

Chapter 10

Promoting Learner Generated Content and Podcasting in Postgraduate Hospitality Education

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ABSTRACT

The chapter aims to investigate the use of podcasting as a means of facilitating learner-generated content in hospitality management at post-graduate level. The research aimed to instigate critical skills development at this postgraduate level, which has been used in delivery at University of Wolverhampton, UK for two years, and addresses a gap in knowledge. Learner generated content is an innovation in this field, where students create 'learning objects' to share with their peer group and tutors. Theoretical perspectives of this technique are explored in the chapter and used to analyse the student experiences of generating a "mockcast" for a new gastronomic concept in a post-graduate hospitality management course. The chapter initially reviews podcasting technologies influence in education, before analysing and discussing the use of learner generated content in hospitality and the wider tourism and leisure subjects.

INTRODUCTION

The nature of the contemporary student has evolved significantly in recent years. Today's

students have been referred to as digital natives who are technologically savvy, and process information differently from previous generations (Prensky, 2001). A society has emerged which reflects an "always-on" culture (Baird and Fisher, 2006) enabling a belief that interaction with

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information can occur, anytime, anyplace, and anywhere. This culture has largely been precipitated by the growth of new forms of social media and related technologies that enable engagement with networks of communities. As a phenomenon, social networking has arguably become a powerful means for interacting, communicating and learning (Barnes and Tynan, 2007). Indeed, its impact is proposed to have a pervasive effect across society, enabling people to engage as a shared community, whatever their age, gender or culture (Goodyear et al., 2003).

A generation of learners are entering higher education having been immersed in a range of electronic devices and gadgets, including personal computers, games consoles, personal music players, mobile phones and so on. These devices structure the daily lives of a generation who have been widely acknowledged as the “net generation” (Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005). The rapid emergence of learning technologies presents both opportunities and threats to a higher education system that has been predicated upon traditional lecture style approaches to learning and teaching (Bach et al., 2007). A traditional lecture is defined as a one-way process whereby the lecturer imparts information via speech and overheads, and students take notes. In this model, the lecturer is active and the student largely passive. Students can interact with the content by asking questions. Recent wide scale research into the adoption and use of learning technologies has noted how students have higher expectations and increasingly desire interactive experiences (Noss, 2008; Ito et al., 2008). Though Burgess and Mayes (2003, p.301) have acknowledged that “pedagogy will evolve to fit with the capabilities of the new technologies”, challenges remain in the embedding of these technologies as part of the learning experience.

Higher education (HE) has been going through a period of significant change and has required teachers, educators and policymakers to be receptive to factors that are driving this change

(Laurillard, 2008). Such factors have included educational policies concerning widening participation and the move towards blended modes of delivery (Motteram, 2006; Hughes 2007; Johnson 2007). Furthermore, the rising expectation of students, which has been driven by the payment of tuition fees, has placed an economic value upon education (Nulden, 2001). As a result the emphasis in HE has been towards enhancing the student experience and this is evidenced through the proliferation of evaluation and satisfaction surveys at module, course and institutional level (Douglas et al., 2006). In order to deliver an enhanced student experience, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have thus been empowered to become more dynamic and flexible in their approach (Laurillard, 2008). This has engendered a culture in some aspects of HE that explores new models of learning and teaching that “meet the needs of a generation of learners who seek greater autonomy, connectivity, and socio-experiential learning” (Lee and McLoughlin., 2007).

Central to these models has been the role of learning technologies to support learning delivery (Motteram, 2006). Electronic modes of communication including virtual learning environments and mobile and wireless devices have influenced learning engagement (Laurillard, 2006). These technologies have facilitated a process of “networked learning” (Steeple and Jones, 2002; Wise and Quealy, 2006) that involves the promotion of “connections” between learners, between learners and tutors and between the learning community and learning resources (Goodyear et al., 2006). However, according to Barnes and Tynan (2007) university teaching has fallen behind changes in the range of new technologies that have emerged.

PODCASTING IN EDUCATION

Podcasting was introduced by “The Podfather”, an ex-MTV VJ, Adam Curry who sought a medium that would facilitate his audiences downloading

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