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E-learning in a Philippine University Tourism and Hospitality Program: Perceptions of Students and Faculty*

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Abstract: This study examines the perceptions of students and faculty on the use of an e-learning module in a tourism and hospitality program offered in a non-sectarian autonomous university with four campuses. A self-paced course by a third party was offered to selected tourism and hospitality students. Instructional materials are in the form of presentation slides with audio, video, and flip books. Evaluation of the course was solicited through an online survey conducted for students and faculty, and interviews with administrators. Results indicate positive reception among students, faculty and administrators and recommendations on internet infrastructure and monitoring procedures for the succeeding classes.

Key words: face to face instruction; blended delivery; tourism and hospitality management

JEL code: I250

1. Introduction

Curriculum development allows for many learning opportunities that will bring desired changes in students. Recent innovations in content availability content, program delivery, and use of technology has facilitated learning among the students and teachers. The simplicity, flexibility, and the convenience of having e-learning available anywhere, anytime is a development that educational institutions must recognize and determine whether it is a direction it should pursue or not.

In more developed countries, the use of e-learning is an accepted medium and has been present in many educational institutions for many decades already. In developing countries like the Philippines, this is a relatively new direction. Many educational institutions are deliberating its utilization, as the traditional form of using face to face instruction is the standard and the use of e-learning, used fully or the use of a combination of delivery. Considerations are on connectivity, content, and availability of gadgets that would allow stakeholders access to online courses as well as teacher's training and student's knowledge and skill acquisition.

1.1 Tourism Industry and Educational Developments

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) report projects that international arrivals to the Asia Pacific Region will increase from 204 M to 285 M for the period 2010 to 2016, and of these arrivals, the Southeast Asia region will get 69 to 98 million arrivals. The Philippines is now experiencing positive tourism growth. There is

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increased international and domestic tourism arrival, increased business investments in tourism related business sectors, and requiring increased manpower requirements.

The Philippine's Department of Tourism (DOT) is the government mandated agency responsible for the promotion and development of tourism as a major socio-economic activity that will generate employment and economic initiatives that will spread the benefits to both private and public sector. The last few years have seen a growth in tourism and hospitality industry, especially in the Southeast Asian region, including the Philippines. For 2013, international the tourism arrivals reached 4.7 million (DOT), and had around 27.9 M domestic tourists in 2011. Based on the DOT National Tourism Development Plan for 2011-2016, the target for international tourists is 10 million international tourists and 35.5 million domestic tourists by 2016. There is need for many employees who have the skills sets needed to work in different sectors of the tourism and hospitality industry. The plan identified strategic directions and the third one is focused on education and training. It is Improve Tourism Institutional, Governance and Industry Manpower Capabilities and cites various activities that will "Develop a competent, well-motivated and highly-productive tourism workforce. ...involve: building skills training capabilities by establishing ...skills assessment centers, and a skills recognition system..."

The interest among students in pursuing programs in tourism and hospitality in higher educational institutions (HEIs) has also generated an increase in enrolment. Based on a report submitted by 2,282 HEIs as of July 10, 2012 to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the government agency responsible for recognizing and monitoring HEIs, the Top 10 Most Populated Baccalaureate Programs with Enrolment for AY 2011/12 identified BS Hotel and Restaurant Management (HRM) with 226,950 enrolled students was ranked third, next to Business Administration and Information Technology. The same report also notes that the Top 10 Most Populated Baccalaureate Programs in terms of Graduates as of AY 2010/11 shows that there were 27,074 graduates of HRM, ranking third with Nursing at 1st with 84,094 graduates and Business Administration at 2nd with 39,580 graduates.

As of 2011, there were around 2,282 HEIs recognized by CHED. Of these, there were 349 HEIs offering Tourism, from 133 only in 2005, and 761 HEIs offering HRM from 321 in 2005. As of AY 2012-2013, there were 978 HEIs offering HRM and 391 HEIs offering Tourism program. Based on CHED statistics, as of 2012, there is a 21.54% national program voluntary accreditation achievement only. With these developments, CHED issued a moratorium (CMO s. 32 s. 2010) on applications of various programs including HRM due to various reasons including the proliferation of schools offering these programs and if uncontrolled, will result to *the deterioration of the quality graduates, and the skills mismatch of graduates as needed by industry*.

Last 2011, DOT requested the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for technical assistance (TA) to improve competitiveness in tourism. The TA of ADB in cooperation with Canadian International Development Authority (CIDA) indicated in the report: "...DOT and tourism providers are especially concerned about relatively lower service standards and employers complain about the skills mismatch of many school leavers entering the industry.....Many young people ... are not considered to be adequately trained. training curriculums of occupations in the industry are not frequently updated to meet changing international standards and practices, and skills development in tourism is underfunded."

The Tourism Industry growth in the Philippines and in the region, the increasing popularity of tourism and HRM courses as well as deterioration in the quality of graduates pose great challenges for tourism and hospitality education providers. With these developments, it is critical that HEIs are able to meet curriculum standards of CHED, TESDA and ASEAN, so that graduates have knowledge, skills and attitude competencies that are relevant

to industry in the local and regional arena.

1.2 Purpose of the Paper

To respond to growing challenges in providing quality training and education in the tourism and hospitality to meet the growing demand of the tourism industry, an innovation that is being proposed by the author is the use of an online course that will allow standardized materials, that can be accessed by a great number of students, flexible and convenient for both students and faculty members, and can be simultaneously offered to a greater number of students, not only in one campus/school but in several campuses/schools at the same time. Differentiations can be achieved through innovations in delivery, supplemental materials and or additional exercises that could be prepared by each school but the core competencies are met by all schools.

This study would determine the perceptions of students, faculty and school administrators on the use of an e-learning facility, in the HEI tourism and hospitality program using the experience of a non-sectarian autonomous university. An online delivery of the Hospitality Professional Certificate (HPC), a self-paced course offered by a third party was chosen for the pilot project and offered to selected tourism and hospitality students in the four campuses of the HEI. The HPC is a non-facilitated online course equivalent to three (3) units, with fourteen (14) sessions, and each session is three (3) hours. It contains materials that will develop both personal and professional leadership traits needed to be successful in the hospitality industry, regardless of the position of a graduate in this industry. Instructional materials are in the form of presentation slides with audio, video, and flip books. Assessment is taken at the end of each session, using multiple choice questions. Results are immediately seen after the students submit their assessment. A running transcript allows the students and faculty members see the current status of the students in terms of sessions completed as well as see the summary of quiz results. Students can also go to an "e-café" where students from other countries can interact with each other. Students participate in discussions with their classmates and their teachers.

2. Literature Review

Students and learning have changed dramatically in the last few years. Many of us who went to school in the 20th century were taught and learned differently to the 21st century students. A limited number of studies have been made on the perception of e-learning programs among students, faculty and administrators, specially as it applies to tourism and hospitality education programs here in the Philippines, simply because e-learning is a relatively new area of interest among schools in the country.

Gilly Salmon (2002) in E-tivities: The Key to Achieve Online Learning identifies a five stage framework to design e-tivities based on interactions to motivate and engage among online learners and participants. Salmon defines E-tivities as "educational online activities, as a new term in online learning". Salmon's 5-Stage Framework of E-tivities, presented in Figure 1 include the following: The first stage 1 is called Access & Motivation where the neophyte online learner may have some challenges in starting the online course, and thus the teacher or e-moderator plays a critical role in welcoming and encouraging to gain entry to the online course through a constant and friendly support and introduction to the program. The second stage is called Socialization, where the e-moderator creates his own special online community by introducing all the e-classmates to one another. The third stage is called Information Exchange as information and cooperative tasks are shared and exchanged among the e-classmates building their confidence, as the students learn to navigate the online course on their own, at their own pace, and interact with e-classmates. The fourth stage is Knowledge Construction where

E-tivities may include online discussion or knowledge development aspects and online learners take control of their learning. The e-moderators have vital roles to build and sustain online groups. Finally, stage 5 is called Development where online learners progress to critical, self-reflective and become responsible for their own learning to be able to build on the ideas acquired through the e-tivities and apply them to their individual contexts. Salmon's 5-Stage framework is significant as this identifies the role of the e-moderators to the learning activities and amount of hierarchy in online learning.

There are three types of interaction in an online distance learning as identified by Watts (2010). These are learner-to-content interaction which could happen in all stages; learner-to-learner interaction and these can happen in Stages 2 and 3 and finally learner-to-instructor interaction that happens in all phases. Care must be undertaken in each type of interaction as there are support and significant technical support needed to make sure that interactions among the learners, content and instructors are effective.

Moule's model (Figure 2) lets various learning activities such as face to face and technology based learning. Activities include "instructivist learning" such as information gathering, through the use of interactive CD-ROMs, to "constructivist activities" such as building communities of practice. The blend of activities leads to an increasing complex technical requirements from both the e-moderators and technical support for the learners as one goes up the ladder of e-learning.

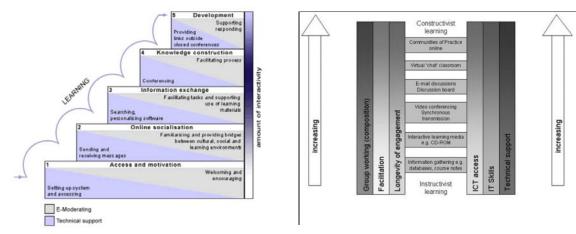


Figure 1 Salmon's 5-Stage Framework of E-tivities Figure 2 Moule's E-ladder of E-learning (2007)

Digital natives, a term coined by Marc Prensky (2001) refers to learners who grew up with digital technology from birth and thus are familiar in using computers, videogames, gadgets, cellular phones and other toys and tools of the digital age. Some writers call these people the N-Gen, where N is for Net or D-Gen, D for Digital. They are learners who were born in the last decades of the 20th century, and may have spent more time using the internet in their studies as compared to the digital immigrant. Anyone who was borne prior to the year of 1980 is referred to a digital immigrant. These are people who had to learn how to use these gadgets, and adopted the technology for use in their professional and personal lives, but still use some of their "natural" processes which they initially used to learn. As a result of this distinction, the students of today are digital natives while most of their teachers are digital immigrants. As a result, there is now a challenge to teach the digital native learners as they learn differently. Digital natives can do several things at the same time and can receive information very fast. They prefer visuals or graphics rather than text and need frequent rewards and instant gratification. They also prefer more games than serious classes. On the other hand, the digital immigrant teachers are the opposite of the students, where they need

to teach students step-by-step, one-thing at a time, and tend to be very serious when teaching. It is thus recommended to take a look at the process or method of instruction and focus of content to make learning more effective and efficient for the digital natives. In terms of the method, there is no longer the need to go step-by-step with the students but facilitate the learning process by teaching them the way and let them undertake self-discovery. For content, there are legacy content that focuses on traditional curriculum and the future content, that contains digital and technological.

There are several approaches that E-learning can be used. It can be used as supplementary materials to a traditional class where face to face instruction is conducted, and this is called a hybrid or blended course or pure online course where there is no face to face interaction. E-learning courses cannot totally replace a teacher, however they are being used in increasing numbers in both formal and informal training and educational courses. Thus, they must be designed well to create interest and motivate students to work and study the online information. A study conducted by Klimova (2013) focused on the analysis of online materials and their impact on the process of learning. It revealed that students are able to complete their studies which they were not able to do during the face-face instruction as there are reading materials that they can review. The teachers are also able to provide further explanations through online discussions. The convenience of reading, reviewing the materials anytime, anywhere is also a significant advantage. As materials should be interesting to read, care should be given on the design. Some suggestions include short and simple structure, if possible bullet words/phrases; there should be sufficient and relevant teaching matter and must include learning objectives and exercises/assignments/self-tests, up-to-date, easily navigated, interactive with multi-media components.

In the tourism and hospitality industry, there are opportunities for development programs were e-learning is utilized. In a study made "E-learning in Tourism and Hospitality Industry" by Vaso Panayiotou (2012), Cyprus University of Technology, Faculty of Management and Economics, Department of Hotel and Tourism Management, Master in Science in International Tourism and Hospitality Management, it noted that various industry sectors need to reduce costs in training, and increase the quality of its employees, and has resorted to the use of e-learning technology in training personnel.

Dr. Thomas Benson, in an article The Gathering Storm: Four Challenges Facing Higher Education identifies the Digital Revolution as one of the four challenges. Many schools will not be able to survive the 21st century if they are not able to address these challenges. Movable printed material was available in the 15th century and because it was hand-made, they had to secure the materials with chains. A school's two greatest assets were the library, which had a great collection of books to read on any topic, and teachers, who would expound on the teachings. However, with the digital revolution, "near universal access to faculty resources" and "renowned scholar-teachers can be made available on an indefinitely expandable scale" as materials can be made available anytime, anywhere and can be viewed by many students at a single time, with no restrictions on classroom sizes, and can be viewed as many times over. Many teachers are now worried because with costs going up in maintaining a school, salaries, facilities, and declining enrolment, there is a great reduction in costs in using e-learning materials.

3. Methodology

The HEI that undertook the online course is an autonomous university, and has pursued local and international voluntary accreditation as part of its quality assurance program in pursuing excellent education. The

university was founded in 1952, and since then, it has expanded its coverage to five campuses, two are located in the National Capital Region (NCR) and three other campuses are in Region IV-A. Of the 34,000 students enrolled in all the campuses, more than 48% of the student enrolments are taking tourism and hospitality programs in the associate and undergraduate programs.

The online course implementation initially started with the training of involved faculty members sometime October and November, 2012. Student registration started early November, together when regular classes started. The online course was extended until April, 2013, to accommodate late final exam takers. Refer to Table 1 for enrolment and actual enrollees for the e-learning program.

Table 1 Total Enforment, Online Students and Course Implementation								
Campus	Enrolment For 1st 2012-2013	Share per campus	Projected	Actual for 2nd Semester 2012-2013		Number of	Course implementation	
			No. of students	No. of sections	Actual No. of students	faculty members	Course implementation	
M	8,040	56.49%	424	9	374	4	Business Communication , complementary, blended	
C	2,895	20.34%	153	13	434	4	Supplementary course for Business Communication, blended	
L	988	6.94%	52	2	56	1	A pre-practicum course, pure online	
В	2,309	16.22%	122	5	174	4	A pre-practicum course, pure online	

Table 1 Total Enrolment, Online Students and Course Implementation

Data was collected from three sources: Students enrolled in the HPC: Two surveys were conducted. The first survey was posted midway through the course, while the second survey was posted towards the end of the course. There were questions that used a Likert Scale response rate ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree or outstanding, above average, average, below average and poor. Some questions had close options answers, i.e., yes or no; 1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year or 4th year. Twelve faculty members who handled the online course responded to survey questionnaire that was posted midway and a paper and pen questionnaire was given to them towards the end of the course. Administrators including the third party provider, campus managers directly involved in the course and the project director provided qualitative statements that were generated from face to face meetings or through emails.

1038

13

4. Findings and Discussion

100.00%

750

4.1 1st Survey Results from the Students (February 12, 2013)

Demographic Profile — Out of 1030 students, 86% (883) responded to the first survey. Notably, 75% were in their 3rd year, and 18% were in the second year and 83% have not previously taken any online course.

Course content, design and structure of the course Most of the students, 71% to 81%, expressed varying degrees of agreement/strong agreement, on the following points: met the course objectives, lessons and scenarios were related to future job in hospitality, content of sessions were well organized and logically sequenced, sessions were interesting and engaging, reading supplements were used to prepare for quizzes and exams, language used was clear and easy to understand, provided helpful insights for professional development, engaging with interesting exercises and interactive components, enjoyed lessons from the "a Ha Moments" and quizzes were

Total

14,232

challenging and covered course content. On the online course, 71% regarded the self-paced course convenient and a major benefit, over 75% agreed/strongly agreed that lessons can be replayed to prepare for exams, over 68% agreed/strongly agreed that they can connect with fellow LPU students and international students, over 78% of the students claimed they experienced technical difficulties while taking the course, 90% said log on instructions were clear and easy to follow. The students rated their over-all online experience with 17% saying it was outstanding, 38% rated it as above average and 38% rated it as average. Only 5% rated their r online experience as poor and below average.

4.2 2nd Survey Results from the Students (April 25, 2013)

There were 704 responses or 69% of the 1023 students enrolled who responded with a response rate of Campus 94%, Campus C 74%, Campus L 93% and Campus M 47%. On the conduct of an Orientation, 97% of the respondents were oriented by their faculty before taking the course. Internet access was available to 78% of students at home. In Campus B, over 81% had internet access at home, 73% in Campus C, 75% in Campus L and 84% in Manila. Only 4% of the respondents said they had no internet access. Of the respondents, 54% spend 2-4 hours a day on the internet, and 18% spend 4-8 hours, 21% spend less than one hour a day, and 7% spend more than 8 hours a day. An overwhelming 81% of the students used their own personal device to access the online course. Of those who did not own a personal device, 8% made use of the computer at school, 3% relied on a friend, and 8% at internet café. The students would access the course at home (79%), 11% at school, 9% at internet café and 1% from other means. Around 69% would work on their online course during weekends, 25% at night, 4% at school and 2% at other times. Most of the students, around 79% of students did their course alone while 19% worked with classmates. Most of the students, 73%, preferred a proctored mid-term and final exams. Students were asked to choose as many of the items given as the best feature, and 71% considered being able to review anytime/anywhere, 58% citing relevance of program content, 49% liked that quiz results were immediately known, 35% cited the self-paced feature, and 20% pointed at "no need to go to the classroom to attend class".

Areas of improvement in the conduct of the online course show that 54% of the students identified challenges with the wifi system at school, over 26% said the quiz should only be taken once.

4.3 Online Feedback from the Faculty

Only 11 out of 12 faculty members responded to the survey. Most, 83.33% faculty members had previous online course experience, with 72.72% oriented by their campus managers before joining the pilot project. All had access to computers, at home or office, 45.45% use the internet 4-9 hours a day, and 36.36% spend 2-4 hours on the internet. Only one spent less than an hour on the internet. All agreed/strongly agreed that lessons and scenarios were related to students' major, language used was clear and easy to understand, insights and information from the course are helpful in their professional development, "a Ha" moments add value and relevance to the course. Most of them, 72.72% encountered problems in administering the mid-term and considered the exercises and interactive components engaging and interesting. Most of the respondents, 90.90%, said that quizzes were challenging and covered course content, they were able to follow student progress in the teachers' box and this feature was relevant and helpful. On the course content and assessments, 90.90% had an easy time navigating the website, and 72.72% felt that students taking the course at their own pace was helpful. The online course was rated by 27.27% as outstanding, 27.27% said it was above average and 36.26% rated it as average. Most of the faculty, 90.90% voted to continue using the online course in their campus and all respondents said they would recommend the HPC course for all the HRM and Tourism students of LPU.

4.4 Feedback from AHA World Campus Team

Given the responses generated from the student, faculty survey and administration, the team has identified the following program related concerns and recommendations:

- orientation of both students and faculty Some participants were not properly oriented and various campuses deployed the course differently. It is recommended that the best practice of Campus L will be used for succeeding deployment, by incorporating it in the pre-practicum course, and using blended delivery.
- online registration Students had various email addresses and registering multiple times, forgetting their sections, non-students enlisting. It was recommended that all students will be issued a school domain email address for use in all transactions with the school.
- conduct of online quizzes and examinations Student's quizzes would shut down if not completed within time, and score will not be recorded. Faculty members were unable to generate a code for the exams. This was immediately addressed by the support team and did not have succeeding challenges in the finals.
- technical and connectivity issues Availability of/access to computer labs in each campus, technical problems encountered in school which were eventually corrected. The perceived connectivity issues were addressed by upgrading wifi bandwidth allowing easy access to the online courses.
- training of faculty Lack of adequate faculty training on the online to effectively monitor and assist students, and answer questions. Only faculty members who complete the Online Monitor Course will be assigned as e-faculty members.

4.5 E-learning of Students

Students took their e-quizzes and noted that they had better results after reviewing the material and "retaking" the quiz. Results are summarized in Tables 2 and 3. Note that there were some students who were almost done with their online course even if it was just the midterms. This could mean that the students were enjoying the learning opportunity and thus were completing all the quiz requirements even before the deadline.

Table 2 Overall Quiz Summary 1st Attempt Avg Final Avg 70% 91% C 66% 88% L 65% 91% В 65% 89%

Campus M average 66% 90%

Quiz Title 1st Attempt Avg Final Avg number of students took the quiz not yet taken the quiz no. 1. Appearance and Etiquette 82% 92% 984 43 59 2. Spirit of Hospitality 76% 94% 968 3. Time Management and Attendance 89% 945 82 78% 4. Character 67% 85% 989 38 5. Choose Your Attitude 78% 92% 983 44 Communication 88% 59 6. 68% 968 7. Cooperation 93% 958 80% 69 Breaking Down Stereotypes 945 8. 55% 82% 82 9. Celebrating Diversity 57% 88% 52 975 979 10. Cross Cultural Communication- 52% 90% 48

Table 3 Overall Quiz Results Per Module Title (as of Midterm Period)

Quiz no.	Title	1st Attempt Avg	Final Avg	number of students took the quiz	not yet taken the quiz
	Effective Communication				
11.	Elements of Service	59%	89%	51	976
12.	Embrace Change	60%	89%	57	970
13.	Teamwork	59%	91%	55	972
14.	Understanding Culture	67%	91%	49	978
	Average	67%	90%	514	514

5. Conclusion

With the pilot offering of an online course, there is need to conduct an orientation with all involved parties, i.e., students, faculty and administrators so that they can understand and be motivated to accept the innovation. As indicated by Salmon's 5-Stage Framework of E-tivities, the e-moderators (faculty) need to provide access and motivation to the students initially and thus, they must be oriented on their duties and tasks before they are assigned an online course. Most of the students were able to navigate the registration and learning activities on their own, the e-moderators should watch out for the "stray" students, and mentor them through their online experience. Once students are able to navigate the course, they readily met with their e-classmates (within the campus, in other campuses, as well as those in the international classrooms) allowing them to socialize with a greater number of people. Discussion boards allowed the students and e-moderators to have an exchange of ideas, and encouraged everyone to have some kind of "recitation". Face-to-face instruction, due to limited time, will not allow everyone to recite, so with online courses, they are able to participate. Schools will take time to implement this innovation, however, online courses will better prepare our students for lifelong learning that will take place in their professional and personal life. This becomes the school's legacy of learning...anytime, anywhere!

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