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Georgia State University- J. Mack Robinson College of Business  
A Buyer Behavior Analysis  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>I.</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	2
	A. Primary Research .....	2
	B. Secondary Research .....	2
<b>II.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	3
	A. Background .....	3
	B. Marketing Situation Overview .....	4
<b>III.</b>	<b>KEY TARGET SEGMENT</b> .....	5
	A. Who are our Customers? .....	5
	B. Segment Profile .....	6
<b>IV.</b>	<b>BUYER BEHAVIOR</b> .....	7
	A. Needs .....	7
	B. Motivations .....	8
	C. Barriers to Entry .....	8
	D. Alternatives to Consumption .....	10
	1. EMBA Competition .....	10
	2. Corporate Universities .....	10
<b>V.</b>	<b>KEY QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS</b> .....	11
<b>VI.</b>	<b>DECISION STATEMENT</b> .....	11
<b>VII.</b>	<b>RESEARCH OBJECTIVES/HYPOTHESES</b> .....	12
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>METHOD</b> .....	12
	A. Secondary Research .....	13
	B. Primary Research .....	13
<b>IX.</b>	<b>DATA ANALYSIS</b> .....	14
<b>X.</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATION &amp; CONCLUSION</b> .....	26
<b>XI.</b>	<b>WORKS CITED</b> .....	30
<b>XII.</b>	<b>APPENDIX</b> .....	31
	Exhibit 1: Marketing Survey Analysis Results - EMBA Class of 2008 .....	31
	Exhibit 2: EMBA Programs- Current Student Profiles .....	31
	Exhibit 3: Current GSU EMBA Student Employers .....	32
	Exhibit 4: EMBA Programs- Atlanta- Other Programs Considered .....	32
	Exhibit 5: Emory University- Modular & Weekend EMBA Programs .....	33
	Exhibit 6: EMBA Programs- Atlanta- Current Student Profiles .....	33
	Exhibit 7: Executive MBA Descriptions, Per Respective School Web Sites .....	34
	Exhibit 8: Decision Statement Translation Process .....	35
	Exhibit 9: Survey Questions .....	36



## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Georgia State University (GSU) Executive MBA Program (EMBA) has maintained the same goal since the program began in 1980: to offer an MBA program to middle to senior level managers who want to complete their degree in an accelerated, lock-step format without interrupting their careers. In the past decade, the competitive landscape has exploded and the GSU EMBA program has evolved to meet market demands and increase its student-base amongst heavy competition. Therefore, the main objective of this buyer behavior analysis is to address the following key questions:

1. What are the most significant factors that detract potential applicants from enrolling in the GSU EMBA program?
2. What competitors are the greatest threats to the GSU EMBA program's market share, and why? (What are prospective students' perceived advantages for these alternatives?)
3. What are the most significant factors that potential GSU EMBA applicants value when enrolling in an MBA program?

Through both primary and secondary research, our team aimed to answer these questions and provide actionable recommendations for the GSU EMBA program.

### **A. Primary Research**

Through primary research, we distributed a 16-question online survey via the Zoomerang online survey tool to approximately 2,200 potential students, who had contacted the program at some point over the last two years, but never applied. The survey was active for ten days and received 64 total responses (2.9% completion rate), which met our 2% completion rate expectation. In-depth data analysis is provided question-by-question in the following report. The survey results revealed that flexibility is a heavily weighted attribute in the buyer behavior process, and that the competitive landscape is more diverse than expected. For example, it revealed Kennesaw State and GSU's Flexible and Professional MBA programs to be more significant competitors than originally expected.

### **B. Secondary Research**

In addition to the online survey, the team also conducted secondary research on the GSU EMBA program's target segments and the buyer behavior process for researching, evaluating and choosing an EMBA program. This process includes needs, motivations, barriers to entry and alternatives to consumption. Again, the goal of this primary and secondary research was to provide the GSU EMBA program with a complete situational perspective to assist the program



with adjusting its marketing plan to effectively reach more potential students and increase applications.

Based on the results of this buyer behavior analysis, our team provided specific recommendations to the GSU EMBA program, which include:

- Increasing its prospect retention strategy;
- Better publicizing the program's flexibility;
- Making online information more accessible;
- Increasing awareness;
- Directly marketing to local Atlanta companies.

Our team encourages the GSU EMBA program to conduct future research to better understand customer needs, the competitive landscape and what causes prospects to delay enrollment.

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Background**

Georgia State University (GSU) launched its Robinson Executive MBA program (EMBA) in 1980; one year after Emory University began its EMBA program. For many years, GSU and Emory remained the only two EMBA programs available in the Atlanta market. Over the past decade, however, competition from other EMBA program at top-ranked universities – most notably the University of Georgia (UGA) and Georgia Tech University – has increased. Therefore, competition for a finite number of prospects (“buyers”) in the Atlanta area has become increasingly intense.

GSU's main objective has remained constant since the program's inception: to offer an MBA program to middle to senior level managers who want to complete their degree in an accelerated, lock-step format without interrupting their careers. Due to heavy competition, the EMBA program has thus evolved to meet market demands. Specifically, recent changes to nationwide EMBA programs include:

- Extending GMAT waivers
- Reducing the program's length (21 months to 16 months)
- Relocating headquarters from downtown to Buckhead (“a more upscale location”)
- Reducing the program's length (21 months to 16 months)
- Increased teaching methods, including online classes

Such updates to EMBA program requirements and offerings are implemented with the ultimate goal of attracting a consistent number of quality applicants despite fierce competition (Paris).



Unlike its competition, GSU has held steadfast in requiring face-to-face learning, since it believes that less interaction between students and faculty could compromise the value of the final product- the EMBA degree. Therefore, the EMBA curriculum does not include online studies or Internet classes.

## **B. Marketing Situation Overview**

As the EMBA curriculum and programming continue to evolve, so does its marketing efforts. In the early days of the Robinson EMBA program, directors maintained a “build it and they will come” attitude, and did not aggressively market to recruit new students (Paris). Instead of hiring a Marketing Director to focus on marketing activities, a part-time student handled these limited marketing and communications efforts, which included newspaper ads, some radio ads, alumni referrals, and word of mouth (Paris).

Currently, due to an increased number of Atlanta-based EMBA programs competing for the same applicant pool, the GSU EMBA program employs a permanent marketing staff of one employee (Marketing Director Melody Paris); the department also employs one part-time employee and one graduate research assistant, who works 16 hours per week. Their main objective is to heavily recruit new students with a variety of innovative media, with an ultimate goal of building program awareness and differentiating the Robinson College of Business EMBA program from competitors like Emory, UGA and Georgia Tech. The Robinson EMBA program’s marketing mix currently includes the following marketing vehicles:

- Internet: dedicated Web site, Web site banner ads, e-mail campaign, paid search efforts on the major search engines like Google;
- Direct Mail: direct mailings to prospective students, drip marketing campaigns, alumni incentive programs;
- Radio: streaming radio ads on local radio stations;
- Outdoor: billboards, kiosks.

Therefore, through implementing a specifically designed marketing strategy to target applicants and maintaining a permanent staff to oversee this process, the program is making strides to strategically compete in a diverse, competitive environment.

The Robinson program’s recent relocation to Buckhead has also helped expand awareness beyond the Atlanta city limits. Since the announcement of GSU’s EMBA opening in Buckhead, the Robinson EMBA program has experienced a spike in applications from the

Cumming area. Therefore, a recent focus and program goal is how to reach out and market to prospective students in this particular area.

All marketing efforts, whether focused on Cumming or the entire Atlanta area, have one overall purpose: To recruit new students to the Robinson College of Business' top-ranked EMBA program. Why students do not choose this program, and instead enroll in other local programs, remains an overarching challenge to understand.

### **III. KEY TARGET SEGMENT**

#### **A. Who Are Our Customers?**

The GSU EMBA program is designed for experienced men and women who want to pursue an MBA while working full-time (Georgia State). EMBA students must be prepared for a rigorous 16-month school year, and must have a flexible work schedule that allows them to attend a full day of classes on Friday and Saturday, every other week. Prospective students must have at least seven years of work experience, with five of those years in a management position.

Although priced lower than its competitors, GSU EMBA students must also be willing to pay a significant price (\$58,500) for the full array of services offered with tuition (Georgia State). In addition to classes, the program price includes registration, book purchases, and meal and parking passes; EMBA staff members are specifically assigned to take care of such details for each student. The EMBA degree has a focus on general management, since most students who enroll in the program are already specialized due to extensive work experience in their given field (Paris). These EMBA students are not looking to specialize. Instead, they are looking to round out their business knowledge in areas they do not normally handle with the ultimate goal of more effectively running a division or a business.

Historically, GSU EMBA program prospects were male, Caucasian, mid-to-senior level professionals in their late 30s to early 40s (Paris). Over the past five years, the number of applications from women and international students has increased (Class of 2008). Currently, GSU EMBA students are about 38 years old and have 15 years of work experience, with 10 of those years as a manager or higher; 74% of students are male, and 23% are international (Class of 2008). The average salary per year for GSU EMBA students hovers around \$100,000. Further, EMBA students hold jobs in a variety of different industries, with manufacturing, information technology and healthcare/ medicine topping the list.

A survey of the GSU EMBA Class of 2008 revealed that students read business publications, such as the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* Business section and *Business Week*, listen



to talk radio during commute times, and use the Internet as a primary research tool- including researching GSU and other schools' EMBA programs (Class of 2008). For a high-level review of the EMBA Class of 2008 survey results, please refer to the included Exhibit 1 of the Appendix.

To better understand GSU EMBA's target segment, it is interesting to note that the Robinson EMBA program is popular with females (second highest percentage- 26%; Emory Modular EMBA attracts 38%), has a slightly older demographic (38, as compared to 37 for Emory Modular, UGA, and Georgia Tech), and a slightly more experienced student base (15 average years of work experience, as compared to 14.5 for UGA and 14 for Georgia Tech). The Robinson EMBA program also has the highest international student base (23%), and the second highest student base with advanced degrees (17%, as compared to Emory Modular with 38%). Exhibit 2 further outlines a comparison of the GSU EMBA with other Atlanta-area EMBA programs.

## **B. Segment Profile**

The best target segment for the GSU EMBA program matches the profile listed above of current customers. Specifically, to further define this segment further, prospects are professionals living or working within a 35 mile radius of the EMBA Buckhead headquarters (Class of 2008). This figure is important due to the increase in Cumming residents that enrolled after the program relocated to Buckhead. In the Class of 2008, six out of the 43 GSU EMBA students are Cumming residents, which is significant since no students from the Class of 2007 are from that area.

For an even narrower segment, the growth numbers and motivations of women joining the program can be evaluated. This segment can be marketed to inclusively, with the above, or separately. As the number of women managers grows in Atlanta, so does this important target segment.

Similarly, international students represent an important segment – almost a quarter of all students. In Georgia, international men and women currently represent 10.2% of the total population (Camarota). Immigration grew by 52.1% between 2000 and 2007 in Georgia, amounting to 953,000 individuals. This immigration growth is part of a larger U.S. trend, which shows that immigrants with some college education increased 9% during that time. In 2007, 11.4% of all U.S. business and financial jobs were held by immigrants. Hispanics represented the largest segment of immigrants (30%), followed by East Asians (18%). Of all immigrants, 32% hold managerial or professional job roles.



In addition, GSU EMBA students work at top Atlanta employers such as Coca-Cola, The Home Depot, and Georgia Power (please see Exhibit 3 in the Appendix for a complete list). Therefore, targeting additional employees within these companies could be advantageous for further recruitment, especially since word of mouth was cited as one of the top ways students learned about the GSU EMBA program (Marketing Survey).

#### **IV. BUYER BEHAVIOR**

Deciding on an EMBA program is a complex decision making process. The buyer behavior process for GSU EMBA prospects is high-involvement, most notably because of the long purchase cycle. 21% of customers in 2007 and 2008 waited one to two months between initial contact and submission of application to the program (Marketing Survey). The majority of students took over a year to contact the GSU EMBA office after they initially became aware of the program. The time between the submission of an application and students' initial contact with the EMBA office was scattered from a few days to over a year. The majority of these students did not attend an EMBA informational session. However, the students who did attend the informational session also had a scattered time lapse of a few days to over a year from their initial awareness of the program; the distribution of this data is not available since the program currently does not track such specifics. High-involvement behavior is also represented by the narrow list of alternative choices the customers considered. Emory was consistently the most frequent alternative choice (Marketing Survey). Likewise, these prospective students also indicated that they searched for information on the GSU EMBA website, which is also a high-involvement indicator.

##### **A. Needs**

In evaluating what will motivate GSU EMBA prospective students to enroll in the program, it is necessary to identify both their long-term goals and short-term needs. To conduct such analysis, a survey administered to the 43 students in the GSU EMBA Class of 2008 was used. Based on this secondary research, the Robinson EMBA customers identified long-term goals such as return on investment (ROI) and reputation. They also identified the following short-term needs, based on convenience: price, location, schedule flexibility, and enrollment flexibility.

With regard to reputation, the GSU EMBA program prides itself as the "best educational value in the EMBA marketplace." It bases this claim on the program's nationally acclaimed faculty and curriculum, and because *Financial Times* ranked it among the top 60 worldwide and





top 25 in the United States (Executive). Since 92% of customers said they considered rankings important when evaluating schools and 93% of customers said they were aware of Robinson's accreditation status, this data supports the importance for having a highly ranked program (Marketing Survey). Looking at return on investment, Robinson guarantees students will learn to apply new techniques to real business challenges, gain a more defined global business perspective, and develop the analytical skills and innovative management concepts necessary to more effectively guide organizations in a general management role (Time to Advance).

Regarding short-term goals, the GSU EMBA students appear to be most motivated by convenience - specifically location, schedule flexibility, and enrollment flexibility. GSU EMBA students identified price as a top priority, with 75% stating price was a major or somewhat important determinant (Marketing Survey). Interestingly, GSU offers the least expensive EMBA degree compared to the other EMBA Atlanta-based programs, which will be reviewed later in the Alternatives to Consumption section.

The survey also indicated location and schedule flexibility as key needs. Seventy-two percent of students said location was a major or somewhat important determinant (Marketing Survey). Further, in the write-in section of the survey asking how students define value when it comes to attending graduate school, a popular response was flexibility in enrollment. Appropriately, GSU offers rolling admissions for its EMBA program.

### **B. Motivations**

GSU EMBA students noted tuition reimbursement, monetary and/or advancement incentive from their companies, desire for a career change, networking opportunities, and expanding their skill sets as key motivating factors. Information gathered from the Class of 2008 show that 40% receive partial funding, 21% receive full funding, 30% pay the tuition themselves, and 9% did not respond (Paris).

Changing careers and networking opportunities are among popular reasons applicants state as their motivation for considering an MBA (Paris). Some applicants are interested in using an MBA to advance their careers or facilitate a career change (Time to Advance). The Robinson College of Business offers a career placement center, entrepreneurship center, and an extensive alumni network to reach such goals.

### **C. Barriers to Entry**

The barriers to selecting the GSU EMBA program are few, but serious. Unlike regular programs, to gain entry to the GSU Executive MBA program, work experience, level of job



responsibility, and a combination of academic grades and test scores are important in the admission process.

According to *Business Week Investor*, “many schools require at least 10 years of experience, five of them in management. It helps, too, to have a title, such as vice-president or director” (Schneider). GSU requires seven years or more of full-time relevant work experience, including five years of managerial or supervisory responsibility (Georgia State). Relevant work experience helps create a richer learning environment, so students can see how classroom concepts will apply to the daily rigors of work (The 5 Ps). Additionally, active support from a candidate’s current employer, a relevant field of specialization, and solid future career goals all play a role in acceptance to an EMBA program.

Financial barriers can also influence a prospect’s decision to apply. Nationally, the cost of a graduate program is usually high. According to *Business Week Investor*, “tuition for these 18- to 24-month programs can run from \$30,000 to \$115,200” (Schneider). As previously mentioned, the price tag for the 16-month Executive MBA program at Georgia State University is \$58,500 (Georgia State). And, according to the class of 2008 statistics for the GSU EMBA participants, 30% listed price as a major factor in their decision to consider the GSU EMBA program (Marketing Survey). For many, even this relatively low amount may pose a barrier.

Moreover, prospective students’ employers may not have a tuition reimbursement program or may choose not to sponsor their executive employees for an EMBA. The idea of being in more student loan or similar debt may also steer buyers away from executive programs.

Time commitment is another barrier. The EMBA program is not the only a MBA program that GSU offers; however, EMBA courses are only offered every other week on Friday and Saturday. Additionally, executives who enter the program continue to work full-time and matriculate through the program. Therefore, if an employer is not open to being flexible with executives’ needs to attend classes on these days, then finding the time to commit to such a rigorous course of study would become a large obstacle.

Finally, the Buckhead location may pose an additional barrier, especially for those who live south of downtown. According to the marketing survey analysis of the EMBA class of 2008, 50% of students listed location of the program as a major factor in their decision to consider the EMBA at GSU (Marketing Survey). This new location, however, will better serve those who live in North Atlanta suburbs, including Cumming and Alpharetta.



Commuting every other week on Friday and Saturday may not be an attractive option for prospective students who want to consider GSU for their MBA. Commuting back and forth from Cumming to Atlanta every other week obviously comes with its own headaches, and the traffic and congestion in and out of Atlanta is daunting enough even to the most motivated commuter. Such a commute can also add more time to students' days and, therefore, the travel time, cost, and personal time expense may not be worth it to prospective students.

#### **D. Alternatives to Consumption**

##### ***1. EMBA Competition***

GSU EMBA Class of 2008 students reviewed several top schools in the Atlanta area before choosing GSU. Exhibit 4 in the Appendix further outlines the various MBA programs the Class of 2008 considered. The top three schools (outside of Georgia State's other MBA programs) included:

- Emory (62%)
- Georgia Tech (26%)
- UGA (15%)

With over half of the current EMBA students considering Emory, this school is the number one competitor of the GSU EMBA program (Marketing Survey). Emory's Executive MBA program currently has two formats, the Modular EMBA and Weekend EMBA, which provide prospective students an even wider array of choices; Exhibit 5 in the Appendix further outlines these two Emory EMBA programs (Goizueta). Also, the competitive landscape of the Atlanta-area EMBA programs includes the primary motivating factors of program length, tuition cost, and location; motivating factors are further outlined in Exhibit 6. Therefore, this data concludes that the GSU EMBA degree is the most cost effective of all the programs reviewed and, along with the Emory Weekend MBA, takes the least amount of time to complete (16 months). Please note that Exhibit 7 offers a detailed description of the highlights of each of these competitive programs.

##### ***2. Corporate Education***

A recent trend in corporate America is to require employees to attend up to 30 hours of training per to remain updated with industry changes (HR Management). Corporate education has many forms: outside trainers that come in-house to teach, sending employees to out-of-house programs, and/or establishing internal intranet and physical corporate universities. Traditional means of education, such as the GSU EMBA program, is still the most popular method of learning however such format education is threatened due to the barriers of time and technology.



Online education has recently exploded into higher education, growing in excess of 25% per year with over two and a half million people taking online courses in 2005. In addition, U.S. companies spend over \$16 billion annually on corporate training and between \$3.5 and \$5 billion of such training is conducted online.

Another challenge for traditional education programs is leader-to-leader business training, such as executive coaching and mentor programs. Companies do not universally support formal education programs due to decreased productivity and high churn (HR Management). These companies therefore opt for an internal corporate education route to provide intimate business training specific to the company (Purcell). The loss of company and industry specific knowledge is likely to increase as Baby Boomers retire, and therefore it is anticipated for the trend of corporate education to increase over the next decade. Corporate education is popular since its convenience, flexibility, and ability to provide industry-specific information caters to the busy professional and therefore should be considered in evaluating alternative consumption to the GSU EMBA program.

#### **V. KEY QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS**

The team designed an e-mail survey to send out to the EMBA program's current prospect database, which contains approximately 2,200 potential students' e-mail addresses. These prospects expressed interest in the program over the past two years through the following methods:

- Directly contacting the EMBA office for information;
- Signing up for an EMBA open house event;
- Opting to click through an e-mail link they received through a drip marketing campaign the EMBA office utilizes on a regular basis.

A negligible number (less than 2%) of the contacts in the database are referrals from a third party (EMBA alumnus, current EMBA student, GSU faculty or staff).

The team identified the following key research questions to ensure the relevance of the responses received from the survey:

1. What are the most significant factors that detract potential applicants from enrolling in the GSU EMBA program?
2. What competitors are the greatest threats to the GSU EMBA program's market share, and why? (What are the prospects' perceived advantages for these alternatives?)



3. What are the most significant factors that potential GSU EMBA applicants value when enrolling in an MBA program?

These key questions serve as the framework for the survey questionnaire. They have been assessed in conjunction with other important elements of the decision statement translation process in the appendix (Zikmund). The survey's primary goal is to discover applicable information for the EMBA program to increase the number of prospects in each admission cycle.

## **VI. DECISION STATEMENT**

The project's objectives are to understand why more potential students are not applying to the GSU EMBA program, and how to focus marketing efforts to increase market share in a competitive industry. Based on these goals, the team developed the following decision statement for the EMBA program: *What are the greatest prohibiting factors for GSU RCB EMBA enrollment, and why do potential students who express interest in the Executive MBA program at Georgia State University ultimately choose not to attend this top-ranked institution?*

To develop this decision statement, the team considered price, program reputation, ranking/accreditation, direct competitors, and purchase intent for this project – all factors that largely impact enrollment decisions. Using a combination of primary and secondary research, the team expects to yield important and determinative information for the GSU EMBA program's marketing process.

## **VII. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES/HYPOTHESES**

Primary research objectives naturally follow the decision statement outlined above. Since the team plans to use the e-mail addresses of potential students who contacted the GSU EMBA program but did not apply, we plan to implement the following research objectives:

1. Learning how and why the GSU EMBA program is initially included in the prospective student's consideration set;
2. Understanding what drives prospective students to research and apply to alternative choices;
3. Discovering these alternative choices and their perceived advantages.

These objectives helped the team discover some research hypotheses as well, namely competitors' benefits, which include price and reputation (see **Exhibit 8**). The decision statement translation process targets the research objectives, and secondary research focuses on bolstering support.



Secondary research revealed that Atlanta's overall population and the number of businesses based here continues to grow (U.S. Census). More people, including both male and female executives, are also pursuing advanced degrees (Application Trends). In addition, the competition is growing and increasing recruitment efforts in the Atlanta area. Secondary research also revealed the following:

- Atlanta universities are increasing advertising efforts in different areas of the local market, including Buckhead and downtown (Marketing Survey).
- Different universities are offerings a variety of alternative MBA programs to increase total market share (Purcell).
- Online education programs are growing in popularity, especially in a city like Atlanta notorious for long commutes (Kelley).

By combining such secondary research findings with our primary research, the team can gain an increased understanding of potential students' alternative purchasing choices. The online survey should provide the necessary data to explain why potential students do not choose to apply to the GSU EMBA program, plus inspire recommendations to recover lost market share.

## **VIII. METHOD**

### **A. Secondary Research**

The GSU EMBA program conducts surveys each year with incoming students. These surveys are used to evaluate media consumption, recruitment cycle, the decision making process, competition, program perceptions, and the most important factors students considered when choosing their graduate program (Class of 2008). The GSU EMBA program also collects demographic statistics of each incoming class, and this data is helpful in understanding students' buyer behavior. In addition, secondary sources such as periodicals and descriptive statistics like Google Analytics identify valuable national trends to ensure that the GSU EMBA program's strategy is in line with changing demand. Overall, this data provided great insight into the aforementioned areas; however, it also provides a comparison benchmark for the team's primary research objective, which is to identify why those initially interested do not choose the GSU EMBA program.

### **B. Primary Research**

Our team created a 16-question online survey that will be sent out via e-mail to approximately 2,200 potential students on behalf of the GSU EMBA department. The e-mail will contain a letter from GSU EMBA Director of Marketing, Melody Paris, to lend credibility to the



survey and its objectives. The e-mail inviting respondents to take the survey will be sent out mid-morning on Wednesday, April 2, and was closed on Friday, April 11 (see **Exhibit 9** for the complete survey). A reminder was included with an open house email that distributed on Thursday, April 10<sup>th</sup>. Questions were designed for attitude rating with fixed-alternative category and numerical scales. Drawing from past e-mail marketing experience, the team has chosen to conduct the survey at this time and day of the week to achieve the best response rate.

The team plans to conduct the survey using the Zoomerang online survey tool. Based on past experience, we anticipate a 2% completion rate, achieving 44 completed surveys. We also expect a slightly higher (5%) click-through-rate (CTR) of 100 respondents. Please note that clicks are only counted the first time a respondent clicks on the survey link from the Zoomerang invitation, and will not be counted again with multiple visits (Zoomerang).

## **IX. DATA ANALYSIS**

The following section reviews each question in the GSU EMBA program survey and analyzes the response rate. The survey was active for ten days and received 84 clicks for a 3.8% click-through rate. Out of the 84 people who clicked through the e-mail, 64 people completed the full survey (2.9% completion rate), which met our 2% completion rate expectation.

As Stage II disclosed, our survey research objectives included:

- To learn how and why the Robinson EMBA program comes to be included in the prospective student's consideration set;
- To understand what drives prospective students to research and apply to alternative choices;
- To discover these alternative choices and their perceived advantages.

Based on the fact that these respondents already reached out to the EMBA program, we surmised that they initially wanted to learn more about MBA programs, which represents the first phase in the buyer behavior process: need arousal (Assael). The survey questions are thus designed to extract more details on the second, third and fourth phases of this process in order to make accurate recommendations on how to increase applicant enrollment.



**Question 1: What was your main reason for initially reaching out to the Georgia State University (GSU) Executive MBA program?**

Option	Number of Responses	Percentage
<b>I was researching all Atlanta-area MBA programs (EMBA, Part-time MBA, Professional MBA, etc.)</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>53%</b>
I was researching all Atlanta-area Executive MBA programs	14	22%
I was researching all MBA programs, regardless of location	3	5%
Impulse/curiosity	5	8%
Other	8	12%
Total	64	100%

This first question seeks to understand the respondents' preferences for an MBA program. For instance, are they interested in all MBA programs or just EMBA programs in particular? Are they focusing their research on just Atlanta area schools? Learning more about how potential students search for information – the second phase in the buyer behavior process (“consumer information processing”) – will lead to more customized marketing strategies in the future (Assael).

As demonstrated by the Question 1 chart above, 34 out of 64 respondents (53%) indicated that in their initial researching efforts, they were interested in all MBA programs. The question also revealed that location played a role in their decision-making, with 48 total respondents (75%) limiting searches to Atlanta area schools. To note, eight out of the 64 respondents cited “other” reasons for reaching out to the GSU EMBA program, including “exploring long term career plan options” (Zoomerang).

**Question 2: Which of the following initially prompted you to consider the GSU Executive MBA program (please choose one)?**

Option	Number of Responses	Percentage
Print advertisement	3	5%
Billboard	0	0%
Radio	5	8%
Mailing	7	11%
GSU online site	16	25%
Banner ad on another site	1	2%
<b>Word of mouth</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>32%</b>
News media	0	0%
I don't recall	11	17%
Total	63	100%

This second question seeks to understand what types of marketing influences have the greatest effect on potential students, and again represents the second phase of the Buyer





Behavior process: “consumer information processing” (Assael). Word of mouth ranked highest with 20 out of 63 respondents (32%). To note, respondents did not choose news media or billboards, but this result was not surprising, as these mediums are scarce within the GSU EMBA program’s marketing mix.

We recommend that the GSU EMBA program consider these responses when deciding how to best allocate marketing budget dollars. For example, with 16 out of 63 respondents (25%) citing the GSU online site as what initially prompted them to consider GSU’s EMBA program, then perhaps more money should be used to refresh the site and other online elements. In addition, many people stated they did not recall their first marketing exposure, which suggests that more pronounced marketing measures are needed to cut through the clutter and remain memorable. However, this result could also be an indication that the overall effectiveness and consistency of the integrated marketing mix precludes respondents from identifying a specific medium as most memorable.

**Question 3: *Are you currently, or have you ever been enrolled in an MBA program?***

Option	Number of Responses	Percentage
Yes	13	20%
<b>No</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>80%</b>
Total	64	100%

The main objective of this survey is to learn more about why respondents who inquired about the GSU EMBA program did not enroll, and therefore question 3 was a qualifier question to weed out those who are not enrolled in an MBA program. Only the respondents who answered “yes” qualified to take the rest of the survey.

The majority of respondents, 51 out of 64 total respondents (80%), answered “no” to this question, which indicates that the majority of potential students are still undecided. To convert these respondents into GSU EMBA students during the crucial decision making stage of the buyer behavior process, the GSU EMBA program should strategically target these respondents through direct marketing efforts as outlined in the following recommendations section.

**Question 4: What institution are you [or were you] enrolled in?**

Option	Number of Responses	Percentage
The Business School at Georgia Institute of Technology	0	0%
Georgia State University J. Mack Robinson College of Business	4	31%
Emory University Goizueta Business School	1	8%
University of Georgia Terry College of Business	0	0%
Kennesaw State University Coles College of Business	1	8%
A primarily online program	1	8%
<b>Other</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>46%</b>
Total	13	100%

This question helps us determine the other alternatives to consumption included in the respondents' consideration set. With four out of 13 respondents (31%) enrolling at GSU, it appears that other GSU MBA programs, such as the Professional and Flex MBA programs, also could be competitors. Therefore, we recommend conducting future research to determine the validity of this hypothesis. Six out of 13 respondents (46%) also indicated they enrolled in other programs that the EMBA department does not consider competitors. These other programs include the following:

- Devry University- (2 respondents)
- Kaplan University- online (1 respondent)
- Babson College (MA) (1 respondent)
- University of Miami (FL) (1 respondent)
- Clark-Atlanta University (GA) (1 respondent)

Based on these findings, the GSU EMBA program may want to widen their view of the competitive landscape.

**Question 5: What specific type of program are you [or were you] enrolled in?**

Program	Number of Responses	Percentage
Executive MBA	3	25%
Part-Time MBA (working part or full time)	7	58%
Full-Time MBA (not working)	2	17%
Total	12	100%

For Question 5, seven out of 12 respondents (58%) indicated they enrolled in a part-time MBA program, as opposed to an executive MBA program. Only three respondents enrolled in an EMBA program at another school (Kansas State University, Kaplan University and Clark-Atlanta University). Analysis of each individual survey response to questions four and five revealed the following:



School	EMBA	Part-Time MBA	Full-Time MBA	School Totals
The Business School at Georgia Institute of Technology				0
Georgia State University J. Mack Robinson College of Business		2	1	3
Emory University Goizueta Business School		1		1
University of Georgia Terry College of Business				0
Kennesaw State University Coles College of Business	1			1
Kaplan University (online)	1			1
Devry University		2		2
Babson College (MA)			1	1
University of Miami (FL)		1		1
Clark-Atlanta University	1			1
"A primarily online program"		1		1
<b>Program Totals</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>

Based on the above chart, it is evident that potential students' alternatives to consumption differed with the hypotheses. Initially, the GSU EMBA program considered Georgia Tech to be a main competitor; however, none of the 12 respondents are enrolled at Georgia Tech. Also, other GSU MBA programs were not considered a significant threat to the GSU EMBA program, but three of the 12 respondents enrolled in either the part-time (PMBA) or full-time (Flex MBA) programs. Therefore, the GSU EMBA alternatives to consumption consist of a wider consideration set than initially anticipated.

**Question 6: What were the primary factors that influenced you to enroll in that specific type of MBA program (choose up to five selections, in no particular order)?**

Option	Number of Responses	Percentage
Alumni/networking	4	31%
Career advancement	6	46%
Salary increase	4	31%
Career change	0	0%
Felt I would receive the most value for my money (ROI)	3	23%
<b>Wanted to increase my professional knowledge base</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>62%</b>
<b>Flexibility with my schedule</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>62%</b>
Leadership training	3	23%
Length of this particular program	4	31%
Company support/ tuition reimbursement available	1	8%
Electronic or blended (some electronic + classroom) learning	0	0%
Inclusion of specific, applicable industry knowledge	0	0%
Other	4	31%

Question 6 was designed to learn more about why potential students who initially expressed interest in the GSU EMBA program decided to enroll at another institution, which addresses the third stage of the buyer behavior process: “brand evaluation” (Assael). The following answers garnered the highest number of responses (8 each): “wanted to increase my professional knowledge base” and “flexibility with my schedule.” To note, three of the options received no responses: “career change,” “electronic or blended learning” and “inclusion of specific, applicable industry knowledge.” Also, four respondents answered “other,” and their comments are as follows:

- Focus on global business
- Entrepreneurial focus
- Multiple international residencies
- Increase professional knowledge base, employer discount

The responses to this question assist with understanding what attributes are most important to potential students, and what ultimately led them to their purchase decision, the fourth phase of the buyer behavior process (Assael). Initially, we believed that potential students were considering other EMBA programs as alternatives to consumption. However, the fact that flexibility ranks high, and the part-time MBA program was a popular response, suggests that potential students are choosing the part-time MBA program over the executive MBA program due to its flexibility.

**Question 7: Why did you decide not to enroll in the GSU Executive MBA program (choose up to five selections, in no particular order)?**

Option	Number of Responses	Percentage
I enrolled in a different GSU MBA program	2	15%
<b>I decided to enroll in an MBA program at another school</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>23%</b>
I did not think I was qualified	1	8%
I decided not to get an MBA altogether	0	0%
I decided to delay pursuing an MBA	1	8%
I could not afford the program	2	15%
GSU reputation	0	0%
I felt the program did not offer a quality education	0	0%
I felt the program had a lack of knowledgeable professors	0	0%
I moved away	0	0%
<b>The program was not flexible enough for my schedule</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>23%</b>
Drive time/location	1	8%
MBA courses were not specific/applicable enough for my company’s staff education expectations	0	0%
N/A	1	8%
Other	5	38%



Question 7 and Question 8 strategically coincide to get a complete understanding of why those who contacted the GSU EMBA program did not enroll. The same answers are listed for each, but the first question is more specific than the second. Question 7 asks why potential students did not choose the GSU EMBA program and Question 8 asks why they did not enroll in a MBA program at all.

For the specific question (Question 7), the majority of responses (5 responses, 38%) answered “other.” Here is a sampling of their comments:

- “I decided not to get another MBA (I did graduate).”
- “The Executive MBA was not available at that time.”
- “I preferred a full-time 2 year program.”
- “I did not have time to take GMAT.”
- “I decided to have my wife finish her Masters first.”

Flexibility (3 responses, 23%) again rated highly, and other popular responses included enrolling at another institution (3 responses, 23%), enrolling at another GSU program (2 responses, 15%) and affordability (2 responses, 15%).

**Question 8: Why did you decide not to enroll in an MBA program (choose up to five selections, in no particular order)?**

Option	Number of Responses	Percentage
I did not think I was qualified	6	12%
I decided not to get an MBA altogether	2	4%
<b>I decided to delay pursuing an MBA</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>43%</b>
I was not accepted into a program	0	0%
I could not afford the program(s)	16	31%
The programs did not offer a quality education	0	0%
There are no reputable schools in the Atlanta-area	0	0%
The local programs were not flexible enough for my schedule	4	8%
Drive time/locations of programs	4	8%
Atlanta-area programs had a lack of knowledgeable professors	0	0%
MBA courses were not specific/applicable enough for my company’s staff education expectations	0	0%
Other	23	45%

As previously discussed, Question 8 was a broader version of Question 7. Again, the “other” responses ranked the highest, with 23 total responses (45%), which included:

- “I am starting a new business and don’t have time.”
- “Realized probably not a good investment at my age.”
- “I’m applying to MBA programs now for Fall 2008.”



- “Considering a Law degree.”
- “I have not made my decision yet.”

Of the 23 total “other” responses, nine respondents indicated they were still considering applying, but had not made a decision. Many seemed to use the “other” response area as a way to justify delaying their decision, such as the following respondent: “unexpectedly had a baby, which delayed enrolling.”

As we also saw in Question 7, delaying an MBA (22 responses, 43%) and affordability (16 responses, 31%) were popular reasons for not enrolling in an MBA program.

**Question 9: Where did you initially apply to receive your EMBA (choose up to five selections, in no particular order)?**

Option	Number of Responses	Percentage
The Business School at Georgia Institute of Technology	1	12%
Georgia State University J. Mack Robinson College of Business	3	38%
Emory University Goizueta Business School	2	25%
University of Georgia Terry College of Business	2	25%
Kennesaw State University Coles College of Business	2	25%
A primarily online program	2	25%
Other	3	38%

This question further analyzes the competitive landscape by asking where potential students applied for their EMBA. “Other” was among the highest responses (3 respondents, 38%):

- Kaplan University
- Clark Atlanta University (GA)
- Have not applied

GSU was tied with “other” at 38% (3 respondents). Emory, UGA, Kennesaw, and an online program each had two responses (25%). Initially, the GSU EMBA program did not consider Kennesaw State a significant competitor; however, again it appears that the competitive landscape is broader than expected.

**Question 10: What were the primary factors that influenced you to enroll in your chosen school (choose up to five selections, in no particular order)?**

Option	Number of Responses	Percentage
Alumni/networking	3	30%
Career advancement/ career change	3	30%
Salary increase	3	30%
Felt I would receive the most value for my money (ROI)	5	50%
Price of this particular program was within my budget	1	10%
<b>Flexibility with my schedule</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>70%</b>
Leadership training	3	30%
Length of this particular program	4	40%
Location of this particular program	5	50%
Quality of education at this school	4	40%
Quality of faculty at this school	1	10%
Company support/ tuition reimbursement available	0	0%
Electronic or blended (some electronic + classroom) learning	0	0%
Strength in specific, applicable industry knowledge (such as IT)	0	0%
Other	1	10%

Question 10 provides a deeper understanding of competitor analysis by identifying primary factors that influenced potential students to enroll in their chosen institution. Flexibility led the answers with seven responses, and continues to be an important issue to this group of respondents. Also, location and return on investment each had five responses. To note, one respondent answered “other” and indicated “multiple international residencies” as the influence to enroll in another institution.

**Question 11: How are you paying for your MBA education (please choose one)?**

Option	Number of Responses	Percentage
Full tuition reimbursement from my company	2	15%
Partial tuition reimbursement from my company	4	31%
<b>No tuition reimbursement</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>54%</b>
TOTAL	13	100%

Since tuition reimbursement is believed to be a main reason why potential respondents choose other EMBA programs over the GSU EMBA program, this question was significant to test its validity. Seven out of 13 respondents (54%) answered that they did not receive tuition reimbursement, and therefore the cost of a program is likely an important factor to potential students. The GSU EMBA program is one of the least expensive EMBA programs in the Atlanta

areas; however, when compared to other MBA programs, specifically part-time MBA programs, it is *more* expensive.

**Question 12: What was your overall impression of GSU after considering it for your EMBA?**

Option	Number of Responses	Percentage
<b>Extremely liked GSU</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>58%</b>
Somewhat liked GSU	4	33%
Neutral	1	8%
Somewhat disliked GSU	0	0%
Extremely disliked GSU	0	0%
TOTAL	12	99%

In analyzing GSU’s reputation, the majority of respondents (7 of 12; 58%) indicated they “extremely liked GSU.” To note, not one respondent said they “somewhat” or “extremely disliked GSU.” The GSU EMBA program and school’s reputation therefore appears to be solid. This finding is important, since – as the next question uncovered – school reputation and the quality of a school’s education and faculty are extremely important to these potential students.

**Question 13: Please rate the importance for each of the following in its relation to the GSU Executive MBA program, using a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning not at all important and 5 meaning extremely important:**

Not at all important → Extremely important

Option	1	2	3	4	5	Total Responses
Alumni/ networking	1	1	2	3	5	12
<b>Schedule flexibility</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	12
Length of program	0	1	2	4	5	12
Location	0	0	1	6	5	12
<b>Quality of education</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	12
<b>Quality of faculty</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	11
Price	1	0	2	5	3	11
Return on investment	0	0	2	5	5	12
<b>School reputation</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	12
Applicability of specific trade knowledge	0	0	6	5	1	12

For Question 13, respondents were asked to rate the importance of a variety of attributes related to the GSU EMBA program to determine what is most valuable to them. Of the attributes that received a ‘5’ rating (extremely important), “quality of education” and “quality of faculty”





received the highest number of responses (9 responses). In terms of a ‘5’ rating, “school reputation” (7 responses) and “schedule flexibility” (6 responses) also ranked high. “Applicability of specific trade knowledge” was not an important consideration, and received an average of a ‘3’ rating.

The two respondents who chose GSU’s part-time MBA program both rated “schedule flexibility” as extremely important. Flexibility repeatedly shows up as an important attribute to these potential students. Combined with the seven respondents who chose “flexibility with my schedule” as a leading reason they did not choose the GSU EMBA program, another EMBA program option may be needed to increase enrollment. Emory University, for example, offers both a modular and weekend EMBA program. Further recommendations will be presented in the next section.

**Question 14: *What do you value most when choosing a graduate school (choose up to five selections, in no particular order)?***

Option	Number of Responses	Percentage
Alumni/ networking opportunities	4	33%
Ability to advance my career	6	50%
Ability to increase my salary	2	17%
Ability to change careers altogether	1	8%
<b>Extending professional knowledge base</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>75%</b>
Leadership training	5	42%
Length of this particular program	3	25%
Location	4	33%
<b>Quality of education</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>75%</b>
Quality of faculty	5	42%
Price	1	8%
Return on investment	3	25%
School reputation	4	33%
Tuition reimbursement	1	8%
Applicability of specific trade knowledge	0	0%

Question 14 piggybacked on the previous question to determine overall value in choosing a graduate school. Based on the data, “quality of education” and “extending professional knowledge base” are the most popular, with nine responses each. Interesting to note, this same question was asked in a survey to the GSU EMBA Class of 2008, and the results were the same. Since quality of education and extending professional knowledge base are valuable to potential students, the GSU EMBA program should emphasize these attributes in their marketing efforts to maximize potential return.

The following questions were not mandatory and used to compile additional demographical information on the respondents.

**Question 15: Where do you live?**

Option	Number of Responses	Percentage
Atlanta (city)	2	15%
<b>Atlanta Northeast and Dunwoody area suburbs</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>31%</b>
Atlanta Northwest suburbs	2	15%
Atlanta South side suburbs	1	8%
Cumming, Alpharetta and Roswell areas	3	23%
Other Atlanta area	0	0%
Outside the state of Georgia	0	0%
Outside the U.S.*	1	8%
Total	12	92%

\*The respondent who lives outside the U.S. indicated he/she resides in London, England.

Location was important to this project due to the GSU EMBA program's relocation to Buckhead and the subsequent increase in Cumming, Georgia, applicants. Based on this data, the respondents mainly live in the Atlanta area, with only one outlier residing outside the U.S. The majority of respondents (4 respondents; 31%) live in Northeast Atlanta and the Dunwoody area suburbs. Three respondents (23%) live in the Cumming, Alpharetta, and Roswell areas.

**Question 16: What is your age?**

Age Range	Number of Responses	Percentage
Under 18	0	0%
19-24	0	0%
25-30	2	15%
<b>31-36</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>31%</b>
37-42	3	23%
43-48	1	8%
49-54	2	15%
55+	1	8%
Total	13	100%

The GSU EMBA Class of 2008 statistics note the average age of applicants to be 38 years old. The respondents of this survey appear to be in this target age range, since the majority of respondents are between 31 and 36 years old (31%) and 37 and 42 years old (23%).



**Question 17: How many years of work experience do you have?**

Years	Number of Responses	Percentage
None	0	0%
1-3	0	0%
4-6	1	8%
7-10	4	31%
11-15	3	23%
<b>16+</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>38%</b>
Total	13	100%

Similar to the previous question, all but one respondent qualifies for the GSU EMBA program based on the requirement of seven or more years of full-time work experience. The Class of 2008 also has an average of 15 years work experience. The majority of respondents had seven or more years of experience, with 16+ generating the largest number of responses (5 responses; 38%).

**Question 18: What is your gender?**

Gender	Number of Responses	Percentage
<b>Female</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>54%</b>
Male	6	46%
Total	13	100%

The GSU EMBA program Class of 2008 profile is 74% males and 26% females. As indicated above, the survey results show opposite results, since seven of the 13 respondents (54%) are females and six respondents (46%) are male. This contradiction indicates that while men currently dominate the GSU EMBA program population, females may offer an opportunity to increase applicants. The GSU EMBA program therefore should consider making more deliberate efforts to target female potential students with future marketing efforts.

**X. RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION**

The survey results differed slightly from what we expected based on our research objectives and hypotheses. The greatest difference concerned our initial belief that local EMBA programs were largely responsible for taking market share from the GSU EMBA program. Instead, the research results suggest that the majority (80%) of respondents did not choose a competitor to the GSU EMBA program. The real reason for not applying arises from deciding to postpone or not to pursue graduate degrees. Our team’s assumption was that this competition was the main barrier to the GSU EMBA program’s increased market share, so we allowed this to direct the questionnaire’s structure. Therefore, if respondents answered “no” to enrolment with a



GSU EMBA program competitor, this operated as the skip question that ended the survey and precluded respondents from answering the remaining questions.

The survey findings regarding enrollment delays, however, are compatible with our secondary research findings, revealing a one-year plus, high involvement purchase cycle for EMBA program potential students. We recommend that the GSU EMBA program employ a multi-touch prospect retention strategy including direct contact by phone, email and mailings. The GSU EMBA program should measure return on investment of such direct marketing efforts by sending potential students to a specially created vanity site to measure impressions and clicks.

Respondents who enrolled with a competitor cited flexibility as a valuable attribute in pursuing their graduate degree. In response to this finding, our team recommends that the GSU EMBA program incorporate greater flexibility into the program and further promotes this to the target market. For example, UGA offers a modular EMBA program; students meet less in person, including meeting on Friday evening instead of the full day. This allows students to not sacrifice a day of work. Implementing such measures would allow the GSU EMBA program to be more competitive with its other MBA programs, such as the Flexible and the Professional MBA programs. To note, nine out of the 12 respondents who enrolled with a GSU EMBA competitor chose an MBA program rather than an EMBA program. And most significantly, more respondents (three out of 12) enrolled at GSU than any competing school. Ironically, primary data suggests that the GSU EMBA program's host institution was its main competitor.

Another research objective was to discover why prospects initially considered the GSU EMBA program. This question was asked directly to respondents, and 34 of 64 (53%) respondents said they considered the GSU EMBA program because they were investigating all Atlanta-area MBA programs, as opposed to exclusively EMBA programs. This response in combination with the previously mentioned findings lead us to recommend more utilitarian information be made available online and through direct marketing channels to distinctively differentiate the EMBA program from alternative MBA programs. Through such differentiation, the GSU EMBA program should specifically highlight the program's flexibility because respondents noted this attribute to be heavily weighted in their decision making process.

The GSU EMBA program should leverage its online assets, since respondents indicated that it is the most popular way to gather information about the different programs. To do this, the GSU EMBA program should collaborate with the university's other MBA programs and



reorganize its current websites so that each of its individual microsites exist through a shared landing page. This landing page should be designed so that the page looks clean and clearly provides information about each program in an organized fashion; the content and the differences between each program should be easy to understand. Individual links to each GSU MBA program's microsite should also be easily located so that users can click through to get more information. In addition, we encourage the GSU EMBA program's site to better emphasize a component to its microsite for potential students to enter their contact information to learn more about the program. Such contact information allows the program to increase the effectiveness of its direct marketing efforts and ultimately increase the number of applications.

Our team also recommends that the GSU EMBA program increase its awareness campaign. The majority of respondents chose to delay purchase rather than choosing an outright competitor, and this data suggests that increasing its number of prospects may be more profitable than improving prospect-to-sales conversion; awareness is essential for such success. Currently, competing EMBA programs such as Georgia Tech and UGA are advertised via multiple billboards in Atlanta; the GSU EMBA program does not currently have any billboards posted.

Initially, our team did not consider Kennesaw State to be a significant threat based on the advisement of the GSU EMBA program. However, our survey results proved that the same amount of prospects (two respondents) applied to EMBA programs at Emory, UGA and Kennesaw State. Kennesaw State's EMBA program headquarters is at the Cobb Galleria, only eight miles from the GSU EMBA program at Buckhead Center. We recommend that the GSU EMBA program include Kennesaw State among its significant competitors and include Kennesaw State in future research to learn more about why it is attractive to potential students. Such efforts will assist the GSU EMBA program in adjusting its marketing program to better target potential students to increase applications.

In theory, increased advertising should help strengthen advertising campaigns to break through the clutter; however, the survey showed that word of mouth was the most popular awareness driver (20 out of 63 responses; 32%). Since we have established the EMBA degree to be a high involvement product, we recommend that the GSU EMBA program implement a push marketing strategy directed at Atlanta-based corporations. The GSU EMBA program should visit the employers of its current students and alumni, and work with these companies to tap into employees who may be interested in the program. To supplement these direct selling efforts,



literature should be made available containing basic information, similar to what we recommended for the GSU EMBA program website.

As a university obligation, GSU's technical service department implemented our survey through its Zoomerang account, which altered important settings (such as making a question mandatory) and compromised the integrity of our results. We recommend that the GSU EMBA program request full control of implementing and distributing its online surveys in the future to ensure the best results possible. In regards to future research, the GSU EMBA program should continue its annual research, such as the entry class surveys. This survey has revealed important findings such as the value of flexibility as a program attribute and competition from Kennesaw State and even GSU itself. Therefore, our team recommends that the GSU EMBA program should consider using small focus groups to gain a more intimate understanding of these issues, customer needs and the competitive landscape. In addition, future online surveys should be conducted to understand what causes prospects to delay enrollment.



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## XII. APPENDIX

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### Exhibit 1: Marketing Survey Analysis Results - EMBA Class of 2008

*Among the most popular media outlets for candidates are:*

- Business news publications (47% in 2007 and 2008 classes read *AJC Business* or *Business Week*)
- Radio listening during morning and afternoon drives (**WSB 750 AM**, 40% of 2007 and 2008 classes; and satellite radio, 37%)
- The Internet is an important information source for them. In fact, candidates learned of the EMBA online, more than from any other method (38% for 2007 and 2008).

*The most important values to candidates regarding the GSU RCB EMBA include:*

- Location (50% of survey respondents chose this as a “Major” importance to their purchase decision)
- Price (40% of 2007 and 2008 classes chose this as at least a “Somewhat Major” importance)

*Additional values cited by candidates regarding the EMBA include (qualitative remarks not statistically measured):*

- Accreditation/word of mouth reputation
- Scheduling
- Global focus
- Peer relationships

### Exhibit 2: EMBA Programs- Current Student Profiles:

EMBA Programs - Atlanta - Current Student Profiles					
	GSU	Emory - Modular	Emory - Weekend	UGA	Georgia Tech
% Male	74%	62%	85%	80%	89%
% Female	26%	38%	15%	20%	11%
Average Age	38	37	35	37	37
Average Years of Work Experience	15	13	12	14.5	14
% International	23%	6%	8%	<i>Not provided</i>	5%
% Advanced Degrees	17%	38%	12%	<i>Not provided</i>	13%





**Exhibit 3: Current GSU EMBA Student Employers:**

- ADP
- AGL Resources
- Cisco Systems
- Coca-Cola Company
- The Home Depot
- Georgia-Pacific
- UPS
- SunTrust Corporation
- Georgia Power
- Marriott International
- BellSouth Corporation
- Wachovia Bank
- Delta Air Lines
- Equifax
- State of Georgia
- Cox Communications
- Sprint
- Cingular Wireless

**Exhibit 4: EMBA Programs- Atlanta- Other Programs Considered:**

<b>EMBA Programs - Atlanta - Other Programs Considered</b>			
<b>2007</b>		<b>2008</b>	
<b>Emory:</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>Emory:</b>	<b>62%</b>
UGA:	31%	GA Tech:	26%
PMBA:	27%	None:	18%
GA Tech:	23%	UGA:	15%
Mercer:	19%	Kennesaw:	15%
GSU Flex:	15%	PMBA:	13%
Kennesaw:	15%	GSU Flex:	10%
Other:	8%	Mercer:	8%
None:	8%	Other:	8%



**Exhibit 5: Emory University- Modular & Weekend EMBA Programs:**

TWO EXECUTIVE MBA FORMATS		
	MODULAR EMBA	WEEKEND EMBA
CLASS SCHEDULE	Quarterly week-long residencies (learning modules)	Courses on alternating Fridays/Saturdays, with some Thursdays
COURSES PER TERM	Two to four courses	Four to five courses
DURATION	Nine residencies; 21 months to complete	Four terms; 16 months to complete
CLASSROOM LEARNING	70%	95%
DISTANCE LEARNING	30%	5%
INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM	Yes	Yes
ORIENTATION	August	December
START DATE	August (each year)	January (each year)

**Exhibit 6: EMBA Programs- Atlanta- Current Student Profiles:**

EMBA Programs - Atlanta – Competitive Landscape					
	GSU	Emory - Modular	Emory - Weekend	UGA	Georgia Tech
Program Length	16 months	21 months	16 months	18 months	17 months
Tuition Cost	\$58,500	\$88,000 or \$96,000* *includes residency	\$92,000	\$65,000	\$69,000
Location	Buckhead	Emory University Campus, Atlanta	Emory University Campus, Atlanta	Buckhead	Georgia Tech Campus, Downtown
Current (Known) Marketing Efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet site, banner ads, e-mail, paid search</li> <li>• Direct Mail</li> <li>• Radio Ads</li> <li>• Outdoor billboards &amp; kiosks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet site, banner ads, e-mail, paid search</li> <li>• Direct Mail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet site, banner ads, e-mail, paid search</li> <li>• Direct Mail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet site, banner ads, e-mail, paid search</li> <li>• Direct Mail</li> <li>• Radio ads</li> <li>• Billboards</li> <li>• Magazine ads</li> <li>• Newspaper ads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet site, banner ads, e-mail, paid search</li> <li>• Direct Mail/Letters</li> <li>• Radio ads</li> <li>• Billboards</li> <li>• Magazine ads</li> </ul>



**Exhibit 7: Executive MBA Descriptions, Per Respective School Web Sites**

<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>BUSINESS SCHOOL DESCRIPTION</b>
Emory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· “The Goizueta Difference” · Superior education · Highly engaged and close-knit community · Distinctive and nationally recognized approach to leadership development · Top 20 research university · Access to many of the world's most recognizable names in business, located minutes away from campus → unique advantages unmatched by any other · Small class sizes · Students get to know professors personally · Globally recognized faculty · Faculty have taught at the finest MBA programs around the world · World class leadership development · Dedicated to educating principled leaders</li> </ul>
UGA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Consistently ranked in the Top 50 among all MBA programs in the United States by such major publications as <i>U.S. News &amp; World Report</i>, <i>Business Week</i>, <i>Financial Times</i>, and <i>The Wall Street Journal</i> · Terry MBA students participate in many national competitions each year</li> </ul>
Ga. Tech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Intersection of business and technology · Strength in entrepreneurship &amp; technology · Innovation grounds students in critical thinking · Teaches performance in highly technical &amp; global environments · Cultural diversity of inter-disciplinary curriculum · Relevant solutions to world problems</li> </ul>



**Exhibit 8: Decision Statement Translation Process (Zikmund)**

*Georgia State University J. Mack Robinson College of Business Executive MBA program*

Firm's Situation	Symptoms	Probable Problem	Decision Statement	Research Objectives	Research Questions	Research Hypothesis
The program wants to better understand its loss of market share, and how it can improve the number of qualified applicants who apply to the program each year.	Many potential applicants contact the GSU EMBA program, but ultimately do not apply.	<b>Awareness:</b> GSU has a lot of awareness and positive reputation - but these may not clearly extend to EMBA.	Why do potential students who express interest in the Executive MBA program at Georgia State University ultimately choose not to attend this top-ranked institution?	Use the Executive MBA program's current database of potential students that contacted the Robinson EMBA Program to learn how and why the GSU EMBA program was originally included in their consideration set.	What are the most significant factors that detract potential applicants from enrolling in the GSU EMBA program?	Reputation is positively related to EMBA enrollment.
	The number of direct competitors (local and/or online universities offering EMBA programs) is growing.	<b>Location:</b> Atlanta is one of the highest cities for job commute times, so the location of a potential school could deter potential applicants who already spend a lot of time in their cars.	What are the greatest prohibiting factors for GSU RCB EMBA enrollment?	If these potential students did choose a competitor, our team aims to learn more about what they most value in an MBA program to make recommendations on possible improvements to increase GSU's EMBA applicant pool.	What competitors are the greatest threats to GSU's EMBA market share and why? (What are the prospects' perceived advantages for these alternatives?)	Emory, Ga. Tech and UGA steal EMBA market share from GSU (for reasons of location and reputation).
	GSU EMBA market share is reducing.	<b>Cost:</b> The GSU EMBA program, at \$58,500, is more expensive than alternative MBA programs at GSU.*		Gather information on alternative choices and their perceived advantages - whether choosing a different school than GSU, or not pursuing an MBA at all.	What are the most significant factors that potential GSU EMBA applicants value when enrolling in an MBA program?	Cost and location are positively related to EMBA enrollment.
		<b>Time:</b> GSU's EMBA program requires candidates to take one full day off work twice a month. Local competition offers schedules that require less classroom time.				Scheduling flexibility is positively related to EMBA enrollment.



## Exhibit 9: Survey Questions

### 1. What was your main reason for initially reaching out to the Georgia State University (GSU) Executive MBA program?

- a. I was researching all Atlanta-area MBA programs (EMBA, Part-time MBA, Professional MBA, etc.)
- b. I was researching all Atlanta-area *Executive* MBA programs
- c. I was researching all MBA programs, regardless of location
- d. Impulse/curiosity
- e. Other (please explain):

### 2. Which of the following initially prompted you to consider the GSU Executive MBA program (please choose one)?

- a. Print advertisement
- b. Billboard
- c. Radio
- d. Mailing
- e. GSU Website
- f. Banner ad on another Web site
- g. Word of mouth
- h. News media
- i. I don't recall

### 3. Are you currently, or have you ever been enrolled in an MBA program?

- a. Yes (go to Q3a – 3c, skip Q3e, continue to Q4)
- b. No (go to Q3e, skip Q3a – 3d, and end survey)

#### 3a. If YES to Q3: What institution are you [or were you] enrolled in?

- a. The Business School at Georgia Institute of Technology
- b. Georgia State University J. Mack Robinson College of Business
- c. Emory University Goizueta Business School
- d. University of Georgia Terry College of Business
- e. Kennesaw State University Coles College of Business
- f. A primarily online program (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- g. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

#### 3b. If YES to Q3 : What specific type of program are you [or were you] enrolled in?

- a. Executive MBA
- b. Part-Time MBA (working part or full time)
- c. Full-Time MBA (not working)



**3c. What were the primary factors that influenced you to enroll in that specific type of MBA program (choose up to five selections, in no particular order)?**

- a. Alumni/networking
- b. Career advancement
- c. Salary increase
- d. Career change
- e. Felt I would receive the most value for my money (ROI)
- f. Wanted to increase my professional knowledge base
- g. Flexibility with my schedule
- h. Leadership training
- i. Length of this particular program
- j. Company support/ tuition reimbursement available
- k. Electronic or blended (some electronic and some classroom) learning
- l. Inclusion of specific, applicable industry knowledge (such as IT)
- m. Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

**3d. If YES to Q3: Why did you decide *not* to enroll in the GSU Executive MBA program (choose up to five selections, in no particular order)?**

- a. I enrolled in a different GSU MBA program
- b. I decided to enroll in an MBA program at another school
- c. I did not think I was qualified
- d. I decided not to get an MBA altogether
- e. I decided to delay pursuing an MBA
- f. I could not afford the program
- g. GSU reputation
- h. I felt the program did not offer a quality education
- i. I felt the program had a lack of knowledgeable professors
- j. I moved away
- k. The program was not flexible enough for my schedule
- l. Drive time/location
- m. MBA courses were not specific/applicable enough for my company's staff education expectations
- n. N/A
- o. Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_



3e. If NO: **Why did you decide *not* to enroll in an MBA program (choose up to five selections, in no particular order)?**

- a. I did not think I was qualified
- b. I decided not to get an MBA altogether
- c. I decided to delay pursuing an MBA
- d. I was not accepted into a program
- e. I could not afford the program(s)
- f. The programs did not offer a quality education
- g. There are no reputable schools in the Atlanta-area
- h. The local programs were not flexible enough for my schedule
- i. Drive time/locations of programs
- j. Atlanta-area programs had a lack of knowledgeable professors
- k. MBA courses were not specific/applicable enough for my company's staff education expectations
- l. Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

4. **Where did you initially apply to receive your EMBA (choose up to five selections, in no particular order)?**

- a. The Business School at Georgia Institute of Technology
- b. Georgia State University J. Mack Robinson College of Business
- c. Emory University Goizueta Business School
- d. University of Georgia Terry College of Business
- e. Kennesaw State University Coles College of Business
- f. A primarily online program (please name): \_\_\_\_\_
- g. Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

5. **What were the primary factors that influenced you to enroll in your chosen school (choose up to five selections, in no particular order)?**

- a. Alumni/networking
- b. Career advancement/ career change
- c. Salary increase
- d. Felt I would receive the most value for my money (ROI)
- e. Price of this particular program was within my budget
- f. Flexibility with my schedule
- g. Leadership training
- h. Length of this particular program
- i. Location of this particular program
- j. Quality of education at this school
- k. Quality of faculty at this school
- l. Company support/ tuition reimbursement available
- m. Electronic or blended (some electronic and some classroom) learning
- n. Strength in specific, applicable industry knowledge (such as IT)
- o. Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_



**6. How are you paying for your MBA education (please choose one)?**

- a. Full tuition reimbursement from my company
- b. Partial tuition reimbursement from my company
- c. No tuition reimbursement

**7. What was your overall impression of GSU after considering it for your EMBA?**

- a. Extremely liked GSU
- b. Somewhat liked GSU
- c. Neutral
- d. Somewhat disliked GSU
- e. Extremely disliked GSU (if so, why) \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Please rate the importance for each of the following in its relation to the GSU Executive MBA program, using a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning not at all important and 5 meaning extremely important:**

- 1 2 3 4 5 Alumni/networking
- 1 2 3 4 5 Schedule flexibility
- 1 2 3 4 5 Length of program
- 1 2 3 4 5 Location
- 1 2 3 4 5 Quality of education
- 1 2 3 4 5 Quality of faculty
- 1 2 3 4 5 Price
- 1 2 3 4 5 Return on investment
- 1 2 3 4 5 School reputation
- 1 2 3 4 5 Applicability of specific trade knowledge

**9. What do you value most when choosing a graduate school (choose up to five selections, in no particular order)?**

- a. Alumni/networking opportunities
- b. Ability to advance my career
- c. Ability to increase my salary
- d. Ability to change careers altogether
- e. Extending professional knowledge base
- f. Leadership training
- g. Length of program
- h. Location
- i. Quality of education
- j. Quality of faculty
- k. Price
- l. Return on Investment
- m. School Reputation
- n. Tuition Reimbursement
- o. Applicability of specific trade knowledge





The following questions are optional:

**10. Where do you live?**

- a. Atlanta (city)
- b. Atlanta Northeast and Dunwoody area suburbs
- c. Atlanta Northwest suburbs
- d. Atlanta South side suburbs
- e. Cumming, Alpharetta and Roswell areas
- f. Other Atlanta area (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- g. Outside the state of Georgia (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- h. Outside the U.S. (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**11. What is your age?**

- a. Under 18
- b. 19-24
- c. 25-30
- d. 31-36
- e. 37-42
- f. 43-48
- g. 49-54
- h. 55+

**12. How many years of work experience do you have?**

- a. None
- b. 1-3 years
- c. 4-6 years
- d. 7-10 years
- e. 11-15 years
- f. 16+ years

**13. What is your gender?**

- a. Female
- b. Male

