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**An exploration of marketing graduates' attitudes
towards their employment in small Irish
businesses**

Camelia Gabriela Balan

MSc

2009



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**An exploration of marketing graduates' attitudes towards their
employment in small Irish businesses**

By

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**Submitted to the School of Business
Letterkenny Institute of Technology**

**As part fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MSc in Marketing Practice**

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Submitted: June 2009

Abstract

The purpose of the research is to understand and explain the situation of marketing graduates in the labour market.

The key findings show that marketing graduates overestimate their abilities to find marketing employment after graduation. However this perception changes once they enter the labour market and realise that a third level qualification is not sufficient to secure a marketing job. This is mainly because the jobs are not publicly available in the labour market and because the marketing graduates lack the marketing experience the business need from them.

A story emerged based on the findings based on which several recommendations were developed in order to improve the graduates' success in obtaining a marketing job after graduation which involve aspects such as the introduction of more work placements at different levels of qualifications and more involvement of institutions in the marketing graduates job search experience.

Disclaimer 1

I hereby certify that this material which I now submit in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Science in Marketing Practice is entirely my own work and has not been obtained from the work of any other, except any work that has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed.....

Disclaimer 2

I agree that this thesis may be used by Letterkenny Institute of Technology for teaching purposes on future Masters Programmes.

Signed.....

Aknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Simon Stephens for all his guidance and constructive criticism throughout the year.

This research would not have been possible without the help and involvement of all the respondents.

Special thanks is due to the library staff in Letterkenny Institute of Technology for their assistance and support.

I wish to extend special thanks to my classmates and Sarah Diffley who contributed to my thinking on marketing. I enjoyed the discussions and especially the disputes.

The final and biggest thanks is to Mr. Aodh Mac Gairbhith for his constant support, encouragement and strength to tolerate me especially in the times where the completion of the study seemed impossible.

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List of abbreviations

CSO Central Statistics Office

EGFSN Expert Group on Future Skills Needs

FMCG Fast Moving Consuming Goods

HEA Higher Education Authority

IT(s) Institute(s) of Technology

SMEs Small and Medium Enterprises

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Sales, marketing and innovation were recognised by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (2003) and Enterprise Ireland (2007) as the most important capabilities for the success of the Irish Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the global market.

The research explored the employability of marketing graduates of third level marketing education in Irish small businesses.

Therefore the issues discussed in the present research involve the marketing curricula in higher business education in Ireland, the Irish business environment and the level of training and capabilities of the marketing graduates developed through the educational system.

1.2 Dissertation structure

The dissertation was divided in six parts which were analysed in separate chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 Introduction described the context of the present dissertation and the dissertation structure.

Chapter 2 Literature Review described the third level business and marketing education in Ireland, the Irish business environment with the main focus on small businesses and aspects related to employability of marketing and business studies graduates in Ireland.

Chapter 3 Methodology described the issues of the two types of research quantitative and qualitative: research philosophy, research design, design issues, sample, respondent profiles, time scales, advantages and limitations of the chosen methods.

Chapter 4 Findings presented the findings of both quantitative and qualitative research.

Chapter 5 Analysis examined the findings from Chapter 4.

Chapter 6 Conclusions presented a series of recommendations based on the findings and analysis of the research.

1.3 Research objectives

The overall aim of the research is

To discover the gap(s), if any, in the Irish marketing third level education reflected in the skills delivered by the marketing graduates in employment in small businesses in Ireland.

The objectives resulting from this are as follows. Sub-objectives were designed where there was a need for more depth information.

1.3.1 To identify the extent to which the skills aimed to be delivered by the third level institutions correspond with the skills acquired by marketing graduates.

1.3.2 To explore the extent to which the skills obtained by marketing graduates correspond with the needs of the Irish small businesses, reflected in the job availability.

1.3.2.1 To determine marketing graduates' awareness of the availability of marketing jobs.

1.3.2.1 To identify marketing graduates' opinion of the skill requirements in small businesses.

1.3.3 To investigate the extent to which marketing graduates believe they are prepared for a marketing job after graduation.

1.3.3.1 To determine marketing graduates' opinion of the level of training obtained from third level marketing courses with regards to the necessary training needed for marketing jobs.

1.3.3.2 To explore the role of previous marketing experience in gaining employment in marketing jobs after graduation.

1.3.4 To discover marketing graduates' expectations and attitudes towards employment in marketing related jobs after graduation.

1.3.4.1 To determine the extent to which marketing graduates' expectations from marketing jobs correspond with the marketing jobs in small businesses.

1.3.5 To explore the marketing graduates' experiences in the labour market.

1.3.5.1 To determine the extent to which marketing graduates obtain employment in marketing jobs after graduation.

1.3.5.2 To determine the extent to which marketing graduates obtain marketing jobs from first time employment.

1.3.6 To discover the marketing graduates' perspective in relation to changes needed in the Irish third level marketing education system in order to facilitate employment in marketing jobs.

1.4 Research overview

The research was designed and organised in three phases. The first phase, described in Chapter 2 Literature Review used secondary information from different sources. The second phase used primary information gathered from Heads of Business Schools in universities and Institutes of Technology (IoTs) with regard to the marketing curricula and marketing graduates.

The third phase used primary information from recent marketing graduates regarding the marketing curricula in third level institutions, their experiences in the labour market and their perceptions about the marketing jobs.

The findings from the first phase were used to design phases two and three and the findings from phase two were used to design phase three.

1.5 Conclusion

The next chapter analyses the available sources related to Irish business and marketing curriculum in third level institutions, Irish small businesses and business graduates in Ireland.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Literature review in the area has focused primarily on general business education, marketing being a part of this, along with other subjects such as management and accounting.

Marketing was defined by Kotler and Armstrong (2001, p. 5) 'as a social and managerial process whereby individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others'.

According to Drucker (1973, p. 64) 'the aim of marketing is to know and understand the consumer so well that the product or service fits him and sells itself'.

In both cases marketing involves interaction and communication with consumers at different levels which result from different sets of activities. For the purpose of this research marketing was divided in two categories which according to a FORFÁS report (2004) involve different levels of knowledge and experience: strategic marketing and operational marketing. Strategic marketing involves market research and analysis using various planning tools and is part of the company's overall strategic planning process.

On the other hand, operational marketing includes day-to-day marketing activities whose final purpose is to deliver the overall marketing strategy.

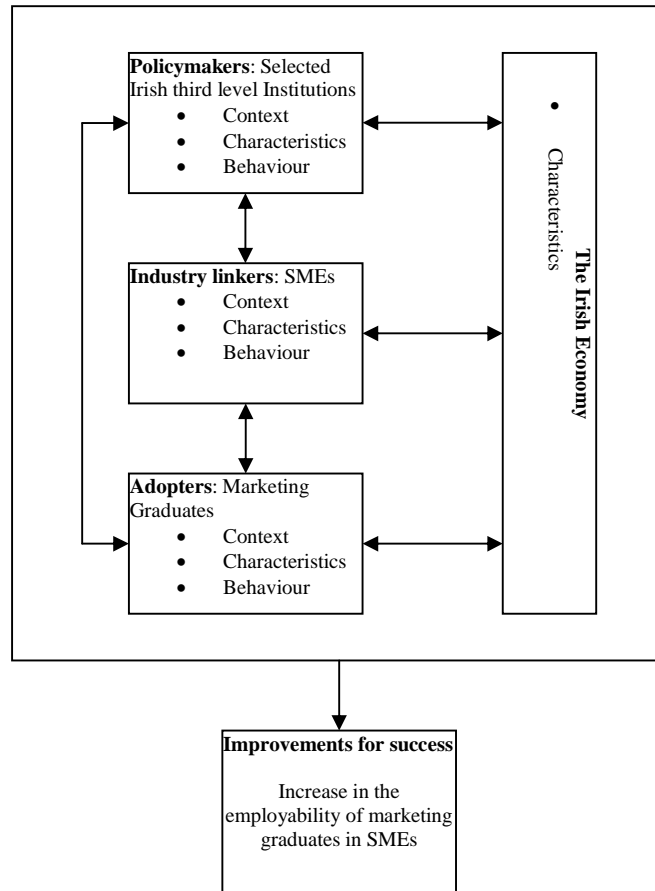
The main objective of this chapter is to provide a better understanding of the degree of fit between characteristics of the marketing graduates and the Irish business environment.

The characteristics of the marketing graduates include aspects such as skills, work experience, readiness to enter the work force, the preferences for types of companies and other aspects like type of enterprises, environment and/or salary package.

The Irish business environment is analysed from the small businesses perspective, according to the number and place of organisations in the Irish economy, their characteristics and their attitude towards employing third level graduates.

Due to the fact that the research has a broad scope and it can be analysed from various perspectives, the literature review has been organised as a conceptual framework based on a Miles and Huberman (1994) model of conceptual framework as follows:

Figure 1 Literature review conceptual framework



Source: adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994)

The conceptual framework resulted from figure 1 consists of four distinct entities which are inter-related and interdependent: the policy makers (third level institutions), the industry linkers (Irish small businesses), the adopters (business graduates) and the Irish economy.

As a result the following three issues will be further discussed: Irish third level business and marketing education, the Irish small businesses context and business graduates.

The Irish economy was not the subject of the research, but some aspects were used in order to set the context for and justify the research of the other three entities.

2.2 Irish third level business and marketing education in Ireland

2.2.1 Context

As a business location, Ireland has become high cost, although still more competitive than other advanced Western economies. The modernisation of Eastern Europe and China has completely changed the global manufacturing scene. The availability of low cost highly qualified engineers and other staff in Eastern Europe and India is affecting the location of design and administration staff. These countries have wage and cost levels only a fraction of those in more developed countries, and have built up an infrastructure and skills base that allows them to offer reliable, low cost outsourcing. Many Irish SMEs are already sourcing manufactured components and finished products from low cost countries, while software and electronics firms are outsourcing development work to India, Russia and elsewhere. The Irish SMEs thus operate in a truly global economy where the paramount importance of the supplier-customer relationship is evident and it is the marketing and sales functions that maintain this relationship (FORFÁS, 2004). All these put pressure on Ireland to become a knowledge economy, in which the education system is the central plank in the economic, social and cultural development of Irish society. Governments and the social partners view it as strategically interlinked with national planning (Department of Education and Science, 2004).

Education is compulsory from 6 to 16 or until students have completed three years of second level education.

The education system in Ireland is based on four levels of education: primary, secondary, tertiary and graduate or postgraduate level. The third level and the fourth level of education represent the focus of the present research.

‘Third level education in Ireland is provided mainly by universities, institutes of technology and colleges of education. For young people and adults who have left education early or without adequate qualifications, second-chance and alternative programmes are available’ (Department of Education and Science, 2004).

According to the Higher Education Authority (1971) an institution of higher authority means a university, a college of a university or an institution which the Minister, after consultation with An tÚdarás, designates by regulations as an institution of higher

education for the purposes of this Act. Since the Universities act in 1997, the universities are autonomous and self-governing. Starting with 2006 the Institutes of Technology are centrally managed by the Department of Education and Science but with autonomy in course provision via delegated authority (Stephens et al, 2007a).

At present there are seven universities and thirteen Institutes of Technology throughout Ireland.

For the purpose of this research the following terms are based on HEA (2007) definitions:

1. Graduate: is a former student who has successfully completed a course of study in the previous academic year (it includes students who have completed their final exams/thesis submission but who have yet to formally receive their parchment from their institution).
2. Faculty: represents a subject area a graduate completed a course in, such as Arts & Social Science.
3. Occupation: describes the nature of the work an employed graduate performs, such as Teaching Professional or Business Professional.
4. Employment sector: describes which part of the labour market employed the graduate, such as Business, Finance & Insurance Services, or Personal & Recreational Services.

This research considers the seven universities and thirteen Institutes of Technologies together as part of the higher education in Ireland, although these two entities are governed by separate bodies: the Higher Education Authority and the Department of Education and Science. Therefore the statistics calculated in the research include cumulative statistics from the two higher education entities.

The programmes and courses in the third level institutions are designed and developed based on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). It was introduced in 2003 and implemented thereafter. The framework is defined as a single, nationally and internationally accepted entity, through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between all education and training awards. The NFQ is based on standards of knowledge, skill and competence.

‘The Qualifications Education and Training Act (1999) requires HETAC to determine standards of knowledge, skill and competence to be acquired (Section 23 (b)). These

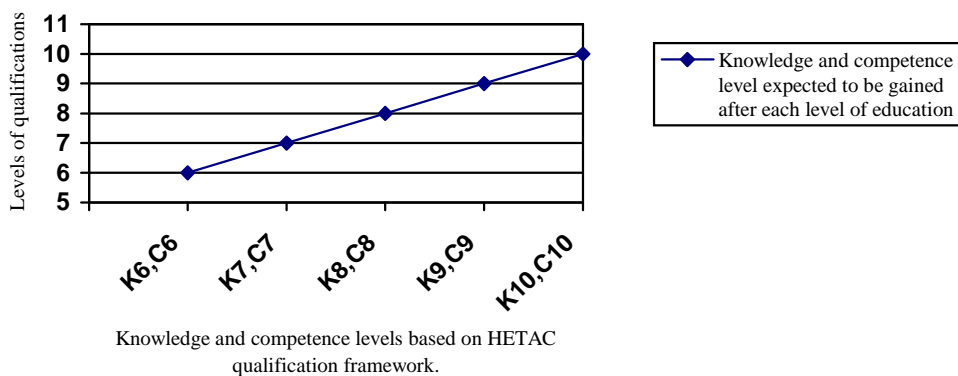
standards are based on the level indicators and award-type descriptors of the National Framework of Qualifications’ (HETAC, 2005). As a result of this, the third level education is divided into five levels:

1. Level 6: Advanced Certificate, Higher Certificate
2. Level 7: Ordinary Bachelor Degree
3. Level 8: Honours Bachelor Degree, Higher Diploma
4. Level 9: Postgraduate diploma, Master’s Degree
5. Level 10: Doctoral Degree

According to FAS (2007) level 6 and 7 data from universities and Institutes of Technology does not allow a distinction between the two levels, therefore they were combined for the purposes of this report.

After completing each level, business graduates are expected to possess a certain mix of skills and competencies which increase in value and number along with the study level completed. These are grouped into the following sub-categories of knowledge (K) and competencies (C) which are detailed further in Table 14 (Appendix 1): knowledge-breadth, knowledge-kind, know-how and skill-range, know-how and skill-selectivity, competence-context, competence-role, competence-learning to learn and competence-insight.

Figure 2 Knowledge and competence levels for HEA levels of qualifications



Source: HETAC, 2005

2.2.2 Business studies and marketing curriculum

Based on 2004 FORFÁS figures, almost 50% of secondary students were exposed to sales and marketing concepts, and there was an output of over 1,500 marketing third level graduates each year with 5,600 having marketing as a minor element. The same report revealed that 134 third level courses, both full-time and part-time were identified as having a marketing and sales element. Of these, 38 had marketing and sales as a major element, while for 96 it was a minor element.

From the same study resulted that third level marketing and sales courses were not sufficiently aligned to SME needs'. It was identified that the graduates lack practical business skills which are obtained through industrial placements and/or internships. As defined by Ellis (2000, p. 35), placements are an academic and business practice and refer to periods spent by students undertaking educational sandwich courses working in usually designated organisations.

One recommendation in the FORFÁS report (2004) was the alignment of third level marketing and sales curricula more closely to the needs of SMEs. As a result, the following actions were recommended:

- A. Incorporate modules that focus on the practical capabilities required by SMEs in the third level marketing and sales curricula;
- B. Make industry placement an essential part of all business, marketing and sales degree courses;
- C. Improve networking between third level institutions and SMEs;
- D. Incorporate marketing and sales modules in curricula of technical disciplines in third level institutions.

While the work placements were also recognised as very important for graduates' development, a report of EGFSN in 2007 also acknowledged the challenge of finding a perfect balance between the time spent in a placement and the time spent acquiring knowledge during the third-level courses. Moreover it was recognised that the graduates needed better management and business knowledge to understand their role in the work place in order to eliminate the unrealistic expectations about the type of work or about the short-term career prospects.

Analysis of the marketing courses in 2009 offered by the seven universities and thirteen Institutes of Technology showed that a total of five courses at level 6/7, level 8 and level 9 offered work placement, from three months to twelve months.

A FORFÁS report in 2005 identified a total of 134 third level courses (full-time and part-time) with a marketing and sales element. Of these, 38 had marketing and sales as a major element, while for 96 it was a minor element.

An analysis of the third level courses (full-time and part-time) in 2009 part of the secondary research summarised in table 1 showed an increase by 14 in third level education courses with marketing as a major subject between 2004 and 2009.

Table 1 Summary of third level business courses with marketing as a major element

Qualification	Marketing as a major element	
	2004*	2009
Certificate	7	6
Diploma	9	18
Degree (Honours level)	10	17
Postgraduate	12	11
TOTAL	38	52

** Source: FORFÁS, 2004*

An analysis of third level business courses with Marketing as a minor element revealed 96 courses in 2004 (FORFÁS, 2004) while secondary research showed that in 2009 there were 139 business courses with marketing as a minor subject. The increase of 43 courses does not necessarily mean that 43 new courses were added but some of these courses may have had different marketing elements introduced as subjects.

2.3 Overview of the Irish small businesses

2.3.1 The Irish business sector

A FORFAS report (2004) defined the Enterprise sector in Ireland as the set of Irish-owned and foreign-owned enterprises, based in Ireland, engaged in either manufacture of goods or the provision of marketable services.

Due to the differences in the business sectors, there is no single general definition of a small enterprise. Two well-known definitions have been developed by the Bolton

Committee (1971) and by the European Commission (EC) and presented by Storey (1994).

The Bolton Committee (1971) formulated an 'economic' and 'statistical' definition. 'The economic definition regarded firms as being small if they satisfied three criteria:

1. They had a relatively small share of their marketplace;
2. They were managed by owners or part-owners in a personalised way, and not through the medium of a formalised management structure;
3. They were independent, in the sense of not forming part of a large enterprise.

The second definition, a statistical definition from the European Commission was designed to address three main issues. The first was to quantify the current size of the small firm sector and its contribution to economic aggregates such as gross domestic product, employment, exports, innovation, etc. The second purpose was to compare the extent to which the small firm sector has changed its economic contribution over time. Thirdly, the statistical definition, in principle, has to enable a comparison to be made between the contributions of small firms in one country with that of other nations (Storey, 1994).

The most widely used definition of a small business is an enterprise which employs less than 50 people (CSO, 2007; Lloyd-Reason and Sear, 2007). For the purpose of this research, a small business is defined as such.

Lynch and Roche (1997, p.23) identified five stages of growth of small businesses in Ireland: conception/existence, survival, profitability/stabilization, profitability/growth, take-off, maturity.

The conception stage requires enough cash for the start-up of the company and enough customers to make it a viable business.

In the survival stage the main concern of the business is the cash flow as it has to finance sufficient growth. There are few employees and planning usually involves only cash forecast and project plans.

At the profitability/survival stage the company has sufficient size and market penetration to be profitable and there is no urgent need for expanding. According to Lynch and Roche (1997) many Irish companies remain at this stage for a long period either because the niche does not allow for further growth or by choice.

The profitability/growth stage involves the decision to grow the company. The issue here is not to grow too fast to affect the profit negatively. Intensive planning and the manager's or owner's high level of training are mandatory for the transition to the take off stage.

Once the growth opportunity and the financial support have been decided upon, the small business reaches the take off stage. The main questions involved at this stage are delegation, cash management and cost control.

At the final stage, maturity the major concern for the small business is consolidation. A highly experienced manager focused on detailed strategic and operational planning is mandatory.

Knowing all these stages is important not only for the businesses but also for the third level institutions and graduates. The benefit for the third level institutions is reflected in a strategic course design to incorporate the needs of the small businesses and to be delivered to the graduates. On the other hand, it is important for the graduates to be aware of the business environment so that they can tailor and develop their skills according to the market requirements.

According to a Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) report from 2006, 97% of the businesses in Ireland were small.

A CSO (2007) research analysed the economy of Ireland based on the three main components: industry, services and construction sectors as follows.

In 2004, 82% of the industrial enterprises, 98% of the services based enterprises 'were small firms employing less than 50 people'; approximately 74% of the people in the construction sector were employed in firms with less than 50 employees.

In the same report of CSO (2007) it was shown that the average wage or salary for employees in a small business was €30,280 per annum in 2004 while the average salary in larger enterprises was €37,181 per annum. Also, on average, full time employees in small enterprises worked one hour more per week than their counterparts in larger enterprises.

More than 90% of industrial turnover in 2004 was generated by medium or large enterprises. Small enterprises in industry had a total turnover of €7.7 billion in 2004. This leads to an average turnover of €145,400 per person in small enterprises, compared with €579,100 in medium and large enterprises. Small firms exported €2.1 billion of their gross output in 2004 compared to €78.6 billion exported by the medium or large organisations.

The average annual labour costs per person engaged in enterprises in 2004 were as follows: €35,340 for enterprises with ten to forty nine employees, €39,133 for enterprises with 50 to 249 employees and €47,061 for enterprises with over 250 employees.

2.3.2 Needs of small businesses

As recognised by Enterprise Ireland in 2007, the Irish businesses need to be innovative, competitive and capable of good leadership in the competitive global markets.

Some of the benefits of working in small firms were developed by Goss (1991) as presented by Storey (1994). The first characteristic of employee relations within small firms is fraternalism and team-working, with employers working alongside the employees.

Another characteristic of the employee relations is the 'benevolent autocracy' (Curran, 1991 cited in Storey, 1994), in which the employer emphasises the closeness of the links with the employee, whilst at the same time making the employee aware that his or her poor performance could endanger the work of all involved in the enterprise.

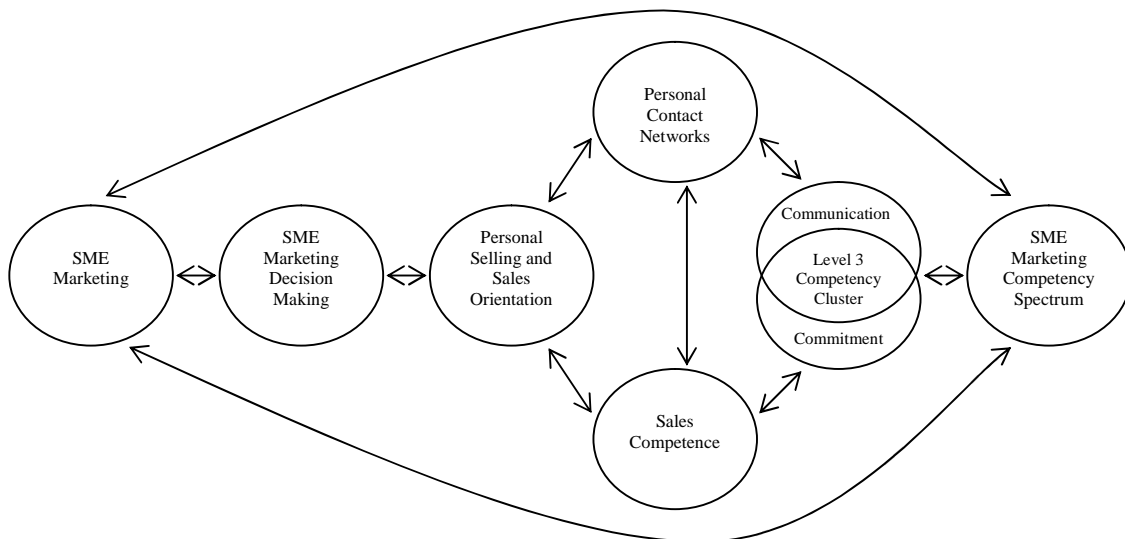
Sweating is another category of employment relations in small firms (Storey, 1994). The employees can be exploited (long working hours and/or poor pay) and they can have no involvement in the decision-making process.

Some of the problems encountered by the small firms in the labour market can be administrative (legislation, official regulations, paperwork etc.), financial (interest rates, raising finance, capital, cash flow, tax burden) and market (overall demand for business products/services, competition from other businesses) (Storey, 1994).

Moreover the recruitment process can also be difficult because of intense search for the right person due to the danger of losing valuable time and money with training.

A FORFÁS report in 2004 based on SME survey developed a holistic model of SME marketing which draws together the key determinants of SME marketing. The model illustrates SME marketing as an integrated whole.

Figure 3 Elements of marketing in SMEs



Source: FORFÁS, 2004

The model in figure 3 shows the activities involved in marketing in SMEs. Mainly due to financial restrictions, all four activities: one marketing related, two sales related, communication and commitment are likely to be carried out by only one employee who would need to possess the necessary skills and knowledge. The first two elements are enhanced by training and the last two elements depend on the individual's training, motivation and competencies.

As a holistic model, it shows the interdependence between marketing and sales activities in SMEs as a capability for business success.

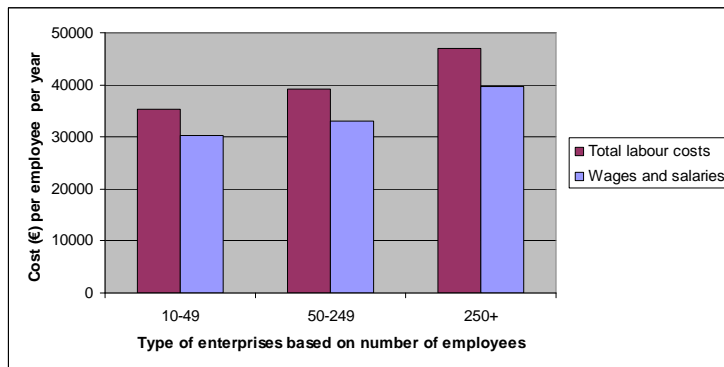
2.3.3 Challenges facing small enterprises in Ireland

The major challenge faced by the small businesses in Ireland is the increasing competitive and hostile environment they operate in.

A report of FORFÁS from 2004 recognises SMEs' sales and marketing capabilities on one hand and innovation capabilities on the other hand, as vital for survival and further growth.

Because the Irish SMEs often serve niche markets (FORFÁS, 2004), they would need to export at an earlier stage and thus, competitive and effective marketing and sales capabilities would be essential.

Figure 4 Labour costs per employee in 2006 in enterprises in Ireland

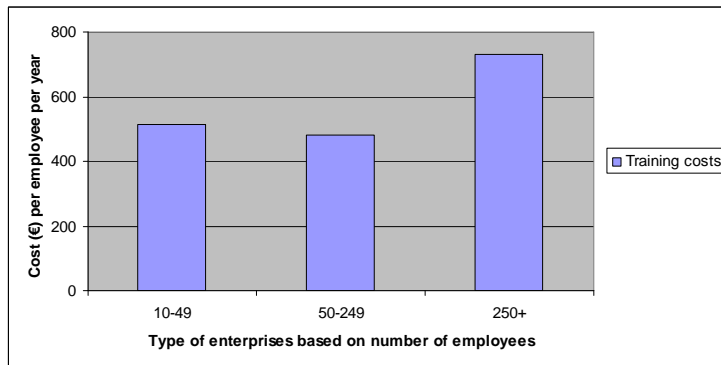


Source: CSO, 2007

Figure 4 shows that the total labour cost per year per person employed in small enterprises with a number of employees between 10 and 49 was €35,340 compared to €39,133 in medium enterprises and €47,061 in large enterprises. Although the total labour cost is slightly lower for the small businesses this does not counteract the disadvantage due to lower turnover.

Another issue for small businesses is the time and cost of training of the employees. As shown in figure 5, the cost of training was €514 in small enterprises, compared to €480 in medium enterprises and €729 in large enterprises in 2006. This represents a challenge for the small businesses as despite their lower turnover they spent more on training than their medium counterparts.

Figure 5 Cost of training per employee in 2006 in enterprises in Ireland



Source: CSO, 2007

2.3.4 Support and assistance for small businesses

According to a FORFÁS report in 2004 different organisations such as the Irish Management Institute (IMI), the Marketing Institute of Ireland (MII), the Sales Institute of Ireland (SII), Enterprise Ireland (EI), FÁS, the Irish business and employers Confederation (IBEC), the Small Firms Association (SFA), the Irish Software Association (ISA), the Irish Exporters Association (IEA), and InterTradeIreland' developed marketing and sales programmes to help the Irish SMEs become more competitive in the market place.

As part of the secondary research an analysis of the current programmes developed by the above organisations shows little change. Some of them were removed and new ones introduced but overall, the number of support training programmes is considerably higher, the majority being sales training orientated. The majority of the added courses and programmes are highly specialised and are meant to target one or more specific needs of the SMEs. Some examples of training programmes include marketing communications, FMCG field selling, marketing skills for profitable export growth and negotiation skills.

2.3.5 International comparison

Research in the UK (Martin and Chapman, 2005) showed that SMEs were more interested in the experience of applicants and employees than in their formal qualifications. The 248 UK SMEs who responded out of 2,337 researched (a quarter

micro enterprises, a half small enterprises and a quarter medium enterprises) have rated the attitude, marketing experience and work experience as more important than the marketing degree (95%, 85%, 70% and 30% respectively) (Martin, 2005).

This research revealed that the majority of the SME owner-managers did not know what a marketing degree contained. Many felt that traditional marketing is geared to the large companies and too much is based on consumer marketing (Martin and Chapman, 2005). Thus the conclusion is that the marketing graduates are perceived as not being prepared for working in SMEs. The research also revealed that SMEs are not prepared to employ full-time a marketing graduate but someone with wider skills. Some of the additional skills mentioned were in IT, management, finance, production and human resource management.

From the UK SME respondents, only 3% said they would employ marketing graduates in the next three years; 65% would not and 32 % were undecided. Moreover the respondents would rather employ experience non-graduates as they would be more practical, better at taking orders and cheaper.

This study also included marketing graduates (333 with a response rate of 38.4%) whose views about the SME sector were researched. Hence, while in previous years the graduates were not attracted by the SMEs, they were willing to secure employment in this sector, although it was not their first choice. In their opinion the skills employers were interested in were flexibility, ability to work long hours without close supervision and adaptability (Martin and Chapman, 2005). They felt that the biggest problems of working in SMEs were long hours, the pay and lack of promotion.

Another problem raised was related to work placement schemes. Where existent most of them were in large organisations. According to the study, 60% of the marketing graduates working for large companies undertook placements, only 19% of those working in SMEs did so (Martin and Chapman, 2005).

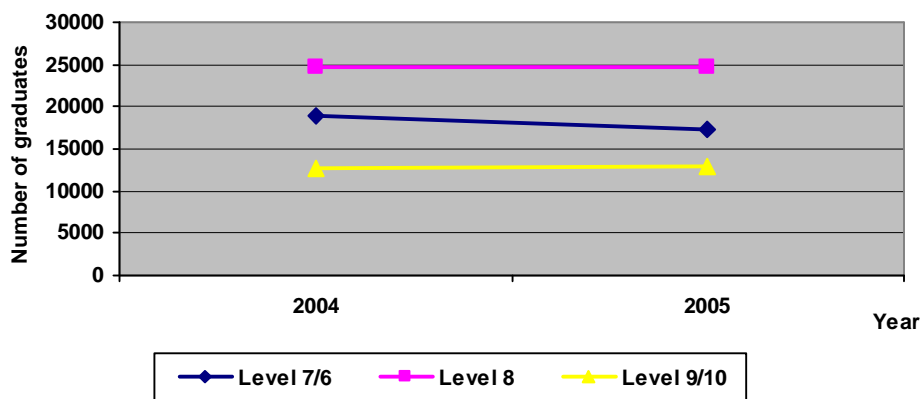
A study related to MBA marketing graduates, undertaken by Dacko (2006), concluded that the six important skill weaknesses - decision-making, leadership, problem formulation, persuasion, creativity and negotiation – need to be developed among future marketers.

2.4 The graduates

The analysis of the graduate labour market trends and characteristics was based on Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Central Statistics Office (CSO) reports.

Overall graduate output at universities and institutes of technology declined by 2.9% between 2004 and 2005. This was primarily due to a decline at level 7/6 of 8.8% in this period. There was very little change in the graduate output at levels 8 and 9/10 (FÁS, 2007).

Figure 6 Graduate output from Irish third level education, levels 7/6, 8 and 9/10 in 2004 and 2005



Source: HEA, 2007

Level 7/6

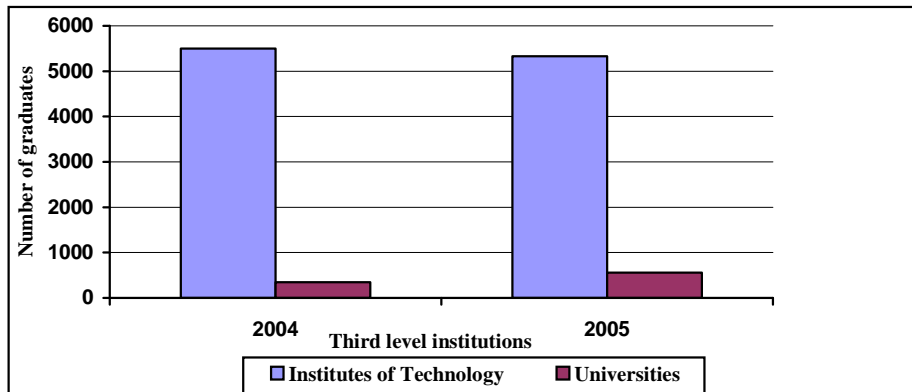
Following the successful completion of a level 7/6 course, students are awarded one of the following: higher certificate, university certificate, ordinary degree or university diploma. In terms of supply, graduate output indicates the potential annual pool of associate professionals.

Institutes of Technology are the main education providers of level 7/6 programmes. In 2005, 85% of all higher education level 7/6 awards were made by Institutes of Technology (FÁS, 2007).

The graduate output at level 7/6 in Social Sciences, Business and Law in Institutes of Technology declined by 3.2% in 2005 compared to 2004. On the other hand, at the same level in the same discipline and the same period of time the graduate output in universities increased by 31% (FÁS, 2007).

Approximately 60% of the level 7/6 graduates continued with further study or training while approximately 30% were found in employment in both 2004 and 2005.

Figure 7 Level 7/6 Graduate Output in Social Sciences, Business and Law discipline in Institutes of Technology and Universities in 2004 and 2005



Source: HEA, 2007

Level 8

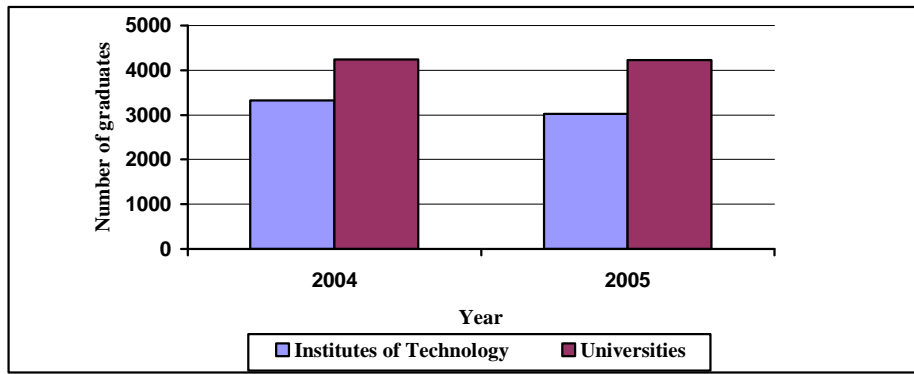
In terms of labour supply, graduate output indicates the potential annual supply of professionals. There were approximately 24,700 level 8 awards made by universities and IoTs in 2005; an increase of 39% in the period 2000-2005.

Universities are the main education provider of level 8 programmes. In 2005, over two thirds of awards made at this level were for university programmes, as opposed to one third for Institutes of Technology (FÁS, 2007).

At level 8, in 2005 compared to 2004, the number of graduates from the Social Science, Business and Law discipline declined by 0.28% in Universities and by 9% in IoTs.

In 2004 and 2005, approximately 55% of level 8 graduates were in employment after nine months and approximately 31% in further study or training (FÁS, 2007).

Figure 8 Level 8 Graduate Output in Social Sciences, Business and Law discipline in Institutes of Technology and universities in 2004 and 2005



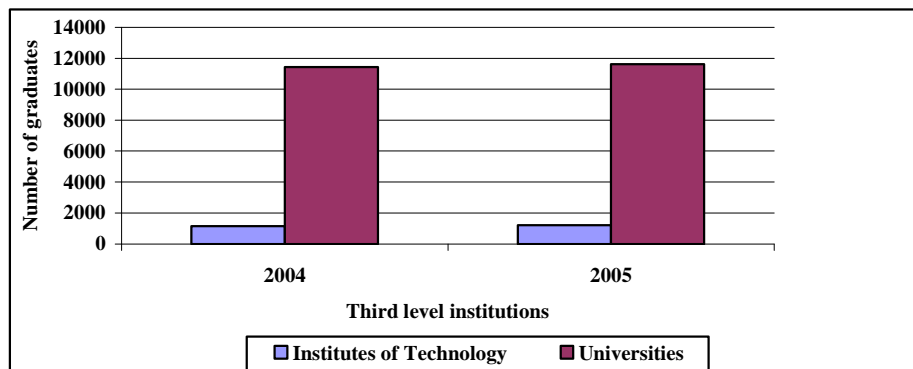
Source: HEA, 2007

Level 9/10

Universities were the major providers of level 9/10 programmes in Ireland. In 2005, over 11,600 students graduated with a level 9/10 qualification from universities, compared to 1,200 students who graduated with the same level from institutes of technology (FÁS, 2007).

The social science, business and law disciplines were the most popular among the level 9 graduates, in both universities and institutes of technology in the considered period of time.

Figure 9 Level 9 graduate Output in Social Sciences, Business and Law discipline in Institutes of Technology and universities in 2004 and 2005



Source: HEA, 2007

2.4.1 The future skills requirements

A FORFÁS report in 2004 recognised a highly skilled workforce as mandatory for continued productivity growth. Ireland's skill requirements are changing due to a number

of factors: the changing sectoral profile of the economy (a move from traditional manufacturing to high-tech manufacturing and services) and the changing occupational profile of the labour force (emphasis on managerial, professional and associate professional occupations).

Since 2003 in the EGFSN reports, marketing skills are a constant in the Irish enterprises skills requirements. One of the recommendations based on skills gap analysis in 2003 was the implementation of more marketing courses. The group's skills bulletins in 2005 and 2006 also recognised the sales and marketing skills shortage.

With the introduction of marketing as a subject in all business courses in universities and Institutes of Technology, more graduates were exposed to marketing concepts. This, as a solution to fill the marketing skills shortage gap, could cause extra competition for marketing graduates.

2.4.2 International outlook

A study by Davis et al. (2002) involving a survey mail of 298 marketing alumni from a teaching-orientated university from the Western United States focused on perceptions of key knowledge and skill areas relevant to the marketing courses. With a response rate of 22.1% the main finding was that general skills such as communication and interpersonal were more valued at entry-level jobs than the marketing knowledge.

On the other hand, according to Taylor (2003) most undergraduate courses focus mainly on delivering a basic knowledge of marketing management principles, an understanding of consumer needs and behaviour and an awareness of marketing research issues rather than communication and interpersonal skills. Therefore as stated by Rotfield (1993) cited in Taylor (2003), the marketing graduates are no more qualified for entry-level jobs than graduates from other majors.

Another study by Dacko (2006) found that marketers would need to develop skills such as decision making, leadership, problem formulation, persuasion, creativity and negotiation.

The findings from these studies were considered important in the design of the qualitative research and included in the interview guideline design.

2.4.3 Marketing graduates and Marketing Warfare

As a response to the current highly competitive climate, a different approach to marketing was developed by two marketing strategists, Ries and Trout (2006). As opposed to a consumer-oriented marketing approach developed initially by Kotler and Armstrong (2001), Ries and Trout's approach is a competitor oriented marketing.

Hence while Kotler and Armstrong (2001) see marketing as the delivery of customer satisfaction at a profit, Ries and Trout (2006) compare the new marketing with war due to the challenging and competitive business environment. The main difference between the classical and the new view of marketing is the main focus of marketing on competition rather than on customers. Hence the main war strategies adapted by Ries and Trout (2006) from Karl von Clausewitz can be applied in marketing: defensive, offensive, flanking and guerrilla marketing warfare. Furthermore the principles of marketing are also based on the main war principles as follows: the principle of force, the superiority of defense and the nature of the battleground.

This approach can also be applied to a certain extent to marketing graduates in their search for a marketing job, especially due to increasing and fierce competition in the labour market. Hence the marketing graduates require skills and behaviour of war generals: flexible and bold, they must know the facts and the rules and they must have mental courage. These represent a combination of skills obtained from training, personal traits, motivation and determination and knowledge about the environment.

2.5 Conclusion

Chapter 2 was strategically divided in three parts: Irish business and marketing curriculum, small businesses in Ireland and business graduates. Issues which emerged from the three parts were used for the research design for phases two and three as follows. The questionnaire in phase two sent to heads of Business or Marketing school/department/faculty included information from the first and third part of the literature review. The design of the interview guideline for phase three of the research

was based on the findings from all three parts of the literature review with the emphasis on sections 2.2, 2.4.3 and 2.4.4 and on findings from phase two, the quantitative analysis.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Research philosophy

The research philosophy influenced the way the research was developed, conducted and analysed. As noted by Nancarrow et al. (2001), the researcher's thinking was the product of his or her beliefs, experiences, training and the researcher's overall view of the research.

Due to the complexity of the research and its unique character, the approach used was interpretivism (Saunders et al., 2003, p. 84). This meant that, according to Remenyi (1998, p. 35), the researcher's main purpose was to discover 'the details of the situation to understand the reality or perhaps a reality working behind them'. Hence a constructivist approach was adopted (Healy and Perry, 2000; Saunders et al, 2003). According to Healy et al. (2000, p. 120), 'constructivism holds that truth is a particular belief system held in a particular context'. As a result, the research inquired about the ideas and values which existed behind the obvious and reachable reality. This required the researcher's intense and passionate participation as noted by Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 194).

3.2 Overview of key research questions

The main aim of the present research is to gain an understanding of the current graduate marketing job situation and therefore a qualitative research was chosen to best achieve the above. The objectives resulting from this were presented in Chapter 1 Introduction and further analysed in Chapter 4 Findings and Chapter 5 Analysis.

3.3 Research design

Based on a Chisnall classification (1997, p. 32) the present research had an overall exploratory character. It was chosen over a descriptive one as the aim of the study concentrated on finding the real nature of the research problem and also there was no sufficient information in the review of the available literature to design a descriptive research.

Using a mixed method approach of 'sequential explanatory strategy' (Creswell, 2003, p. 215), the research was divided in three phases as follows.

The first phase used secondary data, collected and analysed from various available sources like publications, documents and websites of FAS (national employment and training authority), HEA, EGFSN, FORFAS, Central Applications Office (CAO), Central Statistics Office (CSO) and Department of Science.

The second phase used quantitative primary data collected from the Heads of Business or Marketing Schools in the thirteen IoTs and seven universities in Ireland which to reveal more information about recent marketing graduates' experience in the labour market.

The third phase, qualitative research involved semi-structured interviews with eight recent marketing graduates which was designed to gather information that helped explain the current issues related to employability of marketing graduates. It used findings from the quantitative research (Cahill, 1996).

The mixed approach of qualitative and quantitative research was justified by the complex nature of the research itself which involved issues between the two different groups: on one hand, the third level institutions providers of the curricula and on the other hand, the marketing graduates, the receivers of the knowledge.

The method for data collection in the second phase was mail survey and the instrument was self-administered questionnaire. Therefore, a four page questionnaire was developed and sent by mail to all Heads of Business or Marketing Schools in the twenty third level institutions mentioned previously.

The final response rate was 30%, with an initial response rate of only 15%. After the first questionnaires arrived, the remaining respondents were emailed the questionnaire and given the possibility to reply via email. This approach increased the response rate to a final rate of 30%.

The instrument for primary data collection in the third phase of the research was the personal interview based on a semi-structured guideline, a mix between a depth interview and a structured interview.

The main reason it was preferred to focus groups is that the personal interview was more likely to discover complex issues such as the subjects' attitudes, feelings and perceptions on the research theme (Amaratunga, 2007). The subjects were able to speak freely and honestly about their experience in obtaining employment in a marketing job.

Moreover, the questions asked in this research had the potential to uncover sensitive issues related to personal development which might have not been revealed during a focus group (Domegan and Fleming, 2003).

3.4 Design issues

Due to its exploratory nature, the research had a high degree of flexibility (Tull and Hawkins, 1987). All possible ideas and clues related to the research problem were taken into consideration. This led to a high volume of work which generated several directions for this research to be conducted but due to financial and time constraints, only one approach was considered and further researched. Other approaches were suggested in Chapter 6 Recommendations.

The design of the questionnaire in the second phase represented a challenge, as a high response rate needed to be achieved, despite the fact that the questionnaires were self-administered. Following the suggestions presented in Hague (2002, p.151, p.126) the questionnaire was short and the cover letter informed the respondents about the importance of their reply to the overall result of the research. The high level of education and marketing research experience of the respondents was considered a significant factor in obtaining a high response rate.

The mail package consisted of the ongoing envelope, cover letter, questionnaire, return envelope and an incentive (Malhotra 1999, p. 183). The cover letter (see appendix 4) introduced the researcher, the subject of research and informed the respondents about the option of returning the questionnaire. Following Dillman's (2000) suggestion, an incentive was offered under the form of a summary of the findings of the research.

The design of the questionnaire (see appendix 5) was based on the five classes of information from Barker et al. as cited in Chisnall (1997, p. 129): facts and knowledge, opinions, motives, past behaviour and future behaviour. Hence the questionnaire had four parts: respondent details, course provision, emerging trends and future strategy.

The qualitative research in the third phase was developed through interview investigation based on Kvale's (1996, p. 88) seven stages: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying and reporting.

Thematizing involved the formulation of the purpose of the investigation and set the context for the investigation. The design stage involved planning the qualitative research taking into consideration all the other six stages. All eight interviews were conducted in the interviewing stage based on the interview guideline. The transcribing stage involved the preparation of the material from spoken form to written form for the analysis. The analysis phase involved the selection of the method(s) of analysis best suited for the research. The verifying stage tested if the information gathered from the interviews was reliable and valid. Reporting communicated the findings of the qualitative research. The seven stages were interdependent with strong overlapping between the last five stages.

The main challenge was to choose the type of personal interview in the third phase of the research. A brief guideline was designed for use during all interviews. While all topics in the guideline have been covered for all interviews, the discussions were free and allowed for slight variations of the main topic. This led to a few unexpected findings discussed in Chapter 4.

3.5 Sample

Because the primary research has two phases, the two types of research required two samples, resulted from two different sampling methods as follows.

3.5.1 Mail survey

The population was a census of the Heads of Business or Marketing Schools in the thirteen IoTs and seven universities in Ireland. Moreover the respondents were easy to access and their total number did not create any major time or financial difficulties. Therefore the sample in this case was the actual population, twenty respondents.

3.5.2 Interviews

Target population

The target population for the research was the total number of graduates of third-level institutions with marketing as a major subject between 2003 and 2008. In a FORFÁS

report (2004) this accounted for 1519. Based on this figure and the previous calculation of the number of marketing courses in 2009, the number of marketing graduates in 2009 was likely to be over 1,500. Based on the assumptions above, the target population consisted of around 7,500 elements.

Sampling frame

The sampling frame consisted of a compiled list of marketing graduates from all graduate centres in all twenty selected institutions.

A sampling frame error was recognised as the level of reliability and availability of the data. The chosen method to treat the error was to redefine the population in terms of the sampling frame (Malhotra, 1999, p. 331).

Based on this, the target population was redefined as the total number of graduates of the twenty institutions with marketing as a major subject between 2003 and 2008 with full contact details available in the institutions they graduated from.

Sampling method

The chosen method of sampling was a nonprobability sampling: snowball sampling, where an initial group of respondents were randomly selected, based on a list of graduates from LYIT between 2003 and 2008. After being interviewed, these respondents identified others who belonged to the target population who were subsequently interviewed and pointed at more subjects.

The main variable was the graduation time, which was not higher than five years. The main reason for this was the need for relevance to the current economic climate as the interviews made reference to past experience and attitudes.

The gender was not considered a significant variable to influence the sample population because it was ruled out as determinant for graduate employment.

Sample size

The final sample consisted of eight marketing graduates. The reason for the selected sample size was based on the exploratory character of the research and on comparison with a similar study (Stephens et al., 2007a).

3.6 Respondent profiles

For the mail survey, the respondents were all Heads of Department/School/Faculty of Business or Marketing Schools in the twenty institutions. A complete list is available in

table 9, appendix 2. The only variable used to determine the population was the job position which allowed for a broad knowledge of the marketing graduates in the labour market and changes in the marketing courses over years.

For the personal interviews, the respondents were divided in two categories: marketing graduates who were not working in marketing (Group 'CON') and marketing graduates who were working in marketing (Group 'PRO'). The groups were given codes solely to help with the analysis and reporting.

The two groups had similar educational background. Despite the assumption that snowball sampling results in respondents with similar psychographic characteristics (Malhotra, 1999), the final sample had a diverse mix which increased the value of this type of sampling.

The graduation year and the qualification differed across the sample in order to increase representativity.

Group 'CON' is described in table 10 appendix 3. Three respondents have graduated from a marketing course at honours level and respondent C graduated the ordinary degree level. Respondent A was the only one in the group who did not continue the honours level straight after having graduated from an ordinary level. Respondent A worked in a marketing related job between the graduation from ordinary degree and the enrollment for the honours degree.

Table 11, appendix 3 presents the respondents in group 'PRO'. It shows that respondents A and B returned to complete a Masters degree after three years from the honours level graduation. In the three year gap, they did not work in marketing related jobs. One respondent obtained a Masters qualification in continuation of the higher degree qualification.

3.7 Time scales

The questionnaires for the mail survey respondents were sent in the middle of April 2008 before the end of the academic year.

The eight interviews plus the trial interview have been completed in the last three weeks in March 2009, with approximately two interviews a week. The time scale between the

trial interview and the main interviews was longer than between the main interviews, in order to allow for changes and more preparation.

3.8 Advantages

The main advantages of mail survey were as mentioned by Erdos (1974) and cited by Cavusgil and Elvey-Kirk (1998): wider distribution, better likelihood of thoughtful reply, time and cost savings and no interviewer bias.

The main advantages of using depth interviews are low cost, easy and efficient way of obtaining relevant information, along with easier access to the sample population.

3.9 Limitations

According to Malhotra (1999, p. 303), open-ended or unstructured questions are not very suitable for self-administered questionnaires. However, because the dimensions of the overall research question were not readily apparent, any information was valuable for the research to identify issues related to the research questions.

One limitation of using depth interviews in the research was the interviewer's lack of experience. A significant effort was made in the thorough preparation and practice of the interview in order to reduce the negative implications of this matter.

Another challenge was the length of the interviews. Each interview lasted between 30 to 40 minutes. The high quality of the information was achieved through probing when necessary during each interview. Moreover, the confidentiality aspect of the research encouraged reliable and truthful stories.

The small size of the sample was supported by the exploratory nature of the research (Tull and Hawkins, 1987) and the findings of the small sample size may be used to design the questions in a large scale survey (Hanson et al., 2005).

The number of graduates chosen for interviews was a compromise between achieving a representative sample and the resources available for the present study.

The interviews involved marketing graduates from the Donegal area inducing a possible restricted representation of the findings.

The error resulted from the non-responses could be reduced by conducting short interviews with the non-respondents as suggested by Bethlehem and Kersten (1985) cited in de Rada (2005).

4.0 Conclusion

The following two chapters elicit the findings based on mail survey and the eight interviews and their relation to the research problem.

Chapter 4 Findings

Due to the high volume of qualitative data, its complex nature, the different levels of abstraction and frequency of occurrence (Marshall and Rossman, 1999), data collection and analysis have been co-dependent and hence developed in the same time. Therefore they are inter-related. As a set of processes (Saunders et al., 2003), analysis of data occurred during the collection and continued after it.

4.1 The quantitative research

The questionnaire was designed with sixteen unstructured or open-ended questions. Since the attitudes and opinions of respondents were required to gain an in-depth understanding of the research problem, a structured questionnaire would have limited and biased the answers. Hence the open-ended questions were expected to provide more ideas per response (Gendall and Menelaou, 1996), some of which would have not been taken into account in the questionnaire design.

This design was a real challenge from the analysis point of view. In order to overcome the issues resulted from the design, pre-coded categories were generated for the questions where secondary research created sufficient information for the different categories.

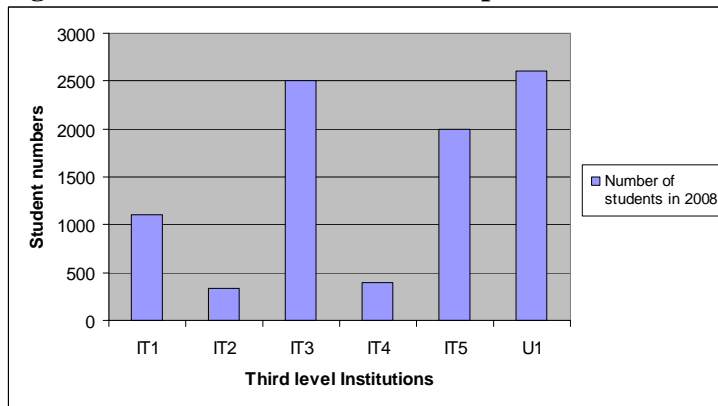
For the purpose of the analysis, the respondents have been randomly numbered as follows. Institutes of Technology were numbered from one to thirteen: IT1, IT2 and so on. The universities were numbered from one to seven: U1, U2 and so on.

Section A – Respondent details

The five questions in the first section were introductory to the questionnaire. They aimed at gathering general information from the selected institutions to determine the number of staff, number of students and any changes that occurred in their numbers in the department/school/faculty of business or marketing studies.

The number of students in 2008 varied from less than 500 in one Institute of Technology to over 2,500 in one Institute of Technology and one university. The variations in the number of staff in were from less than 20 to over 160, both in Institutes of Technology (appendix 6).

Figure 10 Number of students in respondent third level institutions in 2008



Both staff numbers and student numbers have increased in all respondent institutions between 1998 and 2008.

Section B – Course provision

Based on the answers to the questions in Section B, the level of provision of marketing courses/programmes has increased between 1998 – 2008, with three out of six respondents suggesting the increase. The main reason given for the introduction of new courses was related to the industry requirements.

The main reason for removing certain courses was the fall in demand, with three answers out of six. Other reasons mentioned were the lack of relevance in the labour market and the replacement of certain courses with ones covering similar knowledge and skills contents.

Section C – Emerging trends

Based on three out of six answers, overall graduation rates (undergraduate and post-graduate) increased since 1998. This trend was justified mainly by better job prospects and increased number of students.

In addition, the experience of marketing graduates in the labour market was perceived as positive. In 2005, approximately 80% of the marketing graduates from IT3 were employed within three months after graduation in jobs such as sales representative, junior marketing manager and merchandiser.

Section D – Future strategy

The four questions in Section D were designed to determine the future strategy of the department/school/faculty in relation to marketing course provision, prospective marketing students' attraction and retention and links with the industry.

Three out of six respondents suggested continuous evolution of the courses to ensure the offer of courses was constantly adapted to the changes in economy and three out of six mentioned the offer of a broad area of courses as a way to retain students.

The image of the institution was mentioned as the main way to increase student attraction along with the introduction of courses based on labour market requirements.

Student involvement in different activities and student support and guidance were the main methods used for increasing student retention.

The main ways of developing links with the industry were the use of work placements and the involvement of members of the industry in the academic modules.

4.2 The qualitative research

According to Miles and Huberman (1984) as cited in Creswell (2003), narrative text has been the most frequent form of display for qualitative data. This approach, according to Riesmann in Gubrium (2001) entailed subjectivity and positionality as it assumed the perspectives of the narrator and analyst. In the present research, the researcher was both the analyst and the narrator.

The interviews took into account all experience related to a marketing job search. Hence, although four of the respondents are currently working in marketing, their past experience is valuable for the research because it is not older than five years.

The findings and analysis of the interviews followed Marshall and Rossman's (1999, p 152) six phases approach as follows: (a) organising the data, (b) generating categories, themes and patterns, (c) coding the data, (d) testing the emergent understandings, (e) searching for alternative explanations and (f) writing the report. The first three phases were included in Chapter 4 Findings under the headings 4.2.1, 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 respectively; phases (d) and (e) were included in Chapter 5 Analysis under the headings 5.2.1 and 5.2.2, respectively. The sixth phase, report writing, has been omitted for the obvious reason that it is incorporated in all other five phases.

4.2.1 Organising the data;

All interviews have been transcribed after completion and where necessary, the notes taken during interviews have been included in the transcripts.

The data was thoroughly examined and organised in themes and categories developed patterns.

The analysis of the data was done separate for the two groups of graduates. However, there was some overlap in the findings which were be discussed together where relevant.

4.2.2 Generating categories and themes;

Choosing the method of analysis proved to be extremely challenging. The theoretical divisions of the narrative research as presented in Andrews et al. (2008, p. 4-5) were taken into account and consideration was given towards the use of each of them. The narrative of events as developed by Labov (1972) and considered in Andrews et al. (2008, p. 22) is perceived as storytelling, conversational interaction and social process. The narrative is therefore defined in terms of representation of events, where the temporal order is the most relevant.

A second approach, the experience-centred narrative ‘includes all sequential and meaningful stories of personal experience that people produce. Such stories may be an event narrative; but may also be more flexible about time and personal experience’ (Andrews et al., 2008, p. 42). Therefore the narrators describe their feelings and beliefs based on a certain experience or event which could involve their entire existence, not necessarily in a temporal order.

A third form of narrative research, which addresses the co-constructed narratives that develop, for instance in conversations between people or email exchanges (Andrews et al., 2008, p. 5) were also considered. This type of narrative research assumes the analysis of social patterns revealed from different types of dialogues.

From all three types of narrative research, a mix between the event-centred type and the experience-centred type was created to develop the most appropriate analysis. The use of the first type is justified by the exploration of the interviewees’ life and job experience which was constructed as a personal story.

The main reason for the use of the latter is the fact that some of the outcomes of the research are based on the personal experience of the interviewed graduates which were not necessarily presented in a temporal order.

However, because the narration of events and experiences did not occur naturally, a semi-structured approach was used, where the researcher’s intervention was meant to keep the storytelling in line with the research aims.

The interview questions were analysed using a semi-structured form of Silverman's (1993) versions of interactionism. Based on this the generated data gave an authentic insight into people's experiences related to marketing jobs.

Categories (C) and the corresponding themes (T) that emerged from the interviews and based on the research questions are summarised in table 16, appendix 8 and presented as follows:

C1. Marketing graduates and marketing jobs.

T1. Graduates' perceptions of the marketing jobs.

As a general opinion, the perception about marketing jobs emerged as being very challenging, time and effort consuming and that only strong and determined people can be involved in them.

'Pressure of targets and sales became so intense...Marketing can be very difficult to switch off from, especially if you know you have the pressure of going back in the next day to deal with targets' (Graduate A, group 'CON').

Graduate A, group 'CON' chose not to work in marketing due to the high pressure involved in her marketing job and family commitments.

Graduate B, group 'PRO' thought of marketing as 'torturing people' as a result of the jobs she found in her search.

T2. Graduates' awareness of the marketing job opportunities.

All eight interviewees stated that it was hard to find a marketing job.

'I was looking for marketing jobs... at that time it was quite depressing because that was the first time I really looked for one' (Graduate B, group 'PRO').

Another graduate described her job search experience as: 'the jobs weren't really there. I searched every day looking for work but it was quite difficult to find' (Graduate C, group 'PRO').

T3. Criteria and methods used for finding, selecting and applying for a marketing job.

Apart from Graduate A, group 'CON' who secured a marketing job from a part-time job, the seven remaining graduates have searched for marketing jobs on-line, local newspapers and FAS.

Graduate A, group 'PRO' mentioned that she 'did not bother to put CVs in any recruitment agencies' as she never considered them important.

‘I did go for what appeared to be marketing jobs but they were actually more sales jobs and that wasn’t really what I wanted to get into’ (Graduate B, group ‘PRO’).

T4. Graduates’ perceptions of the ability to successfully obtain a marketing job.

It emerged that the graduates thought they were well prepared and ready for any type of marketing job after graduation and, as results from the quotes below, the expectations to successfully obtain a marketing job were high.

‘...that was a big shock to the system when you think you’ve got a degree and you’re working in the reception.’ (Graduate B, group ‘PRO’).

‘After college, I thought I had marketing nailed, I knew everything about it and was nothing else to learn, but little did I know I couldn’t be further from the truth... after the masters, I was absolutely convinced that was everything there was to know about marketing and again I was wrong’ (Graduate D, group ‘PRO’).

C2. Graduates’ marketing experience.

T1. Marketing experience and level of confidence.

Lack of confidence was suggested spontaneously in three interviews as the main reason for not obtaining a marketing job.

The work placement, seen as ‘invaluable’ was linked in three interviews, to human interaction in terms of communication and networking as emerges from the example below.

‘The work placement helped me from networking perspective. The only way really to learn properly is practical experience. During the placement I learned about finding and speaking to people, about networking, invaluable in terms of marketing’ (Graduate A, group ‘CON’).

C3. Marketing graduates’ skills.

T1. Skills obtained during third level education courses.

Communication skills were mentioned by all graduates as the main skills obtained during their third level education courses. As results from the examples below, presentations in front of audiences, group work and reporting emerged as the main activities which enhanced their communication skills.

‘...communication skills due to presentations and feedback gave confidence;’ (Graduate A, group ‘CON’).

‘... presentation skills, being able to work in groups, be challenged of what you’ve done.’ (Graduate A, group ‘PRO’).

C4. Marketing graduates and marketing curriculum.

T1. Changes to increase marketing graduates’ success in marketing employment.

‘... more work experience should be included,... the marketing course to incorporate an introduction in sales, even in the final year of the course for basic skills. Another one is to incorporate negotiation...’ (Graduate C, group ‘CON’).

‘At lower level, degree or diploma, work placement would be a fantastic idea.’ (Graduate D, group ‘PRO’).

The introduction of work placements was mentioned by six graduates as the main change that should be made in the marketing curriculum. Other changes mentioned include the introduction of sales and negotiation courses and the involvement of people from industry.

4.2.3 Coding the data

The data gathered from the interviews was coded into categories and themes for a better understanding. The analysis subsequently was based on the findings and a story emerged.

Chapter 5 Analysis

As stated by Malhotra (2001, p. 220), ‘the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis’.

5.1 Quantitative analysis

The non-responses came from an IT which did not have any course with marketing as a major subject.

Section A – Respondent details

Both staff numbers and student numbers have increased in all respondent institutions between 1998 and 2008 (see Section A, appendix 6 for more details).

Section B

Secondary research in literature review revealed an average of 52 courses in 2008 compared to 38 in 1998 (table 1, section 2.2.2) with marketing as a major subject from the selected 20 third level institutions. This increase was also reflected in the survey, with 50% of the respondents indicating it (table 13, appendix 6).

As shown in table 2 the respondents unanimously indicated the industry requirements as the main reason for this trend.

Table 2 Analysis of reasons for introducing new marketing courses

Category	Percentage
Increased drop-out rate	-
Recommendations from education and government bodies	-
Industry requirements	100%
Other: students less interested in level 6 and in generic courses	16.67%

Table 3 shows that despite the overall increase in the course provision, some marketing courses were removed or replaced with similar courses. Lack of relevance to the market labour needs was quoted as one of the reason for this. However a fall in demand was the overriding reason.

Table 3 Analysis of reasons for removing marketing courses

Category	Percentage
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Fall in demand	50%
Recommendations from education and government bodies	-
Lack of relevance to the market labour needs.	16.67%
Other: replacement by a course covering similar knowledge and skills contents	16.67%
N/A	16.67%

Section C – Emerging trends

The main trend resulting from the survey was an increase (table 4) in retention and/or graduation rates with 50% of the respondents claiming better job prospects as the main reason behind this. Table 14 in appendix 6 shows the pre-coded categories of reasons for the emerged trend.

Table 4 Analysis of trends in retention and/or graduation rates in marketing courses between 1998 and 2008

Category		Percentage
Increased		66.67%
Decreased		33.33%
Stagnant		-
Other	reduction in enrolment for certain courses and increased for others	16.67%
	retention was good	16.67%
N/A		16.67%

The experience of marketing graduates in the labour market was characterised by the respondents as positive in 67.67% of the cases. In one case (IT3), 80% of the graduates were employed in three months after graduation in jobs such as sales representative, junior marketing and merchandiser.

Section D – Future strategy

Table 5 Analysis of the future marketing course provision

Category	Percentage
Flexibility in course development in order to cope with changes in the economy	50%
Offer a wide range of courses to attract and retain students	50%
Suggestions from Government bodies	-
Other:	-

N/A	16.67%
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As shown in table 5 the two strategies for the future marketing course provision are flexibility in course development and a wide range of courses. These strategies should be formulated with the ultimate purpose of student retention (table 6) and attraction (table 15, appendix 6). However no respondent mentioned the characteristics of the course as a reason for retaining students. Student involvement in different activities and student support and guidance were quoted by 66.67% and 33.33% respectively (table 6) of the respondents as a means of student retention.

As shown in table 15 in appendix 6 third level institutions saw the image of the institution as being of similar influence in the attraction of students with the development of courses to meet labour market requirements.

Table 6 Analysis of strategies for student retention

Category		Percentage
Offering competitive course modules to increase the employability in the labour market after graduation		-
Student involvement in different activities		66.67%
Student support and guidance		33.33%
Other	Math tutorials	16.67%
	New learning strategies	16.67%
	Improve quality of education	16.67%
N/A		16.67%

Other strategies mentioned for student attraction shown in table 6 were the offering of math tutorials, new learning strategies and the improvement of quality of education.

One of the findings in the literature review is reflected by the question related to the institutions' strategies for developing links with the industry (table 7). Work placement was considered in 50% of the cases the main way to achieve the aforementioned. Involvement of members of the industry in the academic modules was also seen as important, with 33.33% of respondents suggesting this.

Table 7 Analysis of strategies for developing links with the industry

Category		Percentage
Work placement		50%
Involvement of members of the industry in the academic modules		33.33%
Other	To ensure the relevance of courses	16.67%
N/A		16.67%

5.2 Qualitative analysis

As described in Marshall and Rossman (1999), qualitative interviews are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories.

Data collection resulted from the qualitative research was subject to interpretation rather than analysis. Hence the analysis was primarily associated with techniques and research designs that are explicit and rigorous and can be replicated by others, that is primarily quantitative analysis (Gummesson, 2004, p. 311). As opposed to the quantitative research, the analysis in qualitative research did not follow the same explicit and rigorous techniques but emerged in an interpretation of the findings.

5.2.1 Testing the emergent understandings;

The main purpose of the research is to describe the employability of the marketing graduates in small businesses in Ireland. The objectives and corresponding questions are mainly of exploratory nature. However, based on the findings, the research issues could be described in more detail and hypotheses could be developed for further representative research.

Therefore, the main understandings of the qualitative research which have been constantly probed against the research questions are as follows.

1. Marketing graduates' lack of confidence is related to lack of experience.

Confidence was mentioned spontaneously in three interviews. Lack of confidence was related to lack of experience in two cases and confidence and experience complemented each other in the other case.

Moreover, in their job search, they eliminated all the jobs which required minimum experience: three to five years experience was mentioned in three interviews and two years in another interview.

Graduate B (group 'PRO') 'didn't even bother' looking for a marketing job, as she was convinced nobody would take her on without the minimum experience.

2. Some graduates only started looking for a marketing job after graduation.

One of the respondents stated that she had never opened a paper to look for a job.

Another respondent stated that he didn't really know what kind of job to look for until after he graduated from the Masters programme.

3. Some graduates overestimated their abilities in working in a marketing job and considered that a qualification is enough to get a relevant marketing job until they searched for jobs in the labour market.

Respondent B, group 'PRO' said that she found it as 'a shock' to work as receptionist after having graduated with a higher degree qualification.

Respondent C, group 'CON' stated that he had thought he knew everything there was to know about marketing, both after higher degree graduation and master level graduation.

Respondent B, group 'CON' referred to the 'marketing manager' position instantaneously when he mentioned an example of a marketing job he had looked for.

Another respondent from the group 'PRO' only looked for high profile jobs in large companies after graduation.

4. Marketing graduates found it difficult to obtain employment in marketing related jobs.

Seven out of eight interviewees acknowledged the fact that it was very difficult to gain employment in marketing. The eighth interview had a more optimistic view, as she had previously gained employment in a marketing job through her part-time job.

One respondent said she could only get a job with some help from the college.

The main reason quoted spontaneously behind the failure to find a relevant marketing job was the lack of experience.

5. The available marketing positions were very scarce or not publicly available.

Local newspapers, online search and FAS were the main sources used in the graduates' job search. Three interviewees mentioned the existence of graduate programmes but only one was aware of the graduate programmes in Northern Ireland.

The career service within the college was only mentioned twice, from which, one was a suggestion for future marketing graduates.

Three graduates mentioned finding employment through networking and/or relationship building, from which one is a member of Group 'CON' but has previously worked in marketing.

Two graduates suggested keeping in contact with the college (through lecturers), even after graduation, as the college has been developing links with the industry, mainly the local ones.

6. Majority of marketing graduates would have accepted any kind of job which was marketing related.

Respondent C from group 'CON' tried to find a marketing job in different areas of marketing and she didn't exclude sales. At the time of the interview she had secured an interview with a media company for a position in sales advertising. A follow up shortly after revealed that she had got the job on a full-time basis.

Only one interviewee said he didn't send CVs everywhere, but just to the companies he thought he would have liked to work for. He suggested that marketing graduates should only select one or a few areas they want to work in and direct their efforts towards them.

7. Marketing graduates made a clear distinction between marketing and sales jobs.

In general the perception was that in the labour market, sales jobs were seen as marketing jobs and vice-versa. The majority of marketing graduates did not take into consideration any sales job. Respondent B (group 'PRO') referred to sales jobs as 'torturing door-to-door and telemarketing'. Based on this approach, she said she even considered not looking for any other marketing job, since the aforementioned ones were considered marketing related.

Another graduate said that he didn't want to work in an SME because he would have sales as major part of the job description.

Based on the above categories and themes, a narrative structure (Kvale, 1996; Stephens et al., 2007b) was used to create a story of the interviewees' perceptions and attitudes of the employability of marketing graduates in small businesses in Ireland as follows.

During college years, college graduates did not try to find marketing related jobs, thinking that the perfect job would emerge after graduation. More so, the perfect job was imagined as strictly marketing related based mainly on the marketing subjects the graduates studied during the college years and, according to their

theoretical experience, based in a large company. Once they graduated, marketing graduates started to look for marketing jobs, with the idea that a high level qualification would help them find employment easily. However they discovered that the reality was different to the image they had created. The main obstacle in finding a job was perceived as lack of experience in a relevant marketing role. Graduates were aware of all the knowledge (marketing and other) they had accumulated during the education years, but they were not aware of their abilities to apply it.

The search for marketing jobs turned out to be disappointing for most of the graduates. Not only because the marketing jobs were not publicly available, but the ones which were available required a minimum of one, two or three years of experience and also, they were not pure marketing jobs. The majority of the marketing roles included sales related activities which were completely dismissed by the marketing graduates, as they were not too familiar with this area.

Some of the marketing graduates returned to education after a certain period of working outside a marketing role, hoping that because of the work experience provided in the course, it would increase their chances of finding a marketing job. The only marketing graduate who did not encounter any problems in finding a marketing job after graduation had done three months of work placement and had built upon the relationships developed during that period of time.

The graduates who were not interested in returning to education accepted different jobs, not marketing related. Those who returned to education found marketing related jobs after graduation, based on the work experience accumulated during the course.

Some of the roles these graduates are employed in are not uniquely marketing, but a mix between marketing and sales.

5.2.2 Searching for alternative explanations;

The most obvious pattern which resulted from the above analysis is the direct relation between lack of experience and unsuccessful marketing job applications.

As logical as it may seem, this doesn't necessarily have to be true.

An alternative explanation could stretch out to the psychological characteristics of the graduates. It is possible that some graduates used the lack of experience as a reason to

unconsciously hide other possible issues such as job dislike, not being suitable for a marketing profession or lack of maturity for a full time job.

Another explanation could be the simple fact that graduates were afraid or incapable of recognising flaws in personal presentation and selling; or, in the case of those who didn't even apply for marketing jobs, it could just be the fear of rejection and/or failure.

The recommendations made by each interviewee towards future marketing graduates can also be a reflection of their personal success or failure in obtaining marketing related jobs.

5.3 Conclusion

The story which emerged from the analysis was used to form the conclusions of the research, further developed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 Conclusions

The recommendations for this research are resulting from the findings in Chapter 4 and the analysis in Chapter 5.

Based on the model of conceptual framework developed in Chapter 2, the outcomes of the research result in recommendations for success. The success would be reflected in a high rate of marketing graduates in marketing jobs in small businesses, which ultimately would contribute to the overall being of the Irish economy.

The overall aim of the research was

To discover the gap(s), if any, in the Irish marketing third level education reflected in the skills delivered by the marketing graduates in employment in small businesses in Ireland.

While it was perceived that college years provided the graduates with the necessary communication skills, team-working skills and ability to take on board constructive feedback, the main gap discovered in the present research was that the marketing graduates lack the practical skills required by the small Irish businesses. As a result they lack the confidence needed for obtaining a marketing job.

Moreover it resulted that marketing jobs were not publicly available in the labour market. Based on all aforementioned issues, third level institutions should create more links between marketing graduates and the industry, whether this is done under the form of work placement at undergraduate or postgraduate level or support and guidance after graduation.

Overall, graduates did not have any substantial critiques towards the third level marketing education system in Ireland (reflected by LYIT). However, the introduction of sales as a subject at undergraduate level would appear rational and in line with the findings from the literature review and the qualitative research.

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The general opinion was that graduates gained all the marketing knowledge during the marketing courses necessary for a marketing position. More interaction with members of the industry would be desirable to help graduates gain the confidence that they can apply their knowledge and theoretical experience.

Another aspect of the college years was recognised as lack of interest in finding a job relevant to the course. In the period after graduation pressure accumulated to finding an immediate job able to provide financial support and a base for the chosen career development path.

One recommendation based on the above issue was given by four of the interviewees (of which three were working in marketing) and suggests that marketing students and graduates should actively seek the relevant employment, especially when not provided by the college under the form of work experience (placement).

Based on the same issue, third level institutions could incorporate activities and/or events in order to encourage marketing students and graduates to be more proactive and to learn how to market themselves prior as well as post graduation. Some examples include personal development modules and specialised career guidance.

Moreover, third level institutions should ensure that marketing graduates are well informed about the realities in the market place, as it resulted from both the secondary research and primary qualitative research that the graduates' job expectations were too high.

It was suggested in two interviews that all marketing graduates should have gained at least a Masters qualification in order to be competitive in the labour market.

Since there are not relevant marketing studies, statistics used earlier in the research include all social science and business subjects. Figures from 2005 (FÁS, 2007) show that approximately 60% of graduates of level 6/7 and 31% of graduates of level 8 continued with further study or training. The obvious explanation is that the number of graduates who enroll for a postgraduate course is relatively small. Therefore, in order to increase marketing graduates' chances for relevant marketing employment after graduation, work experience should be organised at level 6/7 and/or level 8.

The findings from this research could be developed into hypotheses and could be further tested and researched in a large scale study on marketing graduates around Ireland. This would give a better understanding of the entire situation at national level, due to high representativity.

More, further research should involve the attitude of small businesses towards employing marketing graduates from third level Irish institutions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 National Framework of Qualifications – Grid of level indicators

Table 8 National Framework of Qualifications - Grid of level indicators

	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9	Level 10
Knowledge-Breadth	Specialised knowledge of a broad area.	Specialised knowledge across a variety of areas.	An understanding of the theory, concepts and methods pertaining to a field (or fields) of learning.	A systematic understanding of knowledge, at, or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning.	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of a field of learning
Knowledge-Kind	Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant underpinning theory.	Recognition of limitations of current knowledge and familiarity with sources of new knowledge; integration of concepts across a variety of areas.	Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas, some of it at the current boundaries of the field(s).	A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning.	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy review by peers.
Know-How & Skill- Range	Demonstrate comprehensive range of specialised skills and tools.	Demonstrate specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills and tools across an area of study.	Demonstrate mastery of a complex and specialised area of skills and tools; use and modify advanced skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional or advanced technical activity.	Demonstrate a range or standard and specialised research or equivalent tools and techniques enquiry.	Demonstrate a significant range of the principal skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials which are associated with a field of learning; develop new skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials.
Know-How & Skill –Selectivity	Formulate responses to well-defined abstract problems.	Exercise appropriate judgment in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related products, services, operations or processes.	Exercise appropriate judgment in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing.	Select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning; develop new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques.	Respond to abstract problems that expand and redefine existing procedural knowledge.
Competence-Context	Act in a range of varied and specific contexts involving creative and non-routine activities; transfer and apply theoretical concepts and/or technical or creative skills to a range of contexts.	Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of functions in a wide variety of contexts.	Use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision making; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts.	Act in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional levels and ill-defined contexts.	Exercise personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent contexts.
Competence- Role	Exercise substantial personal autonomy and often take responsibility for	Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group	Act effectively under guidance in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners; lead	Take significant responsibility for the work of individuals and groups; lead and	Communicate results of research and innovation to peers; engage in critical dialogue;

	the work of others and/or for allocation of resources; form, and function within, multiple complex and heterogeneous groups.	outcomes; take significant or supervisory responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work.	multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups.	initiate activity.	lead and originate complex social processes.
Competence - Learning to Learn	Learn to evaluate own learning and identify needs within a structured learning environment.	Take initiative to identify and address learning needs and interact effectively in a learning group.	Learn to act in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically.	Learn to self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing academic/ professional development.	Learn to critique the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts.
Competence – Insight	Express an internalised, personal world view, reflecting engagement with others.	Express and internalised, personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others.	Express a comprehensive, internalised, personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others.	Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and act to change them.	Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and lead action to change them.

Source: HETAC, 2005

Appendix 2 List of Heads of Department/School/Faculty in universities and IoTs

Table 9 List of Heads of Department/School/Faculty of Business and/or Marketing in thirteen IoTs and seven universities

Third level institution	Address	Respondent	Job title
INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY			
Athlone IT	Dublin Rd. Athlone Co. Westmeath	John Cusack	Head of School of Business, Management and General Studies
Carlow IT	Kilkenny Rd. Co. Carlow	Martin Meagher	Head of Department of Business
Cork IT	Rossa Avenue Bishopstown Cork	Brian McGrath	Head of Management and Marketing Department
Dublin IT Tallaght	Tallaght Dublin 24	Damien Roche	Head of the School of Business and Humanities
Dundalk IT	Dublin Rd Dundalk Co. Louth	Cathal Kearney	Head of School of Business and Humanities
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology	Kill Avenue Dún Laoghaire Co. Dublin	Josephine Browne	Head of School of Business and Humanities
IT Blanchardstown	Blanchardstown Road North Dublin 15	Pat O'Connor	Head of Department – Business
Letterkenny IT	Port Road Letterkenny Co. Donegal	Billy Bennett	Head of School of Business
Limerick IT	Moylish Park Campus Limerick Co. Limerick	Marian Duggan	Head of School of Business and Humanities
Sligo IT	Ballinode Sligo Co. Sligo	Terry Young	Head of Business and Humanities
Tralee IT	Clash Tralee Co. Kerry	Brian O'Connor	Head of School of Business and Social Studies
Waterford IT	Cork Road Waterford Co. Waterford	Thomas O'Toole	Head of School of Business
DIT	Aungier Street Dublin 1	Paul O'Sullivan	Director of Faculty of Business
UNIVERSITIES			
DCU	Dublin 9	Bernard Pierce	Executive Dean of DCU Business School
NUI Maynooth	Maynooth Co. Kildare	Robert Galavan	Head of Department of Business and Law
UCD	Belfield Dublin 4	Paul Haran	College Principal UCD College of Business and Law
Trinity College Dublin	College Green Dublin 2	Gerard McHugh	Head of School of Business
University College Cork	Cork Co. Cork	Sebastian Green	Head of Marketing and Management Department
University of Limerick	Limerick Co. Limerick	Fergal McGrath	Head of Department of Management and Marketing
University of Ulster	Jordanstown Campus Shore Road Newtonabbey Co. Antrim	Rodney McAdam	Head of School of Marketing , Entrepreneurship and Strategy

Appendix 3 Respondent profiles in the qualitative research

Table 10 Group 'CON' respondents profile

Respondent	Qualification level	Year of graduation 1	Year of graduation 2	Work between qualifications	Job position
A	Bachelor of Business - Honours	2004	2006	Marketing related	Student Liaison Officer
B	Bachelor of Business - Honours	2004	-	N/A	Management lecturer
C	Bachelor of Business – Ordinary	2006	-	N/A	Waitress
D	Bachelor of Business – Honours	2005	-	N/A	Retail shop assistant

Table 11 Group 'PRO' Respondents profile

Respondent	Qualification level	Year of graduation 1	Year of graduation 2	Work between qualifications	Job position
A	Masters	2004	2008	Not marketing related	Sales and marketing manager
B	Masters	2004	2008	Not marketing related	Business owner
C	Masters	2007	-	N/A	Sponsorship Liaison Officer
D	Bachelor of Business – Honours	2006	-	N/A	Marketing and management lecturer

Appendix 4 Cover letter for Heads of Department/School/Faculty

Ms. Marian Duggan
Head of School of Business and Humanities
Limerick IT
Moylish Park Campus
Limerick
Co. Limerick
Ireland
14.04.2008

Dear Ms. Duggan,

My name is Camelia Balan. As part of my MSc in Marketing Practice at Letterkenny Institute of Technology I am conducting research into the experience of marketing graduates in the Irish labour market. My preliminary quantitative analysis indicates that there are some anomalies in the market place. To investigate the reasons for these anomalies I am conducting a survey of the heads of departments in the third level institutions. In addition I will be conducting interviews with recent marketing graduates.

I would be very much obliged if you would take 15 minutes during this busy period to complete my short questionnaire, or get a nominee to complete my questionnaire. I have enclosed a pre paid envelope which you can send directly to my supervisor, Simon Stephens.

Of course I will be happy to forward to you a summary of my findings when my study is concluded.

Yours sincerely,
Camelia Balan

Appendix 5 Questionnaire for Heads of Department/School/Faculty

The following questionnaire contains 4 sections. In section A you are be asked to provide some details about your department/school/faculty. In section B you are asked to provide details of course provisions in marketing. In section C you are asked to reflect on emerging trends in marketing education. Finally in section D you are asked to outline your strategy for marketing moving forward. The entire process should take 10/15 minutes.

Your help in filling out this questionnaire is very much appreciated.

Section A – Respondent details

1.1. Name of your Institution/University

1.2. How many staff does your department/school/faculty have?

1.3. How many students does your department/school/faculty have?

1.4. Please describe the changes that have occurred in your staffing numbers/profile since 1998.

1.5. Please describe the changes that have occurred in your students numbers/profile since 1998.

Section B – Course provision

2.1. How many marketing courses does your department/school/faculty deliver? Please provide titles.

2.2. How has the level of provision of marketing courses/programmes changed in the last ten years?

2.3. Please describe the main reasons for introducing new marketing courses. (If applicable)

2.4. Please describe the main reasons for removing marketing courses. (If applicable)

Section C – Emerging trends

3.1. Please indicate any notable trends in retention and/or graduation rates in your marketing courses during the period 1998 – 2008

3.2. Please outline any reasons that you feel explain these trends

3.3. Please summarise the experience of your marketing graduates in the labour market.

Section D – Future strategy

Please describe your department’s strategy to deal with the following issues over the coming years.

4.2. Course provision

4.3. Student attraction

4.4. Student retention

4.5. Developing links with Industry

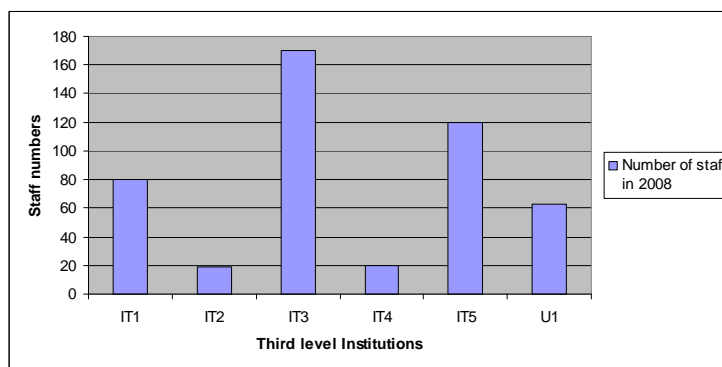
Thank You for completing the survey!

Appendix 6 Findings for quantitative analysis

Section A – Respondent details

Question 1.2 *How many staff does your department/school/faculty have?*

Figure 11 Number of staff in respondent third level institutions in Ireland

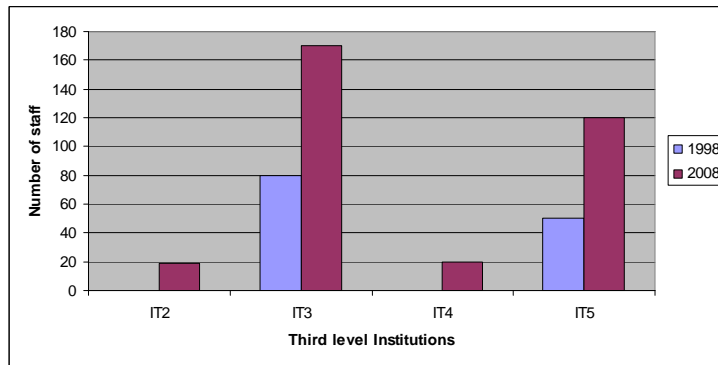


Question 1.4 *Please describe the changes that have occurred in your staffing numbers/profile since 1998*

The question had three pre-coded categories: increased, decreased and stagnant.

All six respondents have used the word ‘increased’. For two out of six respondents, the change was small, while for the rest four, based on the detailed number of the increase, the change was rated as ‘relatively high’.

Figure 12 Changes in staff levels in respondent third level institutions in Ireland between 1998 and 2008



Question 1.5 Please describe the changes that have occurred in your students numbers/profile since 1998

All answers to this question included both full-time and part-time students. However the findings include only the full-time students, as not all respondents gave a number for the part-time students.

Table Student changes between 1998-2008

Table 12 Student numbers in 1998 and 2008 in respondent third level institutions in Ireland

Third level institution	Student numbers in 1998	Student numbers in 2008	Change in student numbers 1998-2008
IT2	0	340	340
IT3	1505	2500	995
IT4	23	400	377
IT5	1200	2000	800

Section B

Question 2.2 How has the level of provision of marketing courses/programmes changed in the last ten years?

Table 13 Analysis of the change in level of provision of marketing courses

Category		Percentage
Increased		50%
Decreased		-
Stagnant		-
Other	change in CAO levels	16.67%

	regularly reviewed through the programme boards	16.67%
N/A:		16.67%

Section C

Question 3.2 Please outline the reasons that you feel explain these trends.

Table 14 Analysis of reasons for trends in retention and/or graduation rates in marketing courses between 1998 and 2008

Category		Percentage
Better job prospects;		50%
Not many options in the labour market;		-
Increased competition in the labour market;		-
Lack of interest		-
Lack of financial support		-
Already on a satisfactory career path		-
Other	Increasing student numbers	16.67%
N/A		33.33%

Section D

Question 3.2 Student attraction

Table 15 Analysis of strategies for student attraction

Category		Percentage
Improving the image of the institution		33.33%
Development of courses to cope with labour market requirements		33.33%
Other	Increasing importance of marketing but tight budget	16.67%
	Work placement	16.67%
N/A		16.67%

Appendix 7 Theme sheet for semi-structured interview

1. Introduction: Respondent encouraged to present his or her story since the graduation from a third level institution.
2. Respondent asked to present their experiences in the labour market after graduation.
3. Respondents asked to present their experiences during college years in terms of the knowledge and skills gained.
4. Conclusion: Respondents are thanked and assured of the confidentiality of the information.

Appendix 8 Categories and themes resulted from the qualitative analysis

Table 16 Categories and themes resulted from the qualitative analysis

CODE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
C1	Category	Marketing graduates and marketing jobs
T1	Theme	Graduates' perceptions of the marketing jobs.
T2	Theme	Graduates' awareness of the marketing job opportunities.
T3	Theme	Criteria and methods used for finding, selecting and applying for a marketing job.
T4	Theme	Graduates' perceptions of the ability to successfully obtain a marketing job.
C2	Category	Graduates' marketing experience
T1	Theme	Marketing experience and level of confidence.
C3	Category	Marketing graduates' skills
T1	Theme	Skills obtained during third level courses.
C4	Category	Marketing graduates and marketing curriculum
T1	Theme	Changes to increase marketing graduates' success in marketing employment.

Appendix 9 Summary of interviews divided in themes and categories

T1.

‘Pressure of targets and sales became so intense...don’t think marketing is for me... Marketing can be very difficult to switch off from, especially if you know you have the pressure of going back in the next day to deal with targets and the pressure that you have left behind the day before’ (Graduate A, group ‘CON’).

‘marketing was seen as torturing people’ (Graduate B, group ‘PRO’).

‘As a marketer you’re willing to put in that effort, you’re willing to put that time in’ (Graduate C, group ‘PRO’).

T2. Graduates’ awareness of the marketing job opportunities.

‘it’s hard to find a marketing job’ (Graduate B, group ‘CON’).

‘I could have found an internship in big cities’ (Graduate A, group ‘PRO’).

‘I was looking for marketing jobs... at that time it was quite depressing because that was the first time I really looked for one’ (Graduate B, group ‘PRO’).

‘the jobs weren’t really there. I searched ever day looking for work but it was quite difficult to find’ (Graduate C, group ‘PRO’).

She also describes that ‘there was no love for marketing or even an understanding of it’.

T3. Criteria and methods used for finding, selecting and applying for a marketing job.

‘I had proven myself in terms of sales... it was pretty natural to me’ (Graduate A, group ‘CON’).

‘I was looking for any job in SMEs or very large corporations’ (Graduate B, group ‘CON’).

‘I looked online, FAS, local newspapers, not bothered to put CVs in any recruitment agencies’ (Graduate A, group ‘PRO’).

‘I did go for what appeared to be marketing jobs but they were actually more sales jobs and that wasn’t really what I wanted to get into’ (Graduate B, group ‘PRO’).

'I would have done any kind of marketing related activities' (Graduate D, group 'CON').

T4. Graduates' perceptions of the ability to successfully obtain a marketing job.

'After graduation, I was prepared for a job theoretically but not practically' (Graduate D, group 'CON').

'I have no experience in sales but I think I'm ready' (Graduate C, group 'CON').

'I should have pushed more even if they asked for two years experience, sell myself better... you know all this stuff but you're not sure of yourself if you can actually apply all this' (Graduate A, group 'PRO').

'...that was a big shock to the system when you think you've got a degree and you're working in the reception. I just didn't know I could do it' (Graduate B, group 'PRO').

'I actually felt a bit nervous going into because it was something new, something completely different' (Graduate C, group 'PRO').

'After college, I thought I had marketing nailed, I knew everything about it and was nothing else to learn, but little did I know I couldn't be further from the truth... after the masters, I was absolutely convinced that was everything there was to know about marketing and again I was wrong' (Graduate D, group 'PRO').

C2. Graduates' marketing experience.

T1. Marketing experience and level of confidence.

'The work placement helped me from networking perspective. The only way really to learn properly is practical experience. Getting your hands dirty, and getting stuck in and seeing how actual things take place. During the placement,... I learned about finding and speaking to people, about networking, invaluable in terms of marketing' (Graduate A, group 'CON').

'I think the main reason for not being able to get a marketing job was lack of experience, lack definitely of confidence. Work placement is invaluable. You learn everything about the company and put four or five years of knowledge into practice' (Graduate A, group 'PRO').

'Work placement teaches you about meeting people, how to interact, time lines (best case, worst case), project management' (Graduate D, group 'PRO').

C3. Marketing graduates' skills.

T1. Skills obtained during third level education courses.

'...communication skills due to presentations, feedback gave confidence; knowledge, broad spectrum due to business course. Marketing courses that weren't just about marketing' (Graduate A, group 'CON').

'...transferable skills, speak in front of audiences, reporting' (*Graduate B, Group 'CON'*).

'... presentation skills, being able to work in groups, be challenged of what you've done. The project company based gave a better idea of putting marketing into practice' (Graduate A, group 'PRO').

'... confidence to present to a large audience or in one-one interview. Good knowledge of marketing, aware of customer service, learn to adapt to suit different businesses, not always the text book scenario' (Graduate B, group 'PRO').

'... you start to think in that mindset that you specialise in. You learn to do a company analysis, a marketing plan' (Graduate C, group 'PRO').

C4. Marketing graduates and marketing curriculum.

T1. Changes to increase marketing graduates' success in marketing employment.

'... placements given by college' (Graduate A, group 'CON').

‘... more work experience should be included, of six months or one year... the marketing course to incorporate sales; an introduction in sales, even in the final year of the course for basic skills. Another one is to incorporate negotiation...’ (Graduate C, group ‘CON’).

‘... work placement would be the key... if it works out it works out, if it doesn’t, it doesn’t, you can always try again... work placement three months during summer holiday after third year or six months experience in the fourth year’ (Graduate A, group ‘PRO’).

‘... for somebody who doesn’t want a master, a short placement into the degree... something whereas the college just doesn’t say ‘bye bye’, but ‘well done, we’ll help you get started’ (Graduate B, group ‘PRO’).

‘Work placement would be excellent. I don’t know about the lower level due to time constraints. If it could be done, definitely in the final year when you’re more focused on marketing’ (Graduate C, group ‘PRO’).

‘At lower level, degree or diploma, work placement would be a fantastic idea. More guest speakers or lectures, people from industry’ (Graduate D, group ‘PRO’).