MUSE in HOSPITALITY EDUCATION:

A PRELIMINARY CASE STUDY APPROACH

Assoc. Prof. Dr Detlev Remy

Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT)

Intro

Although the concept of MUSE (Multi-User Simulation Environment) is not a new one, there is quite limited research in the context of tourism and hospitality education; main areas are in food services, forecasting and hotel investments (i.e. Feinstein *et.al.*, 2002).

Therefore, this case study tries to analyze a MUSE application in the context of a hospitality business degree program in Singapore.

Problem Statement

To transform a theory-laden subject in an applied learning experience, based on a Hospitality Business third year subject (Revenue Management).

Revenue Management, a rather difficult and complex subject and normally taught very theory-laden, which is based on the idea that students get their hands on training afterwards in industry placements/jobs.

To optimize the learning experience by using RevSIM simulation, and IDEAS partner program, and creating an applied learning experience.

Literature Review – Overview of selected publications

Salas, E., Wildman, J. & Piccolo, R., 2009, "*Using simulation-based training to enhance management education*", provide guidance into simulation-based trainings, and guidelines for the use of simulation-based training enhancing management education although without focus on THE education.

Abdullah, N., Hanafiah, M. & Hashim, N., 2013, "*Developing creative teaching module: Business simulation in teaching strategic management*", discuss the effectiveness of business simulation by conducting a qualitative study on 48 students in business education.

Lean, J., Moizer, J., Towler, M. & Abbey, C., 2006, "*Simulations and games*", focus on use and barriers of simulations in (UK) higher education.

Literature Review - Overview

Lohmann, G., Pratt, M., Benckendorff, P., Strickland, P., Reynolds, P. & Whitelaw, P. 2018, "*Online business simulations: authentic teamwork, learning outcomes and satisfaction*", focus on fostering authentic team-based learning contributing to learner experience.

Cox, 2018, "*A simulation approach to hotel revenue management training*", presents a study of use of simulation in revenue management, quite similarly to the author's study with findings indicating the usefulness of simulation in training students on revenue management.

Finally, Feinstein *et.al.*, 2002, "*Simulation research in the hospitality industry*", provides an overview of given research on simulations, and more specifically to provide a more complete discussion of what is known about simulation theory in the hospitality literature.

Methodology

Qualitative case study approach with semi-structured interviews, and observations.

Sampling – 93 third year students

Data analysis - a content analytics approach has been used to analyse the qualitative data provided by interviewing students

Case description, HB program,
Structure of subject delivery:
Lecture time dedicated to knowledge transfer about the key concepts of RM.
Tutorials time allocated to simulation work.
Achievement and measurement of LO's via group-based assignment.

Findings

Findings are in general positive, in line with existing research.

Students enjoy simulations, and find them engaging, and suitable to grasp the RM concept.

Although, students ask for a more flexible framework, and more advanced options within simulation.

Such as for example changing consumer behavior or realistic comp.set's.

Some slightly negative comments are that simulations aren't seen as always realistic and up-to-date.

Implications & Recommendations

MUSE is a quite under-researched area in the field of hospitality education, thus, the questions remains whether this area is of lesser interest for scholars and why is this the case?

More research is needed to determine what the challenges of conducting business simulations are, and how to cope with it? (*different stakeholders perspectives*)

Simulations will never mirror 100 percent of the real-world scenario; so what should be done to overcome this hurdle?

Conclusion

Yet more research is needed to investigate the optimal fit of MUSE into curriculum design and specifically, measuring learning efficiency and outcomes.

References

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