DEVELOPING AND TEACHING AN ONLINE UNDERGRADUATE MARKETING RESEARCH CLASS

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ABSTRACT

This MEA 2010 special session seeks to ascribe, in great detail experience of developing and teaching an online Marketing Research class for undergraduate students. The class was taught for the first time during Summer 2009 and will be repeated in Summer 2010.

BASIC STRUCTURE

The online class is built on a series of html PowerPoint presentations. The professor adopted a very well-regarded and established undergraduate-level Marketing Research textbook. This came with a series of PowerPoint presentations. These were modified and enhanced using the professor's own examples and experiences from nearly 20 years of teaching Marketing Research to undergraduate and graduate students as well as consulting activities. Finally, the topics were combined into 12 modules and placed on the Blackboard platform.

UNIQUE FEATURE: AUDIO+VIDEOS

The online class features several unique aspects. The most prominent of these is the use of nearly 50 Audio+Video segments, produced in the professor's office with the invaluable help of Camtasia software and the Samson USB mic. These A+Vs literally walk the students through topics traditionally regarded as "more difficult", by students from an understanding perspective and by faculty from a teaching perspective. Currently, the featured AV topics include: basic data analysis (frequencies, means,

breakdown of means, cross tabs, Pearson correlation and partial correlation), and simple regression. In every instance, datasets that either came with the book or belong to the professor are actually analyzed from scratch and explained via audio, while the students watch what exactly happens on the computer screen, in digital quality. The A+V segments come with DVD-like controls, allowing replay, rewind, fast forward etc. The professor did not have the luxury of hiring help and ended up doing everything from scratch. This contributed to somewhat crude looks, but a relatively user- friendly result.

Another set of A+Vs deal with a different kind of problem solving, such as those involved in calculating sample sizes and confidence intervals. For this, the Wacom writing tablet, originally designed for digital artists, was roped in as an "online overhead projector". The stylus of the tablet served as a pen and the output was combined with electronic (pdf) versions of standard statistical tables (that came with the book) to create the Camtasia A+V lessons.

A third series of A+Vs were recorded with the help of former colleagues and on-campus experts to explain key concepts in designing and implementing focus groups and illustrating the use of the electronic library (using the examples of ABI-Inform and Lexis-Nexis).

UNIQUE FEATURE: WEB SURVEY

As part of the course, the students designed and implemented an online survey. For this, they made use of the site-licensed Web Surveyor software. Online chat rooms and discussion areas were made available and many of the students made excellent use of these resources to ask questions while designing their individual surveys. The best among these was selected by the professor and placed online for data collection. The resulting dataset was analyzed by the class using SPSS student version. In Summer 2010, Web Surveyor will be replaced by the recently licensed Qualtrics.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Student performance is graded through four Graded Assignments and two exams. The graded assignments are: (GA1) An orientation exercise for SPSS student version. (GA2) A secondary sources assignment to build familiarity for the survey design project, (GA3) Design and then implement an online survey for online data collection. (GA4) Basic data analysis and charting of the GA3 survey data, involving frequencies, means, correlations and cross-tabs.

It is the professor's firm belief that completely fool-proof mechanisms do not yet exist for online

examinations. Therefore, students were required to come to campus for the mid-term and final examinations. Proctored exams at alternative locations were also allowed. Likewise, the professor has previously experienced and therefore does not want e-mail attachment problems. Students are required to submit hard copies of the assignments for grading, either through a physical locked drop box outside the professor's office OR via US mail/alternative courier services. The graded assignments are mailed back to them in the same manner. This has worked well thus far, perhaps since the class size is small.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

The professor administered an end-of-the-semester custom online survey about the class experience. Student feedback about the class was very positive.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The sometimes very frustrating experience of developing the course has been, in the professor's opinion, already offset by the very positive experience of actually teaching it. At the MEA 2010 special session, the professor plans to make a very detailed presentation, where colleagues can "see" all aspects of the online class, ask questions and obtain clarifications. Assuming access to the Internet in the conference room, they can even see the class "as implemented".