

Georgia Southern University

Digital Commons@Georgia Southern

Newsroom

University Communications and Marketing

10-13-2006

Newsroom

Georgia Southern University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/newsroom>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Georgia Southern University, "Newsroom" (2006). *Newsroom*. 53.
<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/newsroom/53>

This news article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Communications and Marketing at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Newsroom by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu.

Georgia Southern business students “wow” trade show with research and presentation

OCTOBER 13, 2006

Four eager students at Georgia Southern University recently took on a real-world research project for Parker’s Convenience Stores, finding that cleanliness and safety are primary issues for teens choosing a convenience store. They demonstrated their project results at the National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS) 2006 Show in Las Vegas earlier this month.

‘The students, armed with new experience in surveys, focus groups, and market research, really ‘wowed” their audience,” said Dr. Kathleen Gruben, marketing professor and director of the Center for Retail Studies. ‘They had everyone’s attention, and conference attendees stayed for an hour afterward to talk with them.’’

‘Gruben’s students were able to punctuate and to bring the complex emotional teen mindset to the NACS audience of retailers and suppliers,” said Martha Russell, president of Clickin Research. ‘They started the session with dialog, showing retailers and suppliers the issues, attitudes, and perceptions most relevant to teens. They did such a good job.’’

‘The students’ work is part of a unique project that began three years ago with national research sponsored by Coca-Cola and conducted by Clickin Research on behalf of NACS/Coca-Cola Leadership Council,” said Russell. Council members, convenience store owners worked this year to validate the national research findings in their own regional stores. The Georgia Southern students worked on the validation phase of this project.’’

The students’ project came as a request from Greg Parker, owner of Parker’s Convenience Stores throughout southeast Georgia. Parker asked a question vital to his business: What aspects of convenience stores will help build loyal teen customers? The previous NACS/Coca-Cola study provided some insight, but Parker was looking for direct application to his southeast Georgia stores.

Kathleen Gruben, associate professor of marketing and director of the Center for Retail Studies, decided to answer Parker’s question by convening a special topics class known as Directed Study in Market Research. Based on recommendations from faculty, she accepted four students to conduct the project: Shanika Benton, a human resource management major from Sylvania; Jarad Brown, a marketing and sales major from Savannah; Christopher Ford, a marketing and graphic design major from Gwinnett County; and Virginia Strong, a human resource management major from Augusta.

'Attending the NACS 2006 trade show in Las Vegas has not only been an exciting opportunity for these students, it's been invaluable experience," said Parker. 'Their research will be used to formulate how convenience stores will operate in the coming years."

What answers did they find for Parker? Not the ones you'd think, according to Gruben. Teens were interested in spending their money in convenience stores that were, first and foremost, clean especially the restrooms. In addition to easily accessible products, they want to feel safe, which meant a store that is brightly lighted and where the ATM is not at the front door.

'We had a lot of hands-on opportunity to work out how our project would go," said Brown. 'We learned from our mistakes. Dr. Gruben allowed us to make mistakes, but then showed us how to fix them."

Benton agreed. 'This was an opportunity to prepare for and lead focus groups that included students from 13 to 21 years of age," she said. 'I got a lot of life experience that will help me down the road."

Ford reported a greater appreciation for the value of focus groups and market research. 'When you're marketing a product, so much goes into each decision."

'With each focus group we rotated roles," said Strong, 'so each of us had an opportunity to moderate the groups, videotape, and analyze the teens' comments."

In Las Vegas, the students demonstrated their research results by playing the roles of teens shopping in a convenience store. They also demonstrated a 'Letterman-style" list of top ten attributes of a convenience store.

'This was a very positive learning opportunity," said Gruben. 'The students provided service for a regional retailer, learned more about marketing research, and got hands-on experience that will benefit them no matter what career they choose."