A Survey of Online User Perspectives and Age Profile in an Undergraduate Fundamental Business Technology Course

Authors : Danielle Morin, Jennifer D. E. Thomas, Raafat G. Saade, Daniela Petrachi

Abstract : Over the past few decades, more and more students choose to enroll in online classes instead of attending in-class lectures. While past studies consider students’ attitudes towards online education and how their grades differed from in-class lectures, the profile of the online student remains a blur. To shed light on this, an online survey was administered to about 1,500 students enrolled in an undergraduate Fundamental Business Technology course at a Canadian University. The survey was comprised of questions on students’ demographics, their reasons for choosing online courses, their expectations towards the course, the communication channels they use for the course with fellow students and with the instructor. This paper focused on the research question: Do the perspectives of online students concerning the online experience, in general, and in the course in particular, differ according to age profile? After several statistical analyses, it was found that age does have an impact on the reasons why students select online classes instead of in-class. For example, it was found that the perception that an online course might be easier than in-class delivery was a more important reason for younger students than for older ones. Similarly, the influence of friends is much more important for younger students, than for older students. Similar results were found when analyzing students’ expectation about the online course and their use of communication tools. Overall, the age profile of online users had an impact on reasons, expectations and means of communication in an undergraduate Fundamental Business Technology course. It is left to be seen if this holds true across other courses, graduate and undergraduate.