

Student perceptions of the effectiveness of computer-based telecommunications in the sport management classroom

Andy Gillentine, University of Miami

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Abstract 334**

Internet telecommunication is one of the most powerful evolving educational technologies. Previous research indicates that the use of computer-based technology in the classroom has a positive impact on student performance (Krentler & Willis-Flurry, 2005). Additionally, it has been suggested that the use of computer-based technologies in the classroom may also help to equip students with the technological skills being demanded in the modern day workplace (Tynan, 2006; Coles & Liptrap, 2007). The rapid development and implementation of telecommunication formats into the educational environment has far surpassed the availability of information examining user perceptions regarding the effectiveness of these formats as educational tools. The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the perceptions of sport management students regarding electronic delivery and use of on-line materials. Specifically, the utilization of podcasts and blogs was investigated.

A podcast is a digital audio file posted to an online journal (blog) or website for playback on portable media players and personal computers. The online materials (podcasts and blogs) utilized in this study were specifically designed to augment classroom lectures and expand the student's understanding and application of course concepts. The computer generated materials allowed for the introduction of video and audio, as well as text and graphic materials to further expand the students learning experience. The on-line materials were housed on a course blog site (<http://theoleballgame.blogspot.com>), through which the students were able to access discipline specific materials on a variety of assigned subjects. Three different Podcasts were utilized in the courses: 1) A recording of the entire class lecture for students to review; 2) A weekly Podcast introducing sport marketing articles and topics featured in the Sport Business Journal (SBJ) (required reading for course); and 3) Bi-weekly Podcasts discussing current topics in sport industry (similar to a blog) were utilized. Students were required to develop a topical reaction paper based on podcast content.

Forty-six students, 17 graduate students and 29 undergraduate students, enrolled in sport marketing courses (1 graduate course and 1 undergraduate) at a mid-sized southeastern university participated in the project. In order to insure consistency between groups the same instructor, SBJ Podcasts and bi-weekly topical Podcasts were utilized in both classes. Each subject completed a modified survey instrument that had been successfully utilized in identifying student perceptions of instructional materials (Gillentine & Schulz, 2001). The survey included demographic items that identified classification, gender, ethnicity, age, and degree status (major/minor). The survey instrument asked subjects to indicate their level of satisfaction regarding the Podcasts: 1) method of delivery, 2) length of material, 3) quality of material, 4) topics of materials, 5) ability to reflect current trends, 6) ability to identify important information, 7) usefulness as an educational tool, and 8) ability to stimulate classroom discussion. Responses were recorded on a 5 point Likert scale with answers indicating 1 = very satisfied to 5 = very dissatisfied. Subjects were also asked to identify their perceived level of familiarity with the described electronic communication formats at the beginning of the course. Lastly, subjects were asked to indicate to what extent they recommended the continued use of this instructional methodology. An open-ended question asking for suggested changes and/or methods to enhance this methodology was also included.

Survey results indicated an overall high level of satisfaction by all subjects in each of the areas measured. While both groups, graduate and undergraduate, indicated positive levels of satisfaction in each area, significant differences did exist in four of the areas. Undergraduates identified a greater level of satisfaction regarding the method of delivery, length of material, quality of material and ability to identify important information. All subjects also recommended the continued use of this type of instructional methodology and that the use of the telecommunication methodologies had improved their computer abilities. Examination of open-ended student responses revealed a variety of useful suggestions regarding the use, development and delivery of the podcast instructional materials.

The results of this study will contribute toward advancing our understanding of student perceptions towards electronic delivery and presentation of information and the development of professional preparation resources. The study could provide information useful in the development of innovative learning opportunities, which could be offered to working professionals throughout the world.