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The effect of anticipatory emotions on students' performance in marketing simulations

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to analyze the effects of goal-directed feelings on student's performance in marketing simulations. Calculating path coefficients from data collected at two points in time, the authors tested a model consisting of four constructs personal stakes, anticipatory emotions, volitions and goal-directed behavior. The results suggest that positive and negative anticipatory emotions mediate the relationship between personal stakes and volitions and determine student motivation, behavior and actual performance independently from simulation design, simulation environment and cognitive personality characteristics of the participants. Implications for educators include the need for active pursuit of anticipatory emotion development. **Design/methodology/approach** – The model consists of the four constructs: personal stakes, anticipatory emotions, volitions and goal-directed behavior. Personal stakes determine involvement and are perceived based on an evaluation of the degree of potential impact of one's performance on one's personal well-being. Anticipatory emotions, as explained before, are affected by personal stakes and can be either positive or negative. They influence volitions or wills; these are intentions consisting of both directive components (for example, strategy planning and approach selection) and motivational components (for example, the commitment to a necessary effort). Volitions are the mediators that transform anticipatory emotions into goal-directed behaviors. These goal-directed behaviors comprise the fourth construct, consisting of mental and physical efforts aimed at accomplishing a specific objective. **Findings** – The hypotheses were tested calculating path coefficients. All hypotheses were supported and statistically significant ($p < 0.01$; one-tailed significance test). With regard to H1, personal stakes were positively related to both positive and negative anticipatory emotions, with a particularly strong relation to positive emotions. Consistent with H2, anticipatory emotions were strongly related to volitions and, thus, heavily influencing the extent to which students would engage in planning and compare their own effort against that of their fellow students. Fueled by the anticipatory emotions, the volitions, in turn, were strongly related to the actually exhibited behavior, supporting H3. In other words, the students put their intentions into practice and engaged in careful simulation planning as well as in an effort that they perceived to be superior to the one of their peers. It is then no surprise that H4 was also supported. The more the students attempted to be carefully prepared and the harder they tried to outperform their fellow students, the more likely the achievement of the desired objectives became. Finally, H5 was supported, even though only weakly with regard to negative outcome emotions. This indicates that successful performance leads to positive emotions, but a failure in the marketing simulation (measured by a non-achievement of objectives set) does not necessarily make the students feel bad. **Originality/value** – In conclusion, the study provides the rising number of marketing educators using computerized simulations with an approach to increase student motivation and performance. It has become obvious that personal stakes alone are not sufficient to fully develop commitment on the side of students. Rather, anticipatory emotions serve as the mediator between those stakes and students' volitions. © Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

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