

# IS ONLINE LEARNING EFFECTIVE FOR PRACTICE-BASED TOURISM COURSES? A CONSTRUCTIVE LEARNING APPROACH

## Abstract

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*Purpose* – The aim of this paper is to 1) measure the effectiveness of online learning in practise-based tourism courses, 2) identify the factors that influence the effectiveness of online learning and 3) propose strategies to encourage tourism students to adopt constructive learning in online learning environments.

*Methodology/Design/Approach* – A qualitative methodology was used to analyse data from students participating in an online course entitled “Field Study in Tourism”. Students were surveyed after completing the teaching semester and asked to give their opinions and comments on the effectiveness of online learning. A total of 32 students gave their opinions on the effectiveness of online learning. The authors used applications for online communication during online learning, such as Google Classroom, Zoom and WhatsApp.

*Findings* – The results show that students have very different assessments of the effectiveness of online learning, with most students stating that online learning is less effective for practise-orientated tourism courses. For most students, learning is very efficient when it is applied directly in practise after learning the theory. They should be able to analyse what is happening in the field through direct observation. The students mentioned various factors (e.g. internet access, economic aspects, family support and the environment) that influence the success of online learning.

*Originality of the research* – The findings are in line with constructivist theory, which assumes that a combination of factors relating to learners, environmental factors and teachers are responsible for achieving the goals of constructivist learning. The paper extends our knowledge of constructivist (online) learning by discussing both TLE (teacher, learner, environment) and institution-based models that need to be developed in order to effectively apply and utilise the educational benefits of constructivist learning theory and make online learning appropriate for practise-based tourism courses.

**Keywords** constructive learning, practice-based tourism course, field study in tourism, online learning

## Original scientific paper

Received 2 April 2023

Revised 9 June 2023

28 September 2023

19 October 2023

Accepted 21 November 2023

<https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.30.2.6>

## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic was a crisis affecting all countries for a prolonged period. Indonesia was no exception, having been affected by COVID-19 since early January 2020. The major impact of the coronavirus pandemic was the elimination of human interaction and public activities to minimise the risk of transmitting COVID-19 (Almeida et al., 2022; Chakraborty & Maity, 2020; Pratiwi & Novani, 2022). The large number of people affected by COVID-19 in Indonesia critically affected the educational sector as well. On 4 May 2020, there were 11,587 COVID-19 patients in Indonesia: 8,471 were treated, 845 died and 1,876 recovered. In anticipation of the spread of the coronavirus, the Indonesian government instructed educational institutions at all educational levels to fully adopt online learning in order to allow students to study from home (Firdaus, 2020; Mayori et al., 2021). Online education due to COVID-19 actually become a global reality (Mishra et al., 2020; Turnbull et al., 2021). Makassar Tourism Polytechnic transferred all teaching online, including the teaching of practice-based tourism courses such as the course Field Study in Tourism (studi lapangan pariwisata or SLP). As the COVID-19 restrictions did not allow teachers and students to conduct any physical visits/field trips to destinations and/or tourism companies, the digitalisation of practice-based courses was unavoidable and necessary.

In tourism education, there are numerous studies providing evidence of the benefits of online learning (e.g. Lomine, 2002) as well as exploring the various factors (in relation to technology, instructors and students) that need to be considered for designing and implementing effective online learning pedagogies (Lu & Chen, 2011; Sigala, 2004). Nevertheless, research on online learning mainly focuses on theory-based courses, while academics also often ignore the benefits of online learning for practice-based courses (Hasanuddin, 2022; Hikmat et al., 2020). Hence, we still know very little about the application of online learning for practice-based courses, as well as how to effectively design online learning that can ensure the achievement of learning outcomes in courses “requiring” the physical presence of students in the industry but instead they are delivered online. Given the essential and beneficial role of field trips and field studies in tourism curricula, there is an urgent need to understand how to implement effective learning when the traditional learning processes taking place onsite are transferred in online learning environments.

The need to conduct research to fill in this gap is also justified because of the following reasons. First, the greatest majority of tourism studies about online learning primarily focuses on issues related to the benefits of online learning and students' satisfaction (e.g. Bailey & Morais (2005); Gomezelj & Čivre (2012); Kuo & Belland (2016); Livingston & Condie (2006), while providing less research attention on how to effectively design online instructional practices. Second, although there is a plethora of research advocating the learning benefits of constructivist theory or constructivism (Chuang, 2021; Krahenbuhl, 2016; Luong & Kim, 2022; Mayombe, 2020; Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019), there is limited academic debate and evidence about the former in online learning and tourism education. For example, although research shows that constructivism can help students better understand the course material (Brown, 2014; Juniu, 2006; Schell & Janicki, 2013), we know very little on how constructivism can boost the students' learning processes and outcomes by better interpreting real-world experience and/or knowledge obtained from practice-based courses (Amin et al., 2022; Bronack et al. 2006). The few recent studies looking at constructivism in online learning have mainly focused on investigating technological factors (Bilotta et al., 2021; Lötter & Jacobs, 2020) and/or issues related to students' learning engagement (Banihashem et al., 2022), ignoring to examine other pedagogical issues which are equally or more important (Lei & So 2021:13). Finally, past research has investigated and considered online learning as a supplemental rather than an essential and a sole component of the learning process (Sari & Asmendri, 2019), which was the case during the pandemic as educational institutions were forced to operate only online even for the delivery of practice-based courses (Ashour et al., 2021; Firmansyah et al., 2021).

To address the above mentioned gaps, this study aimed to examine how a constructive learning approach can be adopted in order to design effective online learning for practice-based courses in tourism. In this vein, the study contributes to the literature by exploring the applicability and benefits of constructivism theory in online learning environments digitising learning of practice-based courses and for which traditionally online learning has not be considered as appropriate to support and ensure the course learning objectives and out-comes. In doing so, the study also provides useful practical insights to many educators teaching practice-based courses who have not considered so far online learning as an instructional practice to complement and/or substitute their instructional practices. To achieve its aims, the study set the following objectives: 1) analyse the effectiveness of online learning for practice-based courses from the perspective of tourism students, 2) identify the factors supporting and inhibiting the effectiveness of online learning and 3) identify and propose strategies to increase the effectiveness of online learning using principles adopted from constructive learning. This study provides an overview of the inhibiting factors or challenges in implementing online learning as perceived by tourism students. Data were collected to answer the following questions: 1) is online learning effective in achieving the goals of practice-based courses for tourism students, 2) what are the supporting and inhibiting factors of online tourism learning and 3) how can online learning be optimised using the principles of constructive learning.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.1. The Concept of Online Learning

The term 'online learning' often overlaps with the term 'e-learning'. For Bach et al., (2006:1) e-learning refers "any technology that can assist learning; therefore it must include radio, television, digital projector, computers, and so on". Online learning refers to the use of technology to help teachers and students communicate with each other (Bach et al., 2006; Dhawan, 2020; Munoz et al., 2021). E-learning is part of online learning, whereas both e-learning and online learning are considered part of distance education (Keengwe & Kidd, 2010; Urdan & Weggen, 2000). Both e-learning and online learning utilise the internet to implement teaching and learning. Furthermore, teachers may combine face-to-face and web-based teaching strategies to provide various learning experiences. Courses that combine the two approaches are called blended courses (Diep et al., 2019; Dziuban et al., 2018; Gao et al., 2020; Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Simonova, 2018), in which teachers and students use advanced technology applications for learning purposes. The authors implemented face-to-face and online learning for the SLP course. However, the focus of this paper is the teachers' utilisation of online media for teaching purposes and so, allowing students to gain online learning experience.

Online learning has been the only and forced choice of universities in Indonesia since the spread of the coronavirus. The decision to eliminate face-to-face lectures with students was taken in order to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. Institutions at all levels of education in Indonesia adopted the same online learning policy in order to be able to continue teaching and learning processes. According to Salmon (2011), online learning is one of the ways in which technology can be used as a learning medium. Implementing and facilitating effective online learning requires active participation by the teacher or instructor (Davis et al., 2020; Elliott & Smith, 2005; Li & Guo, 2015; Vonderwell, 2004; West & West, 2009). Learning is an ongoing process, so the coronavirus pandemic is not an excuse to continue teaching.

The role of teachers in delivering effective online learning can include innovation and creativity. Salmon (2011) proposed a five-stage model for e-learning activities: 1) familiarising students with wiki technology, 2) developing trust between students through short interactive e-activities, 3) providing opportunities for students to share information, 4) allowing students to collaboratively create knowledge and 5) encouraging students to take ownership of their own learning and provide support to others. These five levels can serve as a reference for educators in implementing an online learning curriculum.

Talbot & Cater (2014) presented learning with the principle of collaboration. Collaborative principles are de-fined as a blend of skills and knowledge through learning in the workplace (Sigala, 2012). In the context of tourism learning, the real world of work is the tourism industry, governmental and non-governmental organi-sations and tourism businesses. Therefore, the curricula implemented must take into account students' readi-ness to meet the real needs of the work world (Tribe, 2002). Students' ability to think critically is a fundamen-tal requirement in developing human resources, especially during field study in tourism.

Technology has affected the way teachers and students implement learning strategies. Traditional classes, the choice of most teachers, have switched to technology-based online learning, including in tourism learning (Lei & So, 2021). COVID-19 has served as a catalyst for teachers to implement online learning, using technol-ogy to improve flexibility and eliminate boundaries (Davis et al., 2019; Lei & So, 2021). Using technology-based applications in online learning is an essential skill for students. Therefore, online learning has encour-aged students to learn and use technology. Qiu et al., (2021) affirmed that mastery of technology and infor-mation in tourism education is one of the keys to success for students in fulfilling the world of the tourism industry. Therefore, mastering technology can support tourism students' future careers.

Tourism students must equip themselves with hard skills and soft skills. Hard skills relate to the technical abilities possessed by students in carrying out tasks in the industrial world (Weber et al., 2013), while soft skills are related to the personality and attitudes a person possesses in completing work tasks. Sisson & Ad-ams (2013) identified the skills needed for managerial positions in the tourism industry: conceptual, leader-ship, interpersonal, administrative and technical skills. Tourism students should improve their competencies in these skills either through traditional classes or online learning.

Online learning should enhance the achievement of soft skills and hard skills. Online learning can be a driving force for students to master technology, as they must be able to understand and use the relevant technology in order to follow the learning process. Choi et al. (2021) emphasised the importance of establishing and encour-aging communication between students and relevant stakeholders so universities can provide educational ser-vices and achieve learning goals. The success of online learning requires exemplary commitment from the various parties involved in its implementation (Wang et al., 2020). The acquisition of both hard skills and soft skills can be achieved through communication between students and related parties, who can listen to and meet students' expectations for optimal online learning. Teachers, for example, play an essential role in online learning by planning and implementing course lesson plans.

Tourism students should possess varied skills to enable them to effectively perform in the tourism workplace. For Lu & Chen (2011), online learning allows students to think critically. They argued that "engaging students in dialogue with critical-thinking questions can stimulate students to participate, construct new meanings, and achieve new knowledge of the changing world of tourism" (2011:274). Online learning is useful because stu-dents can engage in a creative learning environment. The use of technology in online learning can enhance tourism students' ability to work independently and in a creative learning environment (Agyeiwaah et al., 2022). The students will try to understand the lessons, and creative efforts will be an option for tourism stu-dents. Furthermore, the tourism industry relates to serving people; thus, tourism students should become skilled at serving people. Shyju et al. (2021) argue that teachers may implement service-based learning to im-prove tourism students' skills via online education.

Visiting tourist attractions for educational purposes is part of experiential learning in tourism. Academics have used various methods for implementing experiential learning. For Arcodia & Dickson (2009), field trips in tourism have the same goal as educational tours in that they are activities for implementing practical learn-ing. In experiential learning, students are required to improve their competence by connecting what they learn in the course with real situations (Hirsch & Lloyd, 2005). Wong & Wong (2009) linked the terms 'educational tourism' and 'field trip' to explore the concept of experiential learning. Similarly, the term 'field trip' is part of experiential learning, involving students' gaining an understanding of a destination through three steps: pre-trip, trip and post-trip (Sanders & Armstrong, 2008).

Teachers or educators help students gain a comprehensive understanding of their courses through field trips. In this vein, the concept of 'academic field trip' help us to better understand the implementation of experien-tial learning and the latter's benefits in terms of giving the students the opportunity to practice, experience and comprehend theoretical concepts in a real situation (Gonzalez-Herrera & Giralt-Escobar, 2021). During an academic field trip, students become part of the community, residing and gaining first-hand experience in different industry environments. Hence, the experiential learning should encourage students to explore and 'see' their community and environment through a more theoretical 'lense', think critically, identify issues, problems or areas of improvement and allow them to mature mentality by implementing problem-solving learning.

## **1.2. Constructivist Theory and its Relevance to the Tourism Learning**

Learning theories are heavily discussed in tourism, as they heavily influence the development of human re-sources in tourism. Constructivist theory is one of the learning theories receiving much of the academic atten-tion. According to Bruner (1990), constructivist theory highlights that learners have the opportunity to apply their cognitive structure to understanding a learning topic. Active learning can help students build their knowledge. Paris (2011) used the term 'constructivism theory' in studying tourism education.

Jean Piaget (1896–1980) is considered one of the proponents of constructivist theory (Pritchard, 2017). According to Pritchard (2017), constructivist learning theory stresses the importance of knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes for the learner. Similarly, most tourism courses in higher education measure the competence of graduates by their skills, knowledge and attitudes. In addition to these three factors, students should have technological competence that enables them to work in the digital era (Ahmad et al., 2018; He & Li, 2019; Junaid, 2018; Morellato, 2014; Ndou et al., 2019; Qiu et al., 2021; Swarbrooke et al., 2003).

Constructivist theory also emphasises that active learning depends on creating a learning environment that is relevant to the real world. In the context of tourism, effective learning also depends on class concepts or materials being associated with the real world of tourism. According to West & West (2009), it is the duty of the teacher or instructor to provide or create a realistic atmosphere or context so that the learner understands the real conditions of a learning topic. Learning activities that lead to real life can stimulate students' motivation to learn, especially those who are studying independently.

The role of teachers in organising and creating the learning environment can encourage students to improve their skills and complete assigned tasks (Goh & Sigala, 2020; Sigala, 2002; Talbot & Cater, 2014). Teachers play a role in facilitating students' learning. Various teaching methods or strategies can influence learners' motivation to engage in the learning process. Student performance is influenced by how teachers utilise resources and infrastructure in their teaching. The use of technology, for example, is one factor that teachers must leverage to create optimal learning.

Constructivist theory stresses the importance of students comprehending information individually. Students should discover information, find solutions to problems they encounter and manage their individual method of learning (Febrianto et al., 2020). Online learning enables students to learn subjects individually or with the help of a facilitator or teacher. Furthermore, teachers should provide more time for students to engage with information from different sources. Various issues occur in tourist destinations, and students should reflect on their constructive learning based on the different phenomena. In addition, different applications help students and teachers to share information about tourist destinations. Studying tourist destinations will be easier since students may explore information about tourism by using online media.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. The Research Process

The authors obtained data from an online learning process and by students through online interviews conducted from March to May 2020. Countries worldwide, including Indonesia, experienced the peak of COVID-19 in 2020, forcing Makassar Tourism Polytechnic to implement online learning. In this period, the authors implemented online learning following the university's policy for online learning. The research frame is one semester, during which the authors investigated the effectiveness of online learning.

Students who had studied during the semester provided arguments and opinions on the effectiveness of online learning conducted by the authors through the Google Classroom system. The authors also utilised other applications for online communication during online learning such as Zoom and WhatsApp. After the semester-long learning process was complete, tourism students were asked to provide their opinions and arguments on the effectiveness of online learning, especially in the Field Study in Tourism (SLP) course. During the corona-virus pandemic, the interaction between teachers and students was very limited. However, the authors utilised Google Classroom to collect data on the students' opinions about the process of online learning.

A total of 32 students provided their assessments on the effectiveness of online learning. Students provided comments in relation to the following three main questions:

1. What do you think of online learning for the course Field Study in Tourism (SLP)?
2. What is your experience in online learning?
3. What do you suggest for optimum online learning for the field study in tourism?

The three questions guided the authors in two ways: first, by enabling them to analyse the informants' perception of the learning process; second, by providing them with an understanding of the effectiveness of online learning in the SLP course. In addition, students were also invited to participate in online interviews in order to further explain their experiences. Sampling was used for identifying and targeting students, which is an appropriate sampling method for collecting data from an appropriate sample to address the research aims.

The students who attended online learning for one semester are the primary informants for this research. For this reason, the authors argued that the students' comments and opinions are relevant data to justify the trustworthiness of the research. The study quotes the students' opinions and comments to strengthen the authors' argument concerning the effectiveness of online learning for practice-based courses. The students have experienced the online learning process, so they are relevant informants for this study. The students who participated in this research have different backgrounds, including origins (different areas in Indonesia), tribe and parents' economic condition. However, they had the same experience attending the course at their university. They passed the Field Study in Tourism (SLP course) in Semesters 1, 2, 3 and 4. They attended on-the-job training in Semester 5. During the research process, they studied in Semester 6.



Validity and reliability are the elements of trustworthiness (Rose & Johnson, 2020). ‘Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, while qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher’s approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects’ (Cresswell, 2014:201). The authors utilised the views of research participants who provided information for the study. The authors read the information provided by the students, understood the data, and created themes and explanations for meaningful communication. Thirty-two students provided their perspectives, enabling the authors to categorise and interpret their statements. The authors check the extent of qualitative information during the research process and ensure the accuracy of the information from the students.

The authors converted the informants’ statements into meaningful interpretations based on the qualitative information provided. Guided by reliability principles, the authors employed methods for understanding the effectiveness of online learning. Furthermore, consistency in utilising qualitative information from the students indicates the reliability of the research. In other words, the authors employed analytical procedures, providing relevant data for online learning analysis. Constructive-based learning theory, as this study’s theoretical stance, has enhanced the research’s trustworthiness. This study has proposed models for constructive-based online learning by presenting the students’ perceptions.

The process of data collection as presented above is part of qualitative research using descriptive data from research informants. The data obtained are qualitative data in the form of descriptions and opinions given by research informants about the learning process. Qualitative research is an approach that understands reality from the informant’s perspective. From the qualitative information obtained, the authors performed qualitative data analysis through thematic principles. Thematic principles are made by categorising data to further interpret research data. The stages of the research method are described as follows:

1. The authors implemented the online learning process utilising Google Classroom, Internal Academic System (Siakad), Zoom and WhatsApp.
2. Students followed the online learning process naturally.
3. In the last week of the semester, the authors asked students to answer questions (via online interview) about the effectiveness of online learning for the Field Study in Tourism course.
4. The authors carefully analysed the answers provided by the students of tourism management (informants) and categorised the data based on thematic principles.
5. The authors interpreted the data obtained for research findings and conclusions.

## 2.2. An Overview of Course ‘Field Study in Tourism’

Makassar Tourism Polytechnic of Indonesia utilises a theory and practice learning curriculum with a ratio of 40% theory to 60% practice. Tourism management is a diploma four programme focused on vocational destination education. The course is taught based on the higher education curriculum inaugurated by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia. The structure of the course consists of weeks of theory and weeks of practice. In the implementation phase, students learn courses based on the types of courses, including theory-based courses, practice-based courses and theory and practice-based courses. The majority of courses taught in tourism management are theory and practice-based courses. Table 1 indicates the practice-based courses taught in tourism management at Makassar Tourism Polytechnic, Indonesia.

Table 1: Practice-based courses in tourism management at Makassar Tourism Polytechnic, Indonesia

Courses	Year (semester) taught	Number of credits per semester
Introduction to Hotel	Year 1 (Semester 1)	2 credits
Tourism Geography Year 1 (Semester 1)		2 credits
English for Specific Purpose 3	Year 2 (Semester 3)	2 credits
On-the-Job Training	Year 3 (Semester 5)	10 credits
Ecotourism	Year 3 (Semester 6)	2 credits
Applied Research in Tourism	Year 4 (Semester 7)	10 credits
Final Research Project	Year 4 (Semester 8)	10 credits
Field Study in Tourism	Year 1, 2, 3 (Semesters 1, 2, 3, 4, 6)	10 credits total

Source: Curriculum of Poltekpar Makassar, 2014

Field Study in Tourism (SLP) is taught during the week of practice and is two credits for one semester. Students study the SLP course from Semester 1 to Semester 6 with the exception of Semester 5, when the on-the-job training programme is substituted. The SLP course gives students the opportunity to see the actual conditions of tourism destinations by conducting analysis based on tourism concepts or theories. Ideally, the SLP course is conducted in the field, with students visiting various tourist attractions and studying destinations from various perspectives, such as management roles, community participation, opportunities and challenges in developing tourist attractions, tourism ventures and tourist behaviour. Students also strengthen their knowledge and skill for managing tourism destinations by studying and providing solutions to issues that may arise in tourism management.

The authors taught the SLP course in Semester 6 and implemented a face-to-face teaching strategy as well as online teaching from January to May 2020. Prior to the spread of the coronavirus in Indonesia, all lecturers were instructed to run online teaching and learning. Field studies were conducted at the following locations prior to the implementation of online learning:

1. Lakkang Tourism Village to conduct an analysis of nature-based tourist attractions and the public perception of tourists towards the tourist attraction.
2. Ecotourism Lantebung of Makassar City to understand and analyse ecotourism, conservation efforts and community participation in nature-based tourist attractions.
3. The fishing village (*kampung nelayan*) in Makassar City to analyse the potential of rural tourism.
4. The Balla Lompo archaeological site and Pattingalloang Museum to analyse various perspectives on cultural tourism attractions.
5. Fort Rotterdam, a cultural heritage site, to analyse tourism potential and tourists' perception of Makassar City as a tourism destination.

The Field Study in Tourism online course began mid-semester in February 2020 and continued through May 2020. From the learning process, the authors applied three teaching strategies:

1. Learning concepts and reality: A concept or theory of tourism was assigned based on reference books. Students then analysed tourism destinations based on the topics of discussion.
2. Self-study teaching strategy. Students reviewed the tools and topics identified by the authors. The authors then conducted an online meeting to listen to the students' presentations.
3. Consultative and discussion learning. Teachers communicated with students and explained how to input data through systems or internet applications, such as how to input data on SPSS and Google Forms.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Factors Affecting Online Learning

The implementation of online learning was not without obstacles or challenges, especially those related to students as learners. Factors inhibiting online learning can be divided into three categories: internal factors with students themselves, environmental factors and situations, and external factors. Table 2 provides an overview of the factors influencing online learning in student-led tourism study learning.

**Table 2. Students' perceptions about the factors inhibiting online learning**

Internal Factors	External factors	Situation and environmental factors
Economic conditions	Communicating with a group can sometimes make students less aware of the context that the lecturer describes. They compare this to studying in a classroom or field, where ample opportunities for discussion with friends and lecturers help them easily understand what they are learning.	Low internet connection
Students cannot focus on learning because most lecturers give assignments Lecturers do not understand the students' condition	Family conditions and support	Damaged mobile phones
Limited internet quota		Problems with internet accessibility in rural areas

Source: Authors, 2020

Internal factors are any obstacles or challenges students face that originate from themselves. In this study, the authors found that students' economic situations varied greatly, affecting their ability to buy internet quota. To be able to study online, students must have enough internet quota. When a lecturer is going to have an online communication or meeting, it requires internet quota on mobile phones and strong internet access. However, students' ability to study online can be hindered by the inability to buy internet packages. Similarly, Jaggars' (2011) research found that economically disadvantaged students may be unable to participate in online classes. Their reduced economic circumstances cause them to struggle and seek ways to overcome in-ternet problems, but often they are unable to find a solution and end up not participating in online learning as a result.

Online learning depends on reliable and accessible internet access, and many students need help attaining it. Adedoyin & Soykan (2023) affirmed that online learning utilises technology and participating in learning activities is dependent on students having internet access. Limited internet access is a problem that requires a solution so that all students can study through online learning. Adedoyin & Soykan (2023) stressed the importance of collaborating with educational institutions and internet service providers to provide internet data for students. Assistance from companies is one way to implement a corporate social responsibility programme (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2023).

Some students may not be able to take full advantage of online learning. This is because each semester, they have many courses, each with assignments that students must complete immediately. One student said, 'On the other hand, lecturers often do not understand the condition of students studying online with many tasks that can lower the body's immune system and can be prone to illness. Apparently, many students still work late into night due to the deadline for submitting assignment' (Informant 4, online interview, May 2020). Students sometimes find themselves in situations where overlapping assignments can affect their health. On the one hand, they must maintain good health in order to avoid coronary heart disease. However, they must also complete their homework assignments online. In these situations, students tend to be unable to concentrate on learning online. However, this factor can be overcome because other students can attend lectures on a regular basis and complete all assignments assigned by the lecturers.

Students need encouragement and motivation from their families to take part in online learning. However, some students complain that their families offer little support and understanding for their studies, especially when they are participating in online rather than in-person learning. One informant stated, 'Many parents think that there is no online learning, so they instruct students to help parents work' (Informant 5, online interview, May 2020). From this point of view, it is understandable that families who do not understand online learning are more likely to interfere with its activities. If students follow an online lecture for eight hours, from 8am to 4pm, online learning from the entire course cannot be maximised.

Students' environmental and family conditions affect their concentration, particularly in relation to online learning. Patricia Aguilera-Hermida (2020) affirmed that internet limitations and family conditions limit online learning, contributing to student concentration levels and access to education. If family and environmental conditions do not support students' learning, they may not achieve the expected competencies in online learning. Therefore, communication between students and lecturers is crucial in finding solutions to the ways in which environmental and family conditions affect student learning.

Students also have trouble understanding course materials when studying online compared to studying in the classroom or in the field. Attempts to discuss class materials and concepts with other students often fail for various reasons. This can be overcome through direct communication between faculty and students. Students may have different interpretations or understandings of course materials for a variety of reasons, including internet problems and an unwillingness to ask questions during online lessons. One informant suggested that 'communication with the group sometimes makes the student less aware of the context described by the lecturer' (Informant 5). This factor is categorised as an external factor because the success of the study also depends on the students and faculty who act as motivators for learning.

External factors also influence online learning by students. The coronavirus pandemic required students to return to their hometowns, some of which are in rural areas where internet networks are difficult to access. Even if there is a network, they still must purchase an internet quota package. Both these factors can prevent the residents of those areas from studying online. Students living in areas with reliable internet connections have a much different experience. Aside from internet access, mobile devices are another issue, with some students complaining that problems or limitations with their mobile phones prevent them from participating in online learning, especially in the Google Classroom system. A student states: 'Although we have a guidebook and discuss it with friends, we don't know what's going on and what to do. Talking with friends through the online media has many obstacles because different places with less supportive data networks make it difficult to discuss, when it is fun to suddenly talk about poor networks and outdated data packs that greatly disrupt discussions. This may cause learning to fail effectively' (Informant, May 2020).

Both students and lecturers should make efforts to overcome the inhibiting factors of online learning to attain the goal of learning both hard and soft skills. Zhong et al. (2021) stated that students should have a positive experience and attitude towards online learning. Lecturers can facilitate positive engagement by implementing innovative teaching strategies, whereas students can have a positive attitude towards the learning goals. Zhong et al. (2021) proposed coaching and training programmes for students, facilitated by the university, focusing on efforts to facilitate learning during a crisis. In other words, efforts to overcome factors that affect online learning are essential for achieving learning goals.

The SLP course requires students to identify and analyse tourist attractions based on different concepts and frameworks. This experience is quite different in online learning settings. This study revealed that most students see visiting attractions through field trips as a necessary component of the course, along with having lecturers as facilitators. Students gain a better understanding of tourist attractions, and can resolve any questions or issues, through direct visits and discussions with their teachers. However, with COVID-19, most universities moved to online learning, which made those onsite physical visits and discussions impossible. Sigala's (2004) noted three characteristics teachers should have during e-learning: an appropriate attitude towards their students, technical competence and efforts to facilitate learning. Although online learning is the only option for teachers and students, teachers still play a key role in helping students achieve the expected skills in the SLP

course. Furthermore, Iskin et al. (2022) used a SWOT analysis to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on tourism education from the perspective of distance education in Turkey. Iskin et al. (2022:108) states, "some of the weaknesses include the lack of infrastructure, not being suitable for applied courses, possible internet access problems, and asynchronous applications that are not suitable for interactive activities". In other words, limited interaction between teachers and students may affect the outcome of practice-based courses, including tourism.

Teachers must ensure that learning goals can be achieved by implementing online learning. Sigala & Baum (2003) propose two skills that the university should emphasise for future learning implementation: facility with updated technologies for the students' learning, and improved knowledge management skills among teachers and students. To succeed with online learning, students and teachers must adapt their teaching and learning strategies to current technology. Two positive impacts of utilising technology products in online learning include: first, students have more understanding about destinations in the world after using technology for information search; second, teachers and learners utilise technology for online communication to solve issues related to the learning process. The SLP course exemplifies how teachers and students should implement online learning by considering learning goals. Teachers should design the online course by having it teach the various skills that students must have after they attend online learning. The teachers may start the online course by ensuring students understand tourism phenomena and how to implement management knowledge in the context of employment in that field.

The tourism industry requires employees who can use their technical skills in the workplace (Baum, 2007). Universities that study tourism should reflect this in their curricula to advance students' technical skills. The development of technical skills required at the tourism workplace should be the primary focus of university's tourism curricula. The SLP course is characterised by visiting attractions to ensure the students gain actual experience. However, online learning is an option when teachers must adapt to circumstances that would otherwise hinder their ability to continue teaching (and students' ability to continue learning). Utilising updated technology to understand tourism attractions is a technical skill for the students. In other words, online learning can be helpful if teachers and students implement a curriculum that encourages them to develop technical skills through technology. The tourism industry requires employees who can understand and use technology worldwide.

### 3.2. The Effectiveness of Online Learning: Perspective of the Tourism Students

Through the implementation of online learning conducted by the authors and experienced by the students, the students' perception of the effectiveness of online learning can be divided into three categories or levels: less or not effective, effective or moderately effective and reasonably effective. Students expected the Field Study in Tourism (SLP) course to provide knowledge and skills through direct visits to tourism destinations, with the teacher acting as facilitator. In general, students said that online learning for the SLP course was not effective. Students viewed online learning as an ineffective method because they needed to look directly at the destination and the tourist attractions. A student stated:

'I think learning field study in tourism (SLP course) through online is less effective because SLP course should go down to the field and do a live review of a destination and attractions; when learning online, it will be difficult to achieve the goals of SLP course' (Informant 6, May 2020).

Other students echoed this view:

'The atmosphere and experience gained differ from the previous year's SLP course with an offline mechanism. When the SLP course is online, students only focus on theoretical issues, and there is less tourism attraction description. The implementation of online learning is not optimally responded to and understood by students, and interaction between students is less established. The checklist or assessment indicators we use sometimes need to be more accurate or compatible with the characteristics of the tourist attractions being discussed' (Informant 12, May 2020).

'In my opinion, SLP courses are not optimal through online learning because SLP courses are easier to understand if practised. Theories are necessary, but more practice is required' (Informant 13, May 2020).

Visits to tourism destinations and attractions allow students to interact directly with the managers of tourist attractions. One of the purposes of field trips is to allow students to ask attraction management directly about the best practices for the destination and observe in person why tourism efforts have been successful or not. An informant stated, 'Online learning is not very effective because we are not directly in the destination or tourist attraction. We just imagine destinations and attractions'. More specifically, one student stated, 'I think it is less effective because the SLP course is a course in which learning is highly efficient when practised directly in the field after learning the theory (Informant 7, May 2020). Students expect that after learning the theories of tourism, they should be able to analyse what is happening in the field through direct observation. From the perspective of tourism students, online learning for practice-based courses is ineffective. It can be argued that university students require practical activities through direct observation to obtain a more theoretical and practical understanding of the lessons. However, not all students had the same opinion about online learning. One student said, 'In my opinion, learning online for SLP course is effective as the lecturer provides material with explanations through voice note and we have a book as a reference and guidelines for learning. Even though we do not implement practical activities, it does not mean we do not need learn the theories and concepts of tourism' (Informant 9, May 2020).



Furthermore, another student stated, 'For me, there are many obstacles in understanding the textbook without explanation by the lecturer. However, the lecturer will provide information and present materials through vid-eo call and it is already effective enough' (Informant, online interview, May 2020). These statements indicate that the effectiveness of learning depends on the role of the teacher in facilitating online learning. In the third year, students visit various destinations in Indonesia. With online learning, students are expected to be able to compare what they have learned through online lessons with their second- and third-year experiences. The informant stated, 'With this online method we can gain a broad and complex understanding of an event or event that we can see from our experience have experienced or the events we have personally experienced that we put into interpretation' (Informant, online interview, May 2020). Through online learning, students are required to learn, master and apply a variety of learning technologies. One student affirmed, 'Online learning is effective because of the coronavirus pandemic keeps our lessons monitored, and of course the material we obtain remains organised on a regular basis, so I think SLP course through online learning is still effective where we can continue to gain new knowledge or information by following this lesson' (Informant 9, online interview, May 2020).

Such information indicates that the success of online learning depends on student- and lecturer-related factors. Lei and So's (2021) research about satisfaction with online learning among teachers and students revealed that different factors affect satisfaction with online learning. Factors affecting students' success in online learning include the effectiveness of technology in online learning, the obtained benefits of online learning and the teacher's teaching strategy. Lei and So suggested some actions teachers can take to achieve learning goals. First, lecturers can record themselves teaching the class and share the recording with students, so students who missed the class because of internet or technology constraints can watch the video without being penalised by the lecturers. Furthermore, lecturers can record the class and give students who missed the live class time to watch it. In these ways, constraints in online learning may be overcome by the role of the teacher in facilitating students' online learning.

Regardless of its effectiveness or lack thereof, many students are aware that outbreaks require online learning. One student expressed, 'When viewed from the situation and the current conditions that require the implementation of teaching and learning at homes, then online learning becomes one of the very effective ways for learning (Informant 7, May 2020). At the same time, another informant added, 'But because of the circumstances that make us stay at home, so we have to go online' (Informant 11, online interview, May 2020).

Although the majority of tourism students considered online learning ineffective for practice-based courses, efforts can still be made to make online learning more successful for constructive learning. The main goal of constructive learning is the independence and critical thinking of the students through online learning. It is essential to understand that students have various perceptions of online learning. The authors argue that students will experience learning based on the way the teacher manages the online class. Thus, constructive learning depends on the teacher's role and other factors that encourage students to learn independently.

The change from traditional teaching to online learning makes students accept how universities have adapted to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is the role of teachers to facilitate the learning process, although online learning remains an option. Understanding the effectiveness of online learning will be valuable for academics implementing strategies when teaching online. Agyeiwaah et al. (2022) argue that "it is surprising, however, that current research has given limited attention to attributes that influence students' online learning satisfaction".

### 3.3. Constructive Learning: Models to Optimise Online Learning

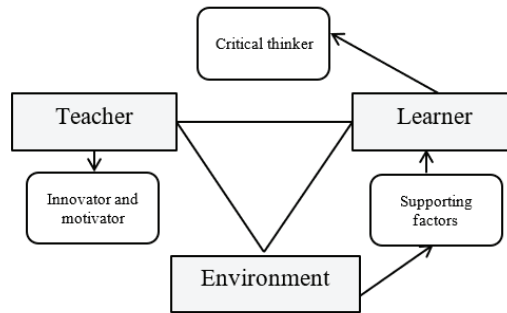
This study recommends online learning models to encourage constructive learning by students. First, the authors recommend the TLE model (teacher/instructor/lecturer, learner/students and the environment) for optimising online learning. Instructors play an important role in motivating students to learn independently. Teachers are considered innovators and motivators. Innovations are defined as teachers' strategies for implementing new methods of online learning. Students receive instruction from the teacher, so their learning will be largely dependent on how the teacher instructs them. Teachers provide learning materials in the context of tourism theory that will be used to analyse tourism destinations in real contexts.

This first model suggests an inseparable relationship between instructors, students and the environment. In this model, the success of constructive learning is due not only to the instructor's role as a provider of information and learning resources but also to the role of students who carry out learning strategies at home. Gomezelj & Čivre (2012) argued that student satisfaction with online learning depends on many factors, including e-learning properties, e-classroom properties and the personalities of the students. In addition, the student's environment plays an important role in encouraging students to take part in online learning. Learners must view the instructor or teacher as a facilitator who can help them answer questions about destination topics. To motivate students and help them overcome environmental problems, instructors should establish and maintain strong communication with learners.

Critical thinking is defined as efforts by learners to analyse destinations based on materials explained by the teacher. A learner affirmed, 'I think studying field study in tourism through online learning is quite effective because we are provided with material to be studied first with complete examples and supported by explanations that add to our understanding' (Informant 9, May 2020). For the informant, online learning for practice-based courses may be useful if the teacher can provide materials that enable learners to critically analyse tourism destinations and learn independently. The goal of constructive online learning

is for learners to understand lessons, apply them to real destinations and critically evaluate tourism destinations through online discussion and presentation.

Figure 1: TLE model for constructive online learning



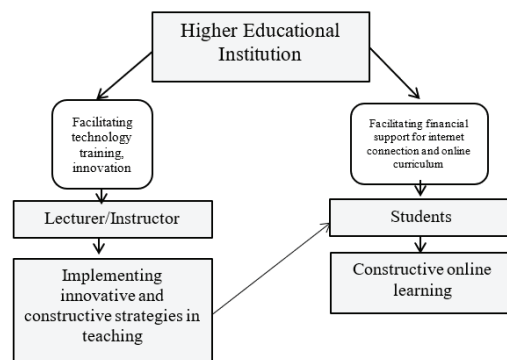
Source: Junaid & Sigala, 2020

Institution-based model as the second strategy to achieve the goals of constructive learning. In this model, the role of higher education is very important in implementing constructive learning. In constructivist learning theory, the students obtain information from outside that enable them to decide what and how they should learn (Pritchard, 2017)). Input comes from teachers that work under the guidelines of educational institution that provide teaching and learning curriculum. As an initial stage, higher education should provide the oppor-tunities for educators or teachers to improve competence through training and skills development focused on constructive teaching strategies and the utilisation of technology for an online teaching. Harrington, et al., (2014) argue that the use of technology is essential to encourage the goals of innovative teaching in tourism. Teachers attend training on a variety of applications that can be used for online learning. Technology training for teachers and students is essential because technology is growing fast, and new applications may arise; thus, teachers and students must adapt to current technology in their teaching and learning process.

Educational institutions also play a role in monitoring teachers in implementing constructive learning and evaluating the success of teachers in carrying out the teaching process. Besides, constructive learning requires the role of the teaching team in producing optimal learning (Thomas & Thorpe, 2019; Yan, 2013). The role of higher education is also very important in encouraging the role of teaching teams to work collaboratively to produce constructive learning goals. Dumford & Miller (2018) affirm that educational institution should con-sider find ways to encourage students' learning through various types of instruction. From the results of train-ing and the implementation of constructive learning by teachers, students will gain constructive learning ex-periences. Constructive learning is inseparable from the role of the teacher because learners will follow the teaching and learning process applied by the teacher. Teachers will apply teaching and learning that combines knowledge and its implementation in real life. Paris (2011) emphasises that teachers have an important role in encouraging and helping learners to achieve the skills and knowledge that will be used in the real world.

In practice-based courses, teachers should apply constructive learning by always bringing students to real life. Learners will adjust and apply the lesson by looking at the real conditions in their area. For the course of field study in tourism, for example, learners will adjust the learning obtained by seeing what is happening in their area as a tourism destination. The application of this model will largely depend on how educational institu-tions implement online-based curriculum by providing financial support for internet connections. Construc-tivist learning theory encourages students to learn reality to bring more positive outcomes. Tourism education requires the implementation of curriculum planning that helps teacher and student to achieve goals of higher institution vision and mission (Cooper, 2002; Fajrini et al., 2018; Su, 2014). This model also emphasises that higher education must ensure that learners have an internet network so that they do not have a burden in the online learning process (figure 2).

Figure 2: Institution-based model for constructive online learning



Source: Junaid & Sigala, 2020

## CONCLUSION

### Theoretical Contributions and Implications

Most research indicates that online learning is a novel and effective learning strategy encouraging students to learn independently (Girik Allo, 2020; Panigrahi et al., 2018; Paudel, 2021; Pei & Wu, 2019). However, the results of this study demonstrate another dimension about the effectiveness of online learning highlighting the important co-creation role and responsibility of instructors and students alike to be able to take advantage of the affordances of constructivism learning and help with their practices towards the materialisation of its benefits. This study advances the literature through two major findings. First, students expect the course to include direct visits to the field through the study of tourism destinations. However, the coronavirus pandemic that occurred in many countries forced teachers and students to transition to online learning. As a result, the effectiveness of learning largely depended on the instructor's role in designing and implementing online constructivism instructional practices. In addition, as constructivism requires an enhanced students' engagement with learning processes, the effectiveness of online learning was found to highly depend on the students' ability to overcome obstacles or challenges preventing them from participating in online learning.

Second, this research has found that environmental and individual related factors (such as family support, the students' economic ability to afford for internet quota and internet accessibility) all affect the sustainability of online learning. Factors identified by the study significantly affected the achievement of the constructive learning goals. This study contributes to the constructivist learning theory by providing evidence that the success of online learning does not only require students to be active learners, but it also depends on environmental factors and the ability of the instructors in applying innovative teaching methods. Indeed, the study revealed that the students' understanding of a learning topic does not only depend on their ability to learn independently and actively, but it is also influenced by other internal and external factors to the students. Online learning is less effective when applied to practice-based courses. Based on constructivist learning theory, students should be able to experience real-world situations and the internet cannot fully simulate the industry reality. When online learning becomes a necessity, constructivist learning is found as a valuable pedagogical approach for digitising practice-based courses and enabling educators to design innovative and creative online instructional practices.

Students have offered their opinions on the effectiveness of online learning based on their experience. Thirty-two students might not fully represent the voice of students who have attended online learning for the practice-based subject. However, the authors argue that the students' opinions are essential for understanding their experiences, particularly as they relate to the SLP course. Different factors affect the effectiveness of online learning, according to tourism students. Tourism and hospitality management include creating human resources to fill the tourism workforce. Hence, the findings in this research contribute to developing the knowledge applicable to the tourism and hospitality management fields. Findings in this paper provide insights into how factors affect the success of online learning, and thus, efforts are essential to address issues related to online learning.

### Practical Implications

This study recommends two models for achieving constructive learning through online learning for practice-based courses. The model offered in this study has practical implications for online learning in practice-based courses. The model in this study is a practical strategy, for example, the role of teachers in motivating students by utilising various types of applications for communication and the role of higher education in facilitating the implementation of constructive learning and strengthening the relationship between teachers and students. The communication developed between the teacher and students to discuss problems in the field can be a practical step in promoting the success of online learning for practice-based courses.

Advanced technology and online learning by teachers and students require teachers to implement different teaching strategies. For example, teachers could provide an online learning module for students to understand and analyse tourism destinations. The teacher should facilitate communication with students by providing explanations. Communication is essential for engaging students in online learning and keeping them motivated. Teachers should utilise technology and encourage students to use internet sources to understand tourism destinations. The emphasis of practice-based courses is on the students' understanding of destination management. This paper has practical implications for encouraging students to use technology as a medium for learning and understanding tourism concepts in a natural context.

### Research Limitations and Future Works

This paper has highlighted contributions to online learning under the framework of constructive learning. Nevertheless, this study has some limitations. For example, this paper uses qualitative information from students. Academics may study online learning by utilising quantitative data and applying different approaches to analysing the effectiveness of online learning. A comparative study with different institutions of higher education is also essential to enhance the knowledge of online learning at different institutions. Academics may also investigate blended learning, as the current situation may differ from learning at

the peak of COVID-19. Post-pandemic, most higher education tourism programmes are utilising a curriculum based on blended learning. Hence, researching factors that affect the success of blended learning may advance the tourism literature, particularly in the field of tourism education. Students take practice-based courses in the hopes of visiting and studying tourist attractions. More investigation into theory-based courses could help understand constructive learning theory.

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Please cite this article as:

Junaid, I. & Sigala, M. (2024). Is Online Learning Effective for Practice-Based Tourism Courses? A Constructive Learning Approach. *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 30(2), 225-238, <https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.30.2.6>



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