

# **Student Perception of Online Courses and Behavior in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)**

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# **Student Perception of Online Courses and Behavior in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)**

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper investigates student perceptions of online courses in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). As online courses offered in colleges and universities gain popularity, the number of research devoted to online course has grown exponentially in recent years. According to our literature review, however, most of the existing studies have neglected students from HBCU located in metropolitan area, who may have different motivations to take online courses. Also, there is a lack of research with a theoretical framework that tries to explain African American students' perceptions about online instruction. This study proposes a research model to examine factors that influence students' attitude and intention to take online courses.

## **Keywords**

Perception of Online Course, HBCU

## **Introduction**

In the past few years, popularity of online classes has grown exponentially. Factors such as changed students' expectations and backgrounds, and greater community engagement in continuous lifelong learning were some of the reasons that motivated colleges and universities to engage in online initiatives (Gaytan and Slate, 2002). In addition, the integration of technology into the learning environment of schools has the potential to create a student-centered and technology-based environment that allows students to have greater control and responsibility for the learning process (Gaytan and Slate, 2002). Furthermore, Karelis (1999) noted that online courses hold great opportunity for postsecondary education with lower average per-student costs, while delivering pedagogically sound and even individually-tailored instruction.

As the information technology that facilitates online learning has increased, so does the research that focuses on online learning. Some relevant research topics include methodological issues (e.g., Adams and Seagren, 2004), comparison between online and 'face-to-face' instruction (e.g., Tutty and Klein, 2008; Ury, 2004), usage (e.g., Lundgren and Garret, 2002), and students' attitude and motivation to take online classes (e.g. Brooks, 2003).

Recently studies on e-learning have moved the research focus to factors that affect student intention to adopt an online technology. For example, the study of Chen et al. (2003) utilized the expectancy theory of Vroom (1964) to explain the intention/motivation of students to adopt an online learning technology. They found that students have strong preferences for the potential outcomes (e.g. improving competence in performing course work) of online learning technologies. However, specific factors

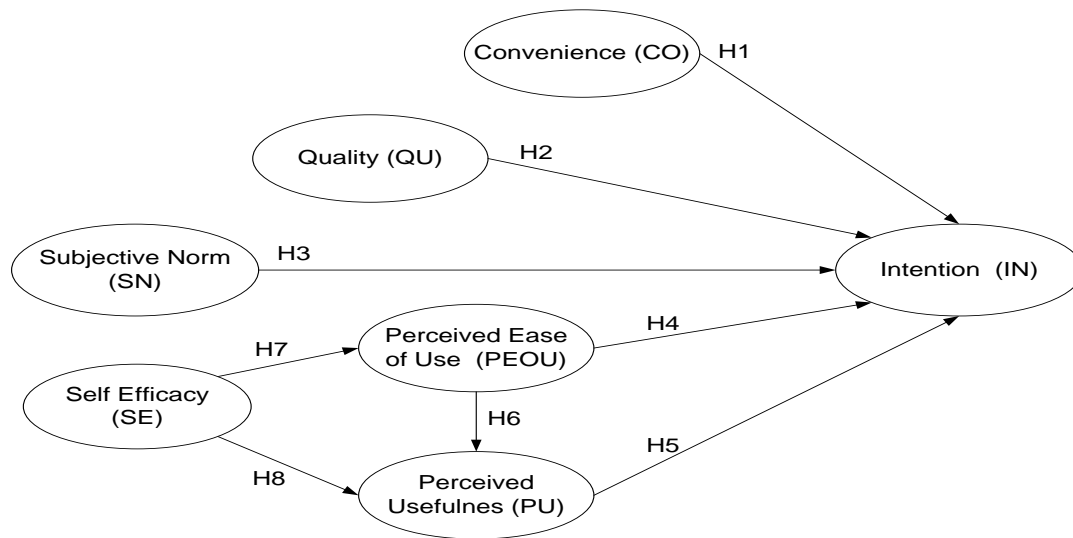
that may directly or indirectly influence the adoption of online learning technologies were not assessed in Chen et al.'s study. Another example includes the study of Grandon et al. (2005) that investigated factors that affect student intention to take online courses with the technology acceptance model framework. This study also emphasizes cultural differences that can affect factors that influence student intention to take online courses. Similarly, a study of Van Raaij and Schepers (2008) investigated factors that influence the acceptance of virtual learning environment with the technology acceptance model of Davis (1989). However, these studies have neglected students from HBCUs located in metropolitan areas, who may have different motivations to take online courses.

A stream of research that has focused on understanding and explaining individual attitudes and behaviors toward new information technology correspond to intention models such as the technology acceptance model of Davis (1989), the theory of planned behavior of Ajzen (1991), and the innovation diffusion theory of Rogers (1995). As pointed out by Agarwal and Karahanna (2000), despite the differences among these models regarding the constructs involved, there are some similarities in the sense that these models are based on individual's beliefs about technology and how these beliefs shape the intention to adopt the technology in question. Based on previous research, we will study some of the constructs involved in these theories and add a few more constructs that may be factors in online course environment. We expect that this addition helps to better explain the adoption phenomenon by students in HBCUs.

This study attempts to explore student perceptions of online courses in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). As online courses offered in colleges and universities gain popularity, the number of research devoted to online course has grown exponentially in recent years. According to our literature review, however, most of the existing studies have neglected students from HBCUs, who may have different motivations to take online courses. Also, there is a lack of research that tries to explain African American students' perceptions about online instruction with a theoretical framework. This study proposes a research model to examine factors that influence students' attitude and intention to take online courses based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).

## **Research Model**

The Study will examine the following conceptual model that was developed based on the technology acceptance model (TAM) by Davis 1989 and the innovation diffusion theory of Rogers (1995). The model may be altered to explore some other possibilities. Additionally, some demographical factors that may affect the relationships will be examined.



## *Hypotheses*

H1: Convenience has a positive effect on students' intention to take online classes.

H2: Quality has a positive effect on students' intention to take online classes.

H3: Subjective-norm has a positive effect on students' intention to take online classes.

H4: Perceived ease of use has a positive effect on students' intention to take online classes.

H5: Perceived usefulness has a positive effect on students' intention to take online classes.

H6: Perceived ease of use has a positive effect on perceived usefulness.

H7: Self efficacy has a positive effect on perceived ease of use.

H8: Self efficacy has a positive effect on perceived usefulness

## **Methodology**

A survey will be conducted to collect data from students at HBCUs located in the New Orleans area. Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis will be used to test the relationships among the constructs in the model and to test how well the model explains the data collected. It has been considered appropriate for exploratory study and testing predictive models. PLS, as a structural equation modeling technique, includes two parts of model testing: measurement model and structural model. In order to test a research model, the measurement model first has to be evaluated (validity test) and then the structural model has to be tested (hypothesis testing).

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