

THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF SHORT VIDEOS IN TEACHING PRINCIPLES OF MARKETING

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Abstract

Research on hybrid courses and our experiences as faculty have supported the contention that, in terms of learning, the most productive in-class time is that spent on discussion, interaction, and in-class exercises versus traditional lecture. With this in mind, a set of short videos was created that covers the key lecture topics in a Principles of Marketing class. In a preliminary study we compared a group of students who had been assigned to view a video as preparation for an in-class exercise and quiz to a group that had not been assigned to do so. Students reported that the video was useful and informative in preparing them for the in-class activity and quiz yet quiz scores were strong and not significantly different for two groups. This reinforces our belief that in-class exercises can be effective pedagogical tools. The video was available to all but only students who were assigned to view the video actually did so. Going forward, viewing the videos will need to be a mandatory assignment. Furthermore, we realize that we, as faculty, will need to reinforce the value of viewing the videos by integrating their content into in-class activities. As we prepare for subsequent phases of research to assess the effectiveness of the videos we invite other suggestions on how to best utilize this exciting new tool.

Introduction

While many marketing faculty would agree that interactive exercises and discussion (“exercises/discussion”) help students engage and learn, we sometimes struggle with how to use actual in-class time. We realize that many students do not prepare for class by doing the assigned reading and that some that do may not comprehend what they have read. Hence, we feel the need to prepare and deliver a lecture or presentation on the relevant material as a prelude to exercises/discussion. This obviously takes valuable class time away from the exercises/discussion that we feel is more stimulating and pedagogically productive.

A number of recent studies have shown that hybrid online courses may represent something of a “best of both worlds” approach by enabling some of the scheduling flexibility of online-only courses while retaining the face-to-face interactions of traditional courses (Terry 2007; Estelami 2012). One means of providing such a hybrid approach is to convert traditional in-class lectures to video format, thus enabling students to learn the basic material at their own pace and schedule, while at the same time freeing up in-class time for more interactive activities. The purpose of the present study is to present an initial pilot evaluation of such a structure for a specific video-format lecture topic coupled with a related in-class exercise.

For this initial study a video was chosen that is one of a full set of video lectures that corresponds to the chapter topics in a Principles of Marketing Course. The videos were created in collaboration with a textbook publisher; approximately three videos per chapter. The videos were posted online and their availability was mentioned in class periodically. However, the students were not specifically assigned to watch the videos nor were points awarded for doing so. This initial study focuses on the effectiveness of viewing one of those videos when coupled with a related in-class exercise vs. sitting through the same lecture in-class when also coupled with the exercise.

Methodology

Two comparable sections of Principles of Marketing were identified at a large west coast public university. Both sections were taught by the same professor, enrolled 52 students, and had performed similarly in class discussion and on a first midterm.

In the first section, students were told that if they were in class the following week for an in-class exercise, they would have the opportunity for extra credit points. In the second section, students were told that they had the opportunity to earn extra credit points by watching an assigned video and then participating in an in-class exercise the following week.

We will call the students in the first section the "Lecture Group." The students in the second section were assigned the task of watching the video. As it turned out most of the students in this section watched the video as assigned and we will call them the "Watched Video" group. Some of the students, however, forgot to watch the video and we will call them the "Forgot to Watch Video" group.

The marketing topic that was the subject of the video was professional sales with a special emphasis on the distinctions between traditional and relationship selling. The methodology for collecting the data follows.

Lecture Group – Sequence of Events:

1. One week prior to class – students were told that there would be an opportunity for extra credit points if they attended class the following week.
2. Day of class – 1) Lecture on personal selling, including traditional vs. relationship selling, 2) Role play exercise on traditional vs. relationship selling, 3) "Surprise" quiz on traditional vs. relationship selling including a few additional survey questions.

Class Assigned to Watch the Video– Sequence of Events:

1. One week prior to class – students told that there would be an opportunity for extra credit points if they watched the short video on sales (including an explanation of traditional vs. relationship selling) and attended class the following week.
2. Day of class – 1) Role play exercise on traditional vs. relationship selling, 2) "Surprise" quiz on traditional vs. relationship selling including a few additional survey questions.

Results

As discussed above, we had three groups.

Lecture group – were not assigned to watch the video. They simply arrived at class, heard an lecture on personal selling that included the definition of and distinctions between traditional and relationship selling, did a role play on the same subject, and they were given a surprise, unannounced quiz.

Watched Video group – they watched the video on traditional vs. relationship selling as assigned. Upon arriving at class, they went directly into the role-play and then they were given the surprise, unannounced quiz.

Forgot to Watch Video group – they forgot to watch the video as assigned. Upon arriving at class, they went directly into the role-play and then they were given the surprise, unannounced quiz.

Key findings follow:

- *Students appeared not to watch the video unless assigned to do so.* Not one student in the Lecture group watched the video although they were aware that the videos were available online. If we should decide to eliminate or substantially decrease lectures and count on students to view the videos, we will need to specifically assign video viewing as mandatory.
 - *Students in all three groups felt and appeared prepared to participate in the exercise.* When asked, “How prepared did you feel for the in-class exercise on TRADITIONAL vs. RELATIONSHIP selling?” all three groups self rated themselves similarly. With 0 assigned to a response of “Not prepared,” 1 to “somewhat prepared,” and 3 to “prepared” the averages for all three groups were virtually the same.
 - WATCHED VIDEO. 1.26
 - FORGOT TO WATCH VIDEO 1.11
 - LECTURE 1.23
 - *Students in all three groups performed similarly when assessed on their understanding of the characteristics of traditional vs. relationship selling.* The average scores (out of a possible 6 points) for the three groups are as follows:
 - WATCHED VIDEO. 5.86
 - FORGOT TO WATCH VIDEO 5.78
 - LECTURE 5.72
- We would not have been surprised if the “Forgot to Watch Video” group had lagged behind the other two. But this was not the case.
- *Students liked the video.* Those who watched the video commented that it straightforward, short and concise. Several mentioned that it introduced them to selling in general and the differences between traditional and relationship selling specifically.

Discussion

The results of this initial pilot study reveal that the role-play exercise was able to successfully convey the difference between traditional and relationship selling. Students in all three groups (video-lecture, in-class lecture, and no-lecture) generally performed well on the quiz. Also, students in all three groups generally felt prepared for the in-class exercise. This applied even to those students who had no exposure to the lecture. Though perhaps contrary to the value professors may assign to their lectures, these initial findings are in line with prior findings on successful e-learning practices. For instance, Kilic-Cakmak et al (2009) found that a key driver of e-learning success is the expectations students have regarding the value of the e-learning components. When students view the online component of courses as adding little academic value they are much less engaged. Given the lack of a requirement in the present study to view the videos, or a formal discussion of their value, students re-directed their focus to the in-class exercises as a source of learning value.

These findings are also in line with other research that found learning strategy had a more significant impact on performance than presentation modality when video lectures were compared to traditional lectures (Jadin et al 2009). A more focused learning strategy is more effective than casually “surfing” through the material. Given the casual presentation of the video lectures in the present study it is unsurprising, then, that they did not increase learning

outcomes. This may be a function of how students utilized the videos rather than an indictment of their inherent value.

This conclusion is bolstered by students' qualitative responses to the value of the video. Students who did watch the video reported finding it to be useful, compelling, and helpful in preparing for the in-class exercise. It may be that an insufficient number of students, however, saw the value of the video in this way due to the casual nature of its incorporation in the course.

In future studies motivation to view the videos should be enhanced by the professor, perhaps by making viewing a requirement, but also by emphasizing the value and importance of the video to the students overall learning goals. Also, when assessing comprehension of material, it will be important to evaluate other potential enhancements to students' successful learning, such as video-viewing environment, reading from the text, prior knowledge, etc.

The consistently strong performance of the students, including those that did not view the video or have a lecture, reinforces our belief that classroom discussion/exercises are an effective pedagogical tool. It may be most effective to view online video lectures as an enhancement to in-class learning experiences, including interactive exercises, rather than as a standalone learning tool, or a replacement for in-class lectures with no additional interactive component.

Our goals in moving this research forward are to evaluate these different approaches, via more rigorous evaluation of learning outcomes between traditional lectures, video-only lectures, and hybrid approaches. To that end further studies of a much larger sample of over 300 Principles of Marketing students will be conducted to evaluate not just standard student performance measures such as exam scores, but also their level of satisfaction with both the process and their perceived level of subject competency.