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Food Marketing Information Literacy: Pedagogical Approaches and Student Success

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Abstract

Given the shift toward an increasingly knowledge-based economy, educators and employers have expressed the need to emphasize information literacy among students (Sternhold and Hurlbert 1998). An information-literate student recognizes the need for information and is able to locate, evaluate, and effectively use the needed information (American Library Association 2013). These skills are particularly useful in food marketing, where effective sales rely on thorough market research. Market information originates from diffuse sources, which makes it necessary to find, compare, and verify information from multiple publications. The increase in information accessibility poses the additional challenge to critically evaluate the sources, assess the information requirements, and evaluate whether the search should be further pursued. In order to most effectively teach information literacy, there is a need to assess how much guidance to provide students. Should students be guided by the instructor or rather be independent in their quest for information literacy?

Our study determines the difference between the impact of a guided vs. self-directed instruction method on students' information literacy skills. We designed a survey to assess the students' information literacy abilities, their familiarity with agribusiness research databases, their confidence at finding key pieces of information, and demographic information. In addition, objective questions tested the students' ability to locate specific types of information through common agribusiness databases. We collected data from two different sections of the same course; one section employed a guided teaching approach and the other used self-directed learning. Results indicate that a scaffolding approach, the increased usage of research databases through guided learning, will enhance information literacy more than self-directed learning. This suggests an emphasis on guided learning of information literacy in undergraduate education, however raises questions about the role of student independence. Our research provides a unique contribution by evaluating two teaching methods simultaneously in multiple sections of one food marketing class with the goal to enhance information literacy. The availability of this research provides insight to

researchers who investigate the design, development, and improvement of teaching methods for effective student learning.

References

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