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Bringing Concepts of Electronic Commerce Into the Classroom Environment

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Bringing Concepts of Electronic Commerce Into the Classroom Environment

Abstract

To prepare students for positions in apparel and hospitality industries, students are required to understand basic concepts and characteristics of electronic commerce, trends, strategies, and competitive advantages.

Keywords

e-commerce, market trends

Disciplines

Curriculum and Instruction | E-Commerce | Fashion Business | Higher Education | Hospitality Administration and Management

Comments

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BRINGING CONCEPTS OF ELECTRONIC COMMERCE INTO THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

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Apparel and hospitality industries have witnessed a soaring number of firms launching their marketing efforts on the Internet. To prepare students for positions in these companies, students are required to understand basic concepts and characteristics of electronic commerce (EC), current EC market trends, strategies to be implemented for successful EC, and the competitive advantages EC can create for customers and companies. For apparel and hospitality management students in our newly combined major, we felt it was also essential that they understand the state of affairs of EC in the apparel and hospitality industries, their products and services, Web site features, and customers.

To ensure knowledge of both industries two instructors, representing either the Apparel or Hospitality Management programs, offered “E-Commerce for Apparel and Hospitality Companies” as a three-credit elective course in Summer 2001. This course was open to both undergraduate and graduate students. As part of an electronic commerce certificate program administered by the university’s College of Business, this course was registered as an elective course for students to obtain the EC certificate. No textbook was used for the course, but we developed a course packet by compiling EC-related Web sites, research papers, industry articles, and EC book chapters. This course was divided into five topical areas: (1) the environment of EC, (2) marketing plan for EC, (3) EC trends and practices, (4) Web site evaluations from customers’ perspectives, and (5) designing a Web site for a client company. A desired outcome of this course was students’ enhanced understanding of industry practices in EC via first-hand Web site evaluation and design. Students mastered HTML and FrontPage basics for web design.

Students were assigned to one of three groups for group-based learning activities and projects. Three major projects were assigned as they were designed to evaluate each group’s performance as well as group members’ individual performance in developing an EC marketing plan, evaluating marketing and design aspects of a Web site, and designing a Web site for a selected client company. Graduate students received an additional assignment of writing a research paper on Web site evaluation criteria. All 11 students successfully completed the course.

This first attempt at offering an EC-related course was successful. This course helped students understand industry practices in EC. For example, students were able to discern degrees of similarities and differences in EC practices, as compared to traditional marketing approaches, by developing a marketing plan for EC. The actual Web site evaluation project helped students apply theories to practice. Student understanding of EC marketing strategies was represented by



successful design of a Web site for a chosen client company. For graduate students, in particular, this course offered fundamental knowledge for theory-based EC applications that could be built on in their theses and dissertations. While the course was successful for a first attempt, improvements include lecturing less and increasing interactive activities, rearranging reading materials, and increasing time allowed for students to design a Web site. Additional performance evaluation methods need to be developed for the course. Finally, redesigning the extra graduate student project is needed.