

COMPETITIVE PAPERS

Online Lectures and the Marketing Classroom: To What Degree is Self-Discipline Necessary to Succeed?

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Abstract

Use of online curriculum in higher education experienced a rapid growth in the early part of the 21st century but has leveled off some in the past few years. In 2015, a survey tracking academic officer views of online education found that perceptions were positive in general, but there were some perceived drawbacks. Enrollment in online courses is still growing, but growth rates are lower than in previous years. In addition, the percentage of academic leaders who perceived online education as the same or better than classroom education has dropped somewhat, though at 74% is still quite high.. Some believe online delivery may be more amenable to graduate education because these learners generally have greater practice in self-regulation and in acquiring learning strategies (e.g. Arbaugh 2014, Comer & Lenaghan 2013). In addition, there has been no increase in the majority of those surveyed who feel there is a lack of “value and legitimacy” of online education” and that students need more discipline to succeed in online coursework (Allen & Seaman 2015). Using in-class data, this research takes a look at whether such growing pessimism is justified.

Elements of the online environment, such as CMS distribution of grades and feedback to students, can be added to enhance a marketing course. In general students seem to like these resources and use them, especially in regard to offering quick responses for grades, though when it comes to replacing in-class interaction with either the instructor or students there are both perceived strengths and weaknesses (Jackson & Helms 2008). For example, on the one hand pre-recorded lectures can be a valuable resource for students if they are offered as a supplement in face-to-face classrooms, but not all students will use them (Wieling, & Hofman 2008).

On the other hand, if they are used as a substitute for in-class lecture in a hybrid class, will it be beneficial to student learning? What will the impact be on comprehension and learning? Referring to the concerns reflected by academic officials and instructors (Allen & Seaman 2015), will only students who have a significant degree of self-discipline be able to take advantage of such classes? Will others be at a disadvantage? This exploratory research examines these questions.

Data was collected for this pilot study from one section of a hybrid marketing research course (N = 27) at a large public university in the Southwestern United States. This course is taken after general education requirements have been completed in the first two years and a basic marketing course has been taken.

Data were collected at the beginning of the semester.

Results suggest that concerns regarding high levels of self-discipline needed for online learning may not be justified. Self-discipline may be no more important for students to succeed for online coursework than it is for them to master in-class assignments. Students who have more self-discipline at first did better on quizzes that were based on online material. Perhaps they were better able to discipline themselves to download and listen to the pre-recorded presentations.

On the other hand, spontaneity grew more important than self-discipline, and had a large positive impact on the third and fourth quiz scores. This finding is somewhat counterintuitive, but not as surprising as it might seem at first. Once people are used to using them, segments of a course that are online offer a high degree of flexibility. They can be viewed at any time, ideal for procrastinators, and almost any place. This would seem to give the advantage to students who value flexibility and spontaneity. More work needs to be done in this area given the results and the small number of data points.

References Available upon Request