Marketing Students’ Perceptions of Online Recorded Lectures

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Abstract

Students enrolled in two on-campus marketing units were surveyed about their claimed attendance at face-to-face lectures and tutorials and their access to online recordings of the lectures. Only around 30% of students claim they attend all lectures, with tutorial attendance higher for both student cohorts. Most students claim they listen to at least eight (out of twelve) of the online recorded lectures, although there does not appear to be a correlation between accessing these recordings and actual attendance - we had expected that non-attendees would claim the highest rates of listening to the recordings. Students appear to access the recordings more for revision or translation purposes, rather than to catch up lectures they have missed.

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Introduction

Many papers in the literature report that students’ participation in lectures and tutorials is declining (for example, Ramsden, 2003). Reasons for this are varied, ranging from conflicting demands on students’ time (including work and family commitments) through to a lack of motivation from students.

The link between student attendance and successful academic performance, particularly at undergraduate level, has been well documented. Studies in Economics education have shown that students who attend classes on a regular basis perform significantly better in terms of final results compared to those who attend irregularly (Schmidt, 1983; Park and Kerr, 1990). Recent work on the relationship between attendance and student performance found that student absenteeism impacted negatively on students’ grade or scores performance. Stanca (2006) estimated that missing one lecture was associated with a loss of half a percentage point drop in test scores. He concludes:

“The opportunity cost of missing lectures is relevant not only in absolute terms but also in relative terms” (Stanca, p. 263-4).

Marburger (2006) investigated the impact of enforcing an attendance policy on absenteeism and student performance. Marburger’s results support Romer’s findings (1993), who established the link that full attendance to lectures and tutorials potentially provided an increased grade score, compared to those whose attendance was more sporadic. Marburger (2006) concluded that a policy of mandatory attendance not only reduced absenteeism, but also improved student performance in terms of students’ scores in the final exam.

Engaging students to attend of their own volition, rather than forcing attendance at class, is preferred by many academics, although this requires that students are prepared and willing to actively participate, ensuring classes are not one-way communication (Collier, 1985). Students want more interactive classes and activities that engage their learning (Harasim, 1999; Madden-Hallett and Ho, 2008; Ramsden, 2003). Lack of preparation and engagement can lead to limited reflection on content and the appearance that students are more concerned with the ‘answers’ rather than why an answer is applicable (Keddie and Trotter, 1998).
Changes in technology also assist in reshaping the educational process - students now have unlimited access to information. This potentially causes challenges for academics, such as how do we engage students with content and classes, if they only access this content online. To encourage students to “think like marketers”, today’s educators need to possibly move beyond the traditional modes of instruction (Ali and Ho, 2006).

The purpose of this paper is to investigate on-campus marketing students’ perceptions of online lecture recordings (using Lectopia software) as an alternative to class attendance. It appears that little has been done in the marketing discipline regarding investigating this issue. Smith (2001) pointed out that some of the universities in North America started by taping its MBA classes and then sending tapes via snail mail to distance-learning students. Van Zanten (2008) claimed that two on-campus marketing courses has been audio recorded in one of the Australian university in South Australia. However, no investigation has been done for on-campus marketing students’ perceptions of video recordings using Lectopia as an alternative to class attendance.

Methodology

This study focuses on on-campus students enrolled in two undergraduate marketing units - Marketing Communications (LBM202) in semester 2, 2008 and Product Management (LBM300) in semester 1, 2009. The students are currently pursuing their Bachelor of Business degree at the Lilydale campus of Swinburne University of Technology, and had completed at least two of the six semesters of a Bachelor of Business degree program. At the time of the study, 176 full-time students were enrolled in LBM202 and 102 full-time students were enrolled in LBM300. Classes for each unit comprised a 90-minute lecture and a 90-minute tutorial each week of a 12-week semester. Every lecture delivered was automatically recorded (using the Lectopia recording system), and recordings were made available to students via their online BlackBoard sites as mp3 or mpeg files. It is important to note that separate recordings were not made of the lectures – Lectopia records the scheduled lecture session, together with any discussion, interruptions and background noise normally associated with a live class and which can be picked up by the lectern microphone. This means that the both the video and audio qualities of the Lectopia recordings is far from ideal, and often only records one half of any discussion taking place. While attendance at all classes is expected (and stated clearly in Unit documentation), our experience is that many students choose to miss the lecture and claim that they listen/view to the audio/video recording instead. Tutorial attendance is higher, due to an assessment component based on tutorial participation.

Data was collected using a brief paper-based questionnaire administered in the final week of both semesters (semester 2, 2008 for LBM202 and semester 1, 2009 for LBM300). Questionnaires were conducted in both lectures and in tutorial classes, in an attempt to get the highest possible response rate (including students who regularly skip lectures). The survey asked students to respond to basic profile questions focused on the use of Lectopia recordings, including how many lecture recordings they listened to, their perceived understanding of the lecture content, as well as what students felt they gained from this online access. Students were informed that their participation was anonymous and not part of the assessment regime of the class.
Results

209 completed questionnaires were returned from 111 female students and 98 male students (as shown in Table 1), comprising a response rate of 75%. However, the key target pool may have still been missed in this – students who failed to attend both the lecture and the tutorial in the relevant week would not have received the questionnaire.

Table 1: Gender of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LBM202</th>
<th>LBM300</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male (%)</td>
<td>57 (45.8)</td>
<td>41 (47.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (%)</td>
<td>65 (54.2)</td>
<td>46 (52.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>122 (100)</td>
<td>87 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although students can access any of the lectures via Lectopia, more than 32% from LBM202 and over 28% of the respondents from LBM300 claimed that they have attended all the lectures (see Figure 1). Also, an additional 28% from LBM202 and nearly 40% of the respondents from LBM300 reported that they have attended at least eight to ten (out of a possible twelve) lectures.

Responding to a question on tutorial attendance, students from both units claim to attend more tutorials than lectures – not surprising given the assessment component assigned to tutorial participation. More than 61% of the respondents from LBM202 explained that they have attended all the tutorials as compared with 44.4% from LBM300. We believe that the disparity in attendance rates for tutorials in the two units is due to a compulsory assessment presentation conducted over several LBM202 tutorials.

In total, over 89% of the respondents in this study identified that they have attended at least eight tutorials during the semester. Unfortunately, actual attendance at class is not recorded, so we cannot compare these figures against the students’ claims.

Figure 1: Class attendance for lectures and tutorials (n = 209)
In response to a question on how many lecture recordings students listened to, more than 23% from LBM202 and over 39% of the respondents from LBM300 indicated that they have listened to all 12 lecture recordings (Figure 2). An additional 42% of LBM202 students and 34% of LBM300 students reported that they have listened at least eight lecture recordings via Lectopia during the semester.

However, some respondents claimed that they do not listen to any online lectures at all (17% from LBM202 and 6% from LBM300). This is not overly surprising, since all of these respondents identified that they have attended at least eight to ten face-to-face lectures during the semester, but is still somewhat disappointing that these students do not feel it necessary to catch up lectures that they have missed.

Figure 2: Frequency of accessing recorded lectures (n = 209)

When asked how much of the content they understand when they listened to Lectopia recordings, almost every student (100% from LBM202 and 96.4% from LBM300) claimed that they fully understand most or all of the content (see Table 2). The remaining 3% of LBM 202 students claimed that they only understand a little. Of course, these figures represent the students’ self-assessment of their understanding, prior to their final assessment and receiving their marks, so is likely to be an overstatement of their actual understanding of the concepts involved.

Table 2: Students’ perceived understanding of the lecture content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When you listen to recorded lectures, how much of the content do you understand?</th>
<th>LBM202 (n = 122)</th>
<th>LBM300 (n = 87)</th>
<th>Combined results (n = 209)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand it all</td>
<td>41 (33.6%)</td>
<td>38 (43.6%)</td>
<td>79 (37.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand most of it</td>
<td>81 (66.3%)</td>
<td>46 (52.8%)</td>
<td>127 (60.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand a little</td>
<td>0 (%)</td>
<td>3 (3.4%)</td>
<td>3 (1.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t understand at all</td>
<td>0 (%)</td>
<td>0 (%)</td>
<td>0 (%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A final question asked the students what (if any) benefits they felt they gained from access to recorded lectures online (via Lectopia). Unfortunately less than 30% of students provided responses to this question. Those who did respond mostly discussed the ability to pause and replay sections of the recording, both to help with their own translations or to better understand the language (many of these students are from non-English speaking backgrounds), or to catch sections where the lecturer spoke too fast, for example:

- “I can pause and replay certain parts to help understand and go at my own pace.”
- “The ability to go back and re-listen to important points … Helps to stay up to date with information.”
- “If the lecturer is talking too fast, I can refer back to Lectopia and pause the lecture while watching it.”

Other students mentioned the flexibility associated with downloading the video/audio recordings for later playback, for example:

- “Can play in car on iPod when driving … flexibility to study.”
- “I used them to study for exams at the end of semester… is great to listen them in my iPod.”

It is interesting to note that these students all commented on the opportunity to revise the content material, not the opportunity to catch up on lectures they may have missed.

**Conclusions and Future Research**

This paper reports on a pilot study to determine the reported level of access of recorded lectures available online, and to gauge the students’ perceptions of the value of these recordings. Students appear to use the availability of recorded lectures as an excuse for class absenteeism, yet we are unsure if students do actually listen to them. Download statistics are available from the online Blackboard sites, but give no indication of whether these downloads are from students who also attend the lectures, and so are accessing the recordings for revision or language translation purposes, or from students who did not attend class.

Our questionnaire results indicate that 14 students (11.4%) from LBM202 and three students (3.4%) from LBM300 claim they attend no lectures during semester. However, all these students indicate that they do access at least 8 to ten recorded lectures during the semester, which is somewhat heartening. Our results indicate that few students feel it necessary to either attend or listen to *all* lectures. Our questionnaire did not ask students for reasons for non-attendance, but we can assume that their reasons are similar as those commonly reported i.e. work or family commitments, travel issues, and, for some at least, a lack of engagement with their studies.

Our results only report the students’ perceptions of how much of the lecture content they understood, and may have little or no relation to their actual understanding of the concepts involved. Our next step is to conduct further investigation into the actual learning that takes place from listening to the lectures – out of the context of the class discussion taking place, and without the opportunity to ask questions or for further clarification from the lecturer.
References


