

PARADOX OF NEW TEXTBOOK ADOPTION: WHEN DO 'NEWEST' EDITIONS MATTER TO STUDENTS?

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Abstract

Textbooks are an integral part of the higher education process. It is estimated that textbooks provide between 75 and 90 percent of instructional learning (Clow et al., 2006; Stein et al., 2001). Previous research has examined various aspects of the textbook adoption process (e.g., Clow et al., 2006, 2007; Smith and DeRidder, 1997). However, one side of the textbook adoption equation that has received less consideration is student perceptions.

Costs of college textbooks have been rising rapidly over the last decade. Students spend between \$700-1000 per year on textbooks (Allen, 2008), and the average cost of textbooks per semester a few years ago was close to \$900 (Marklein, 2005). Also, textbooks are typically not covered by financial aid (Peek, 2012). The lack of textbook affordability has drawn increased attention nationwide, and many groups – ranging from students, to parents, to teachers and school administrators – have expressed concerns and frustration (Nicholls 2010; Robinson, 2011; Silver et al., 2012).

Research shows that students turn to various alternatives to combat rising costs of textbooks. According to the National Association of College Stores, only 43 percent of students buy the required books for their courses (Carlson, 2005), whereas many students borrow or share textbooks (Clow et al., 2006). However, a study by Robinson found that price may be not the only criterion whether students buy a book. According to this study, one-third of 28 students would buy the required textbook regardless of price, but half would refuse when the book reached a price of \$225 (Robinson, 2011). While the study's results are not representative, the question arises how students make purchase decisions of textbooks, and if there are other options besides costs that influence their decision-making process.

As publishers have increased the frequency with which they revise textbooks, critics have argued that changes in the new revisions are often insignificant. In this workshop the panelists discuss findings of a recent study investigating when 'newest' editions matter most to students.

For example, do students judge the importance of new editions in marketing research courses differently from online marketing, consumer behavior, or marketing management? The panel discussion then focuses on implications for faculty textbook adoption and the potential for creative development of a used (or rental) textbook market for the university bookstore.

References available upon request.