

Students' Attitudes towards Textbook Types: Are Students Really Ready for E-Textbooks?

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Abstract

Textbook selection is just one of the many decisions a professor has to make when teaching a class. These selection decisions are sometimes made by the individual professor while other times it is made by committee or department. In many cases, students are not taken into consideration when making these decisions. However considering many professors complain that students do not buy or use the required textbook (Kingkade 2014, Paxhia 2011, Robinson 2011), maybe it is time to think about student's attitudes and preferences before making textbook adoption decisions. Unfortunately there are only a few studies (e.g. Daniel and Woody 2013) that have examined students' perceptions towards the different types of textbooks currently on the market. Because of this, the goal of this exploratory study is to examine the attitudes and opinions of students towards four possible textbook options (hardback, paperback, e-textbook, and looseleaf) in order to better assist in textbook adoption decisions.

Two hundred twenty-three students taking Principles of Marketing from a large public university in the Southeastern United States were asked to complete a brief survey in exchange for extra credit. In this survey, students were asked about their current textbook purchase behavior, preferences to four different textbook options, attitudes towards e-textbooks, and an open-ended opinion question about the respondent's perceptions towards the different textbook options.

When examining student preferences towards the four textbook types, results found that students still prefer paperback textbooks, even if this textbook is at a higher price than some of the other alternatives. When students were asked about their opinions on the various textbook options, it was clear that price, ease of use, health concerns, and ownership desires were the primary reasons why they liked and/or disliked the various textbook options. For many, price was key and many believed that textbook prices, regardless of option, were overpriced. When looking at ease of use of an E-textbook, a majority of the positive ease of use dealt with convenience and space savings while a majority of the negative ease of use dealt with difficulty reading online, increased distractibility, and additional hardware/software/Internet required. When examining the ease of use of physical textbooks, a majority of the positive ease of use comments related to convenience, increased study ability, and the ability to physically hold, highlight, or write in the textbook while the negative

ease of use comments dealt primarily with the weight of a book and durability. For E-textbooks, health concerns primarily dealt with eye strain while for physical textbooks, it was the weight of the textbook that caused the concern. Finally, students commented about ownership issues such as the ability to own the textbook, resell the textbook, have physical possession, and rental opportunities. These results show that professors need to be cognizant of student attitudes towards textbook options prior to making textbook adoption decisions as selecting the wrong textbook type may result in less students purchasing the required text.

References

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Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and Practitioners: This exploratory study examines students' attitudes towards four different textbook options. Results show that paperback textbooks are still the preferred option by students and these attitudes need to be considered by marketing educators when making textbook decisions.

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