CONSUMER MOTIVATION IN SELF ONLINE LEARNING

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Abstract: *This paper evaluates the consumption motivation regarding online learning. The research aims to gather information regarding learning engagement, motivation, satisfaction, and barriers to accessing and completing online courses. Grasping the patterns of digital course participants is vital for academic bodies and decision-makers to create and advocate for engaging online educational journeys. Collecting data concerning various factors aids in pinpointing consumer categories according to their necessities.*

Key words: *consumer motivation, self-learning, learning experiences, online learning.*

1. Introduction

In the rapidly advancing digital age, the field of education has experienced profound transformations. Electronic learning, often referred to as e-Learning or online learning, has emerged as a significant aspect of contemporary education. This form of education carried out via digital platforms is reshaping traditional teaching and learning methods, shifting away from the confines of physical classrooms to the vast, interconnected world of the internet (Nambiar D., 2020). However, the success of such a method is heavily reliant on the attitudes and perceptions of those who use it: educators and consumers.

Understanding the behaviour of online course consumers is crucial for educational institutions and policymakers to design compelling online learning experiences. Factors such as learner engagement, motivation, satisfaction and barriers to access and completion play a significant role in shaping the dynamics of online courses. Further research in this area can contribute to developing strategies to enhance the quality and effectiveness of online courses and maximize their benefits for learners worldwide.

2. Literature Review

Online courses, also known as e-Learning, are becoming an increasingly popular form of education. These courses are typically delivered over the Internet, allowing learners

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to access course materials, interact with instructors and complete assignments remotely (Stracke et al., 2023).

Zhang Q. et al (2023) mentioned that there are two main types of online courses: self-paced and instructor-led. Self-paced online courses allow learners to progress through the course materials at their own pace. This type, of course, is ideal for learners who require flexibility and independence in their learning. Self-paced courses are often designed with a modular structure, which allows learners to choose which modules to complete and in what order. This structure provides learners with the freedom to focus on topics that are of particular interest or relevance to them. It allows them to skip material that they are already familiar with.

Instructor-led online courses, on the other hand, have set start and end dates and include regular interactions with instructors and fellow students. This type, of course, provides learners with more structure and guidance than self-paced courses. Learners can benefit from the expertise of the instructor and engage in discussions with their peers. This can enhance the learning experience and provide opportunities for collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

2.1. Benefits of online courses

Online courses offer a wide range of benefits for learners, regardless of whether they are self-paced or instructor-led. Self-paced courses allow learners to learn at their own pace, which is ideal for individuals who require a more flexible schedule or prefer to work independently. Self-paced courses can also be more cost-effective than instructor-led ones, as they often have lower tuition fees and do not require learners to travel to a physical location.

On the other hand, instructor-led courses offer learners the opportunity to interact with instructors and peers, which can enhance the learning experience. These courses also provide more structure and guidance than self-paced courses, ensuring learners stay on track and complete the course within a specific timeframe. In addition, instructor-led courses often provide learners with access to additional resources and support services, such as online tutoring and academic advising.

Both online courses offer the convenience of remote learning, allowing learners to access course materials from anywhere with an internet connection. This flexibility can be particularly beneficial for individuals who live in remote areas or have busy schedules. Online courses also offer learners access to various courses and instructors, regardless of their location (Abasha'ar M.Y.M et al., 2022).

Overall, online courses provide a flexible and accessible form of education that can benefit a diverse range of learners. Whether learners prefer the independence of self-paced courses or the structure and guidance of instructor-led courses, they can access high-quality educational opportunities from anywhere in the world.

2.2. Online courses categories

Online courses have become increasingly popular in recent years, allowing learners to

access educational materials and acquire new skills from the comfort of their homes. Countless examples of online courses are available across a wide range of topics, and the demand for these courses is constantly growing.

Many individuals are turning to entrepreneurship to pursue their passions and take control of their careers, and the demand for courses in this area reflects this trend. One of the most popular categories of online courses is business and entrepreneurship. These courses teach individuals how to start and run their businesses and cover marketing, accounting, and management topics (Cavalheiro V., 2023).

With technology playing an increasingly important role in the workforce, individuals seek to acquire skills in web development, data science, and artificial intelligence. Another popular category of online courses covers computer science and programming. Courses in this category range from beginner-level courses that introduce individuals to coding concepts to advanced courses that provide in-depth knowledge of programming languages and software development tools, as stated by Cooke C. (2023).

Health and wellness is another popular category of online courses, with courses covering topics such as nutrition, fitness, and mental health. Many individuals prioritize their well-being and seek ways to improve their physical and mental health. Online courses provide a convenient way to access information and guidance on these topics.

Other categories of online courses that are in high demand include personal development, language learning, and creative arts. Personal development courses cover time management, goal setting, and communication skills. In contrast, language learning courses provide instruction in a variety of languages for both personal and professional use. Creative arts courses cover photography, graphic design, and writing, allowing individuals to pursue their creative passions and develop new skills (Todorov G., 2023).

2.3. Online courses evolution

Online learning has rapidly gained traction in recent years, with more people than ever before opting to pursue education and professional development through digital means. This trend has only accelerated with the COVID-19 pandemic (Flores A. et al.2023), which forced many schools and businesses to shift to remote learning and work.

Statistics show that online courses have gained significant popularity worldwide. The e-Learning market was valued at USD 255 billion in 2021, with a projected growth rate of over 8% from 2022 to 2028 (Todorov G., 2023).

The evolution of online courses has been dynamic, with advancements in technology and changing learner preferences. Over the years, online courses have evolved from introductory text-based courses to highly interactive and multimedia-rich experiences, incorporating virtual classrooms, simulations, and gamification. The increasing availability of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and micro-learning modules has also transformed the landscape of online education, making it more accessible and flexible for learners (Waleed et al. 2019).

The rise of online learning has also significantly impacted the workforce. The World Economic Forum (2022) reports that online learning is helping to close the skills gap and reskill workers for jobs of the future. In particular, online learning has been instrumental

in helping workers adapt to the rapid pace of technological change, which is transforming many industries. Online learning can democratize access to education and skills training, particularly for individuals in underserved communities or those who face barriers to traditional forms of education. The report notes that online learning can help to bridge the gap between formal education and on-the-job training, providing learners with the skills they need to succeed in the workforce.

In terms of specific statistics, 98% of companies planned to use e-Learning for employee training in 2020. This highlights the growing importance of online learning for businesses looking to upskill their workforce and stay competitive in the global marketplace (Cooke C., 2023).

Overall, the statistics and evolution of online learning over the last few years point to a growing demand for flexible, accessible education and professional development. As the world becomes increasingly digital and remote, online learning is poised to play an even more significant role in the future of education and workforce development.

2.4. Educators' attitudes towards online courses

Recent research endeavored to uncover the sentiments of educators regarding this technological shift in the educational landscape. The findings are enlightening. According to Bouchrika (2023), educators harbor a predominantly positive attitude toward e-Learning. An impressive 91% of educators surveyed believed that e-Learning measures up to, if not surpass, traditional classroom learning. This is a significant indicator of the perceived effectiveness of e-Learning. Additionally, a substantial majority of 86% of educators believed that e-Learning is not just a passing trend, but an essential component for the future of education. This suggests recognizing the potential impact and longevity of digital learning platforms. The study also emphasized the perceived benefits of e-Learning from an educator's standpoint: the ability for students to learn at their own pace, the convenience of accessing materials from any location, and the flexibility of scheduling were deemed the most significant benefits.

The overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards e-Learning among educators suggest a growing acceptance and even adoption of online courses in the educational system. This trend points towards a future where digital learning may become a standard education feature, changing how we teach and learn forever.

2.5. Online courses consumers

Online courses appeal to a diverse demographic. The primary consumers include both young students and adult learners seeking to expand their knowledge, develop new skills, or pursue career advancement. College and university students often enroll in online courses to earn degrees or certifications (Wright et al. 2019) while working professionals use them for continuous learning and professional development.

High school students are also increasingly leveraging online courses for advanced studies and college preparation. Many lifelong learners use online courses to pursue personal interests or hobbies regardless of age.

In recent years, a growing trend has been observed among traditionally educated individuals, who increasingly turn to online courses for further education. In the corporate world, organizations invest in online courses to provide training and upskilling opportunities for their employees. In essence, the market for online courses is vast and varied, catering to anyone who desires flexible, accessible, and self-paced learning.

3. Motivation

Regarding education, student motivation is necessary for curriculum implementation because motivation is an influential factor in the educational process, and this determines the desire for knowledge, action, belief or obtaining skills. Motivation can be described as the impulse to satisfy a need, whereas the needs of the students determine them to achieve academic goals (Filgona et al., 2020).

3.1. Intrinsic motivation

Here, the stimulus is internal and can be biological, emotional, spiritual, or social. Thus, in this particular case, there are no external rewards. The undertaken activity is for personal pleasure or to satisfy their needs. For example, the need to socialize can generate the desire to learn a new language. Intrinsic motivation can influence the learner to a greater extent than the extrinsic one, because intrinsic motivation grows from the learner without being influenced by external factors (Filgona et al., 2020).

3.2. Extrinsic motivation

Here, the stimulus is external and can be found in the form of operative or social knowledge. That is, obtaining task performance with the aim of acquiring a desired result, such as social recognition, appreciation or another external response (Filgona et al., 2020).

4. Agreeableness

Agreeableness includes traits related to altruism, such as empathy and kindness. Agreeableness represents the tendency towards cooperation, social harmony and consideration for the people around (Weisberg et al., 2011).

Considering the nature of agreeableness, one may assume that a high level of agreeableness is beneficial in the educational process because the educational system requires cooperation from the learner. In this sense, agreeableness serves education because it offers resistance in stressful conditions, and a low level of agreeableness contributes to more vulnerability (Nieuwenhuis, 2018).

Thus, a high level of agreeableness is sufficient to provide enough resistance for the respective education system, and combined with a properly managed motivation, the educational process offers optimal conditions.
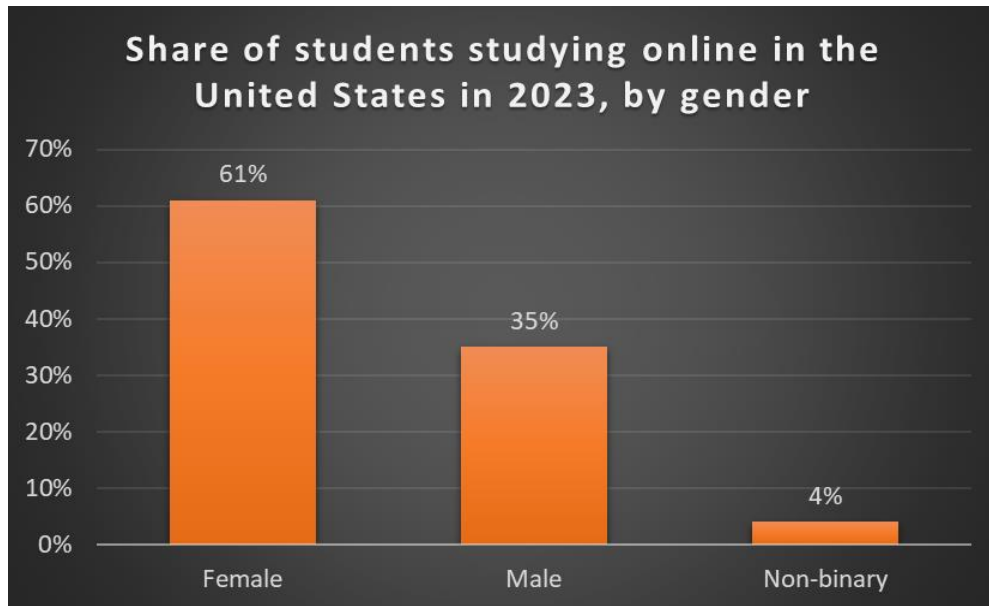
Fig. 1. *Share of students studying online in the United States in 2023, by gender*
Source: Statista.com

Figure 1 shows that the share of women is dominant in the gender distribution regarding the consumption of online courses, and this proportion is correlated with agreeableness. In this sense, Weisberg, Deyoung and Hirsh (Weisberg et al., 2011) analysed personality, and the results of the analysis of the differences in personality traits between men and women demonstrate that agreeableness presents the most considerable difference between men and women regarding the aspects of personality and, even if men's and women's agreeableness largely overlap, women score higher than men on the average. Thus, the women's higher level of agreeableness causes them to be more inclined to participate in the educational system.
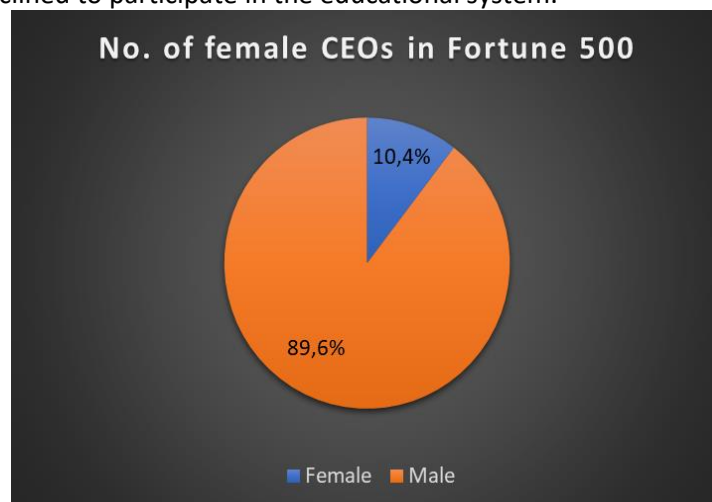

Fig. 2. *Share of females CEO in Fortune 500 companies.* Source: Fortune.com

Another consequence of the fact that women have a higher level of agreeableness can also be observed in the distribution of CEOs by gender. At the beginning of 2023, the number of female CEOs crossed a milestone. Currently, of Fortune 500 Companies, 52 companies have the position of CEO occupied by a woman, and it is the first time in history that the share of female CEOs exceeded 10% of Fortune 500 Companies.

5. Conclusions

Regarding the gender distribution in the online consumption of courses, a first conclusion could be that marketing in online learning should address women to a greater extent. However, upon a more detailed analysis, one may realize the importance of agreeability in online courses. Thus, promoting online learning to people with higher levels of agreeableness could provide better results, but one may find it more difficult and more expensive to obtain data about the required segment.

6. Proposals

For policymakers low on resources, we suggest promoting their online courses considering gender preferences. However, we suggest policymakers with a good amount of resources should promote their online course to segments of consumers with high levels of agreeableness. Thus, they can obtain better results regarding the experience and more consumers.

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