

# **THE IMPACT OF FUNCTIONAL BENEFITS AND INTERACTION ON STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF AND ATTITUDES TOWARD MOODLE**

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## **Abstract**

Instructors have adopted use of the system for both online courses and face-to-face classrooms. Some have suggested that student motivation is a key factor in the success of Moodle in the classroom and that students found it easier to use (Beatty and Ulascewicz 2006). Students do like Moodle better than faculty (Payette and Gupta 2009), but this may be a function of greater faculty familiarity with other classroom management software.

In contrast to instructors, students do not have as much choice about the use of a Course Management System. If the course is a required course, they can choose a course section. If it is an elective, they can choose not to take the course, but for the most part selection is likely more based on time and content than on instructor use of CMS. For the most part students will experience the degree of Course Management System that their instructors implement. Despite this lack of choice for students, CMS can influence the entire structure and flow of their coursework.

From a student's perspective, Moodle provides the means whereby they receive class materials and submit assignments to instructors. Studies have suggested that students do find online learning and components provided by most classroom software packages to be effective in overall learning (Clarke et al. 1999) and a CMS can be used in a variety of online active/passive learning experiences, including even a social dilemma game (Oertig 2010). Overall, they are in fact very positive about most aspects of a CMS (Carvalho et al. 2011). This positive impact does not seem to vary by the learning style of the student (Young et al. 2003).

Despite these potential benefits, the use of a CMS is not always met with optimism. Could a lack of clarity about how to use CMS, the inability to complete tasks and perhaps the stresses or other negative aspects of using it lead some students to view it with disfavor? This could also influence student evaluations of a course and their instructors. More importantly, will students want a CMS such as Moodle for their coursework?

This study administered a web-survey designed to measure student perceptions toward CMS. Data were collected using a convenience sampling method using a self-administered questionnaire among marketing major students. Seventy respondents from three marketing classes at a public university in the northeast United States participated in the survey. Of these 70 respondents, 28 (40%) were from a face-to-face class and 42 (60 %) were from two online classes. There were approximately the same number of males and females, 34 males and 36 females and the class standings of the students were mostly juniors and seniors, 97.2 percent. Respondents revealed that, besides Moodle, they have used Blackboard (46%), WebCT (44%) and other (27%) CMS systems. In addition, most students indicate they have good Moodle literacy (average 5.8 out of 7).

Results suggest that the difficulty of Moodle and its perceived usefulness directly impacts functional benefits and task needs being fulfilled. Functional benefits can be increased by decreasing difficulty and increasing perceived usefulness and the functional benefits are directly related to favorable feelings. The various functions of Moodle will be easier for those who have experience with it than for those who do not, but to instructors do have an impact as well. Instructors who make an effort to help students with Moodle, and who make it clear in class how assignments are completed with Moodle, are helping to increase the functional value of this CMS. At the same time, instructors who are more knowledgeable about Moodle themselves and able to more effectively implement it are also facilitating the functional usefulness.

References Available on Request