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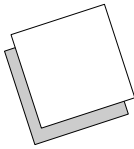
Web vs campus store? Why students buy textbooks online

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Abstract *This study proposes and tests several social and perceptual motivations for shopping online. Using online textbook purchasing as a model, we outline predictors of online purchasing based on motivation theories drawn from traditional online consumer motivation research, social motivation theory, social influence theory and uses and gratifications theory. Our research adds a social and perceptual dimension to much of the typical online motivation research that deals with availability and cost issues. Data were collected using a pencil-and-paper survey of 156 students from a large Northeastern university. Findings of this study indicated that previous online purchase, positive social environment, professor support, knowledge of online retailers, and perception that needs will be met online are all predictors of online textbook purchasing. Implications for advertisers, online textbook retailers, and e-commerce, more generally, are discussed.*

Sales of textbooks more than $6.8 billion

Each semester, college students purchase millions of textbooks. In 2001, The National Association of College Stores estimated the sales of textbooks in college bookstores to total more than $6.8 billion (National Association of College Stores, 2001). In addition to bookstores, however, online retailers, such as varsitybooks.com and bigwords.com, are now capturing more and more of the textbook market. What is motivating this behavior change, that is, what causes students to break out of the traditional pattern of purchasing textbooks at the campus store and instead purchase them online? Can likelihood to make purchases online be predicted by various social and personal characteristics of consumers?

More viable platform

Each year the Internet becomes a more viable product-marketing platform. Many marketing sectors, including books and textbooks, are experiencing rapid growth in online sales, with total Internet sales topping $37 billion in 2000 (Meeker and Pearson, 1997; *eMarketer*, 2000). Although this is still only a fraction of the sales generated by brick-and-mortar stores, Internet growth is allowing online retailers to capture a substantial portion of sales in some sectors. For example, 11 percent of all book sales are expected to occur online by 2002 (Roe, 1999). The rapidly expanding electronic marketplace has opened the doors for new genres of consumer research. The question most commonly asked in this research is what motivates consumers to shop on the Web. Although the research pool is still quite small, many researchers have discovered that lower cost and better product availability are two key reasons why people shop online. But, what if these factors are not significant, as is the case when comparing on- and off-line textbook purchasing. There is

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no statistically significant price advantage to buying textbooks online, nor is there an availability issue, given that textbooks can be purchased in the campus store (Foucault *et al.*, 2000). Yet, students purchase textbooks online, leaving us to question the other possible factors motivating students to turn to the Internet for their textbook needs.

Social factors influencing decision to purchase textbooks online

In an effort to contribute to the relatively small pool of online marketing and sales research, this study focuses on the social factors influencing the decision to purchase textbooks online. Using theories such as social motivation theory, social learning theory and uses and gratifications theory as a theoretical backdrop, this study provides a framework for future advertising and consumer research, demonstrating how peers, authorities, personal perceptions, and past purchasing behaviors influence the likelihood to shop online. It also investigates how predictors of online shopping identified in previous research, such as demographics and security concerns, influence textbook purchasing decisions. In doing so, we also demonstrate that some of these more traditional explanations of purchasing behavior, such as pricing, do not have a significant impact. Finally, we propose advertising and marketing suggestions for both on- and off-line textbook retailers based on social and perceptual climates.

Traditional motivations for shopping online
Demographics
Demographics are often considered when trying to determine why consumers shop online. Although many studies found slight differences in purchasing behavior based on gender and age, the most significant differences are usually associated with income and education levels. Those with higher income and those who have attained a higher level of education are somewhat more likely to shop online (Li *et al.*, 1999). However, most researchers agree that other indicators, such as past purchase and intent, are far more important for predicting shopping habits then are demographics.

Security concerns
Effect of security and privacy concerns

Many previous studies on online shopping behavior have focused on the effect of security and privacy concerns on the decision to shop online. Some studies have found these concerns to be a significant deterrent to online shopping. A study by Bhatnagar *et al.* (2000) found that perception of risk significantly decreases the likelihood that an individual will purchase goods or services online. They also found that higher priced items and ego-centric items, or those items that are strongly representative of oneself, such as clothing or cologne, are considered more risky, and therefore are less likely to be purchased online (Bhatnagar *et al.*, 2000).

Other researchers have found privacy and security concerns to be much less significantly related to the decision to shop online. Helander and Khalid (2000) found that while subjects cited security as a concern when shopping online, their decision to shop online was influenced far more by such factors as convenience, product availability and cost. Similarly, the Wharton Virtual Test Market (WVTM) study showed that security concerns did not affect the decision to shop online, and were not significant predictors of the decision to shop online or the amount of money spent there (Bellman *et al.*, 1999).

Overall, results from studies on the effect of security concerns on the decision to shop are inconsistent. Even the Bhatnagar *et al.* (2000) study that showed that security concerns were significant when consumers considered shopping online indicated that these concerns were much more significant

for high-cost, ego-centric items. Since textbooks are neither high-cost nor satisfy egocentric needs, it seems unlikely that security concerns would play a major role in whether or not to buy them online. Accordingly, we expect that security concerns will have no influence on an individual's decision to purchase online.

Lifestyle

Important predictors of online shopping

Recent research as part of the WVTM suggests that the most important predictors of online shopping included leading a "wired lifestyle" and being starved for time (Bellman *et al.*, 1999). Those who lead a wired lifestyle include those who use the Internet for other purposes such as work, news and communications. Such people have been on the Internet for several years and often receive a large number of e-mail messages a day. They also are likely to be "early adopters" of a variety of high tech devices, both computer-related and not. Finally, and most importantly, those leading a wired lifestyle are considerably more likely to have made one or more purchases online. They are likely to view the Internet as a good place to research, search for and purchase goods.

Time starvation is also a significant predictor of online shopping. Those with little discretionary time, including those who work long hours and those with a number of obligations, tend to have little time to research and buy products in traditional stores (Bellman *et al.*, 1999). As such, those people tend to go online to research and shop for products.

Similarly, Nielson (1999) found that convenience and ease of use were the main reasons that people buy online. When asked, respondents to Nielson's (1999) survey indicated that the promise of low prices attracted them to online retailers, but making the shopping experience easy, pleasant and convenient were the main reasons they actually purchased, rather than browsed, at a particular site.

Likely also to purchase

Although none of these studies pertains specifically to the case of textbook purchasing, it seems likely that those who purchase other items online are likely to also purchase textbooks online. It also seems likely that those who have found the Internet to be more convenient, less hassled, and an otherwise pleasant place to shop would also be more likely to look online for textbooks. Therefore, our first hypothesis deals with previous online shopping as a predictor for online textbook shopping:

H1. Previous positive online purchase is positively correlated with the likelihood of an individual purchasing textbooks online.

Online shopping: a comprehensive theoretical framework
Social influence theory
WVTM and other researchers concluded that Web consumers are likely to shop online to save time and/or money, but what of those consumers who shop online when an equally time- and cost-efficient alternative is present? With regard to textbook purchasing, the time invested in searching for the appropriate books is likely to be similar, regardless of whether the student chooses to shop in the campus bookstore or through an online textbook retailer. If time from purchase until use is taken into account, online textbook shopping could be considered less time-efficient than its offline counterpart. Similarly, the cost of textbooks purchased online is not significantly different from the cost of textbooks purchased in the campus store (Foucault *et al.*, 2000). Clearly, other factors are at play in the decision to shop online. Traditional communication theories, such as social learning theory, social

influence theory and uses and gratifications theory, can be applied to new media and help us identify these issues.

Social influence theory, based on the notion of normative social influence, presumes that groups are governed by sets of rules (the norms) that specify appropriate behaviors and actions. Individuals are pressured to conform to the norms of their social groups and exhibit appropriate behaviors as prescribed by those norms. Those who do not conform are seen as different and difficult and they are subject to ridicule, embarrassment, and ultimately, rejection. The fear of sanction serves as a powerful tool for enforcing group values and promotes strong conformity to group norms (Aronson *et al.*, 1997).

Effect of social influence

This theory has been tested in only a very small number of online shopping studies. Limayem *et al.* (2000) conducted one study that demonstrated the effect of social influence on the decision to shop online. They found that perceived norms did play a role in the decision to purchase online, specifically with regard to family influences. Although they did not find friend influence to be a significant factor, they found that the presence of an Internet-supportive environment, including friends who shopped online, did increase the likelihood of making an online purchase (Limayem *et al.*, 2000). In addition, Kraut *et al.* (1996) found a significant link between perceived norms and intentions to shop online. They found that people are far more likely to use the Internet for shopping if they have a supportive social environment, including friends and relatives who shop online (Kraut *et al.*, 1996).

Groups exerting pressure

Although neither of the aforementioned studies pertains to the specific case of online textbook purchasing, it is reasonable to assume that social influence theory will directly apply in this context. In the specific case of textbook purchasing, however, the groups who are exerting pressure may be somewhat different than the groups in question for other online shopping decisions. Clearly, friends could potentially exert considerable influence on the textbook purchasing decision, just as the influence of friends factors into all online purchasing decisions. However, it seems unlikely that parental and family influence would play a significant role in this case. Since many students are away from home and family, it would be difficult for these groups to be very influential in the decision to purchase textbooks on- or off-line. Instead, norms determined by college professors as to appropriate textbook purchasing outlets are likely to influence the textbook buying decision. Therefore, the next two hypotheses deal with the effect of social pressure on online textbook purchasing decisions:

H2. Peer support for online textbook purchasing is positively correlated with the likelihood of an individual purchasing textbooks online.

H3. Professor support for online textbook purchasing is positively correlated with the likelihood of an individual purchasing textbooks online.

Social learning theory

Humans learn by observing behaviors

Study after study, beginning with Miller and Dollard (1941) has shown that humans learn by observing the behaviors of others. The early Miller and Dollard studies showed that imitative learning occurred when observers picked up on environmental cues and imitated them in personal behaviors (Baran and Davis, 1995). Bandura (1971) later expanded on these studies to include three different ways that social learning might occur. First, through observational learning, individuals can acquire new behaviors simply by watching the behavior represented by someone else. Second, viewing an individual being punished for exhibiting a certain behavior can have an

inhibitory effect, and decreases the likelihood that observers will recreate that behavior. Finally, viewing an individual receive a reward for a threatening or prohibited behavior can have a disinhibitory effect, and significantly increase the likelihood that an individual will reproduce that behavior (Baran and Davis, 1995).

Alerting individuals about the possibility of online purchasing

Although there is limited research in the area, it seems very likely that social learning could affect online purchasing behaviors in a variety of ways. The most basic way that observational social learning could be influencing the decision to shop online would be alerting individuals that the possibility of online purchasing even exists. In the specific case of textbook purchasing, this would translate into knowledge of online textbook retailers. Clearly, if an individual has not learned through friends or the media that there is an alternative to off-line textbook purchasing, he or she clearly could not adopt the behavior. Therefore, my fourth hypothesis deals with awareness of online retailers:

H4. Awareness of one or more online textbook retailers is positively correlated with the likelihood of an individual purchasing textbooks online.

Uses and gratifications theory
The uses and gratifications approach developed by Katz *et al.* (1974) identifies a multi-step process of gratification derived from media use (McQuail and Windahl, 1993). The process begins when media users identify basic needs (derived from Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of human needs) which are influenced by aspects of social structure and individual characteristics. If needs are perceived as problems, relevant action is taken to formulate motives for media use or other kinds of behavior. The selected action will result in gratification, which will be used when evaluating future needs (Rosegren, 1974 in McQuail and Windahl, 1993).

Audience has preferences

Some assumptions associated with this model are the audience is active and goal-oriented in its media use. That is, the audience has preferences in media use and bases use decisions around these preferences. Second, the audience takes initiative in linking the need for gratification to a specific media choice. Again, the audience selects media based on the perception that needs will be met through the use of that media. A corollary to these assumptions is that there are alternative media formats to choose from. Clearly, if only one medium is available, the theory breaks down, as users have no choice but to use the only available medium, regardless of needs.

Clearly, in the case of Internet shopping, users have the choice between a variety of media (on- or off-line chopping, catalog, TV, etc.) and each medium may satisfy different needs. Bhatnagar *et al.* (2000) demonstrated that the perception that the Internet can meet needs is positively correlated with increased online shopping. Subjects who perceived the Internet as the most convenient place to shop were far more likely to shop online more often than those who did not view the Internet as a convenient shopping place. Conversely, those who felt that needs could be better met by not shopping online were considerably less likely to do so. For example, subjects who viewed the Internet as a risky place to shop and were concerned about the security of online transactions were far less likely to shop online than those who did not perceive those same risks (Bhatnagar *et al.*, 2000).

Again, although no uses and gratifications studies deal with the specific topic on online textbook purchasing, and few deal with online shopping at all, the model can be applied to this research. Based on the uses and gratifications

model, textbook purchasing behavior would change and individuals would shop online for textbooks when they perceive online textbook purchasing as a solution to a particular need, and the gratification taken from online shopping will be used when deciding where to shop in the future. With that in mind, my final hypothesis deals with perceived need for alternative shopping outlets and knowledge of the Internet as an alternative to traditional campus retailers:

H5. Perception that purchasing textbooks online will satisfy a need not currently being met by purchasing textbooks in the campus store is positively correlated with the likelihood of an individual purchasing textbooks online.

Methods
The sample

156 surveys were completed

A cross-sectional survey of college students was conducted to learn about their attitudes about textbook purchasing options and to uncover possible motivations for purchasing textbooks online. It combined a series of closed-ended questions with open-ended and free recall questions. A total of 156 surveys were completed. Of those who responded, 45 percent were male, and 55 percent were female. The respondents ranged in age from 18 to 33 years old, with the vast majority falling in the 18-24 years age range.

The measurement

The dependent variable in this study, the student's online textbook purchasing behavior, was measured by asking the respondents to identify what portion of their textbooks they purchased online in the last academic year. The response categories were: "I purchased all of my textbooks online," "I purchased most of my textbooks online," "I purchased about half of my textbooks online," "I purchased a small number of my textbooks online," and "I did not purchase any of my textbooks online." For analysis, these categories were re-coded into two levels: "Online shoppers" for those who responded that they had purchased at least a small number of their textbooks online in the last academic year, and "Non-online shoppers," for those who did not purchase any textbooks online in the last academic year. Based on this split, 36 percent of the respondents fell into the "online shopper" category, in terms of textbook purchasing, and 64 percent were "non-online shoppers." Every respondent answered this question, so all 156 responses were used in the subsequent analysis.

Respondents asked about purchasing textbooks online

A second measure of textbook purchasing behavior was taken by asking respondents whether or not they planned on purchasing textbooks online in the future. Again, this question was measured with five response categories as follows: "Yes, definitely," "Yes, probably," "Yes, but only if I can't find the books in the campus store," "No, probably not," and "No, I will never purchase textbooks online." For analysis, these responses were split into two response levels, "High likelihood for future online purchase," for those who selected the "Yes, definitely" or "Yes, probably" response categories, and "High likelihood for future online purchase," for those who selected one of the remaining three options. The split left 51 percent of the respondents in the "High likelihood" category and 49 percent in the "Low likelihood" category. Those who did not answer this question were removed from analysis and the remaining 145 were included in the subsequent analysis.

Concern for privacy issues was measured by asking the respondents to indicate how concerned about privacy they were when they made online purchases. Concern was measured on a ten-point scale, with one being "Not at all concerned," and ten being "Extremely concerned."

The quality of and satisfaction with previous online purchases (for *H1*) was measured with a series of questions that asked about satisfaction with the product quality and customer service during previous online transactions.

Peer and professor support

Peer and professor support for online textbook purchasing was measured through a series of questions aimed at assessing the climate of acceptance for online shopping. Questions including, how often do you discuss online shopping with your friends, how would you feel if your friends found out that you purchased your textbooks online, and how many of your professors suggested the Web as a textbook purchasing option, were used to assess whether the respondent felt a general support or lack of support for online textbook purchasing.

Awareness of online textbook retailers was measured through a free response question that asked the respondents to write down the names of Web pages that sell new or used textbooks. The responses ranged from zero Web sites to ten Web sites, with the median being two Web sites.

Perception that online textbook purchasing will satisfy a need not currently being met by traditional purchasing outlets (for *H5*) was measured by asking the subjects a series of 13 questions, with response scales 1-10, aimed at assessing their feelings about quality of service, hassle and cost of purchasing textbooks on- or off-line. The 13 questions were re-grouped into three categories, one for each of the topics assessed. Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951) was applied to test the reliability of the groupings, and the measures were found to be sufficiently reliable for analysis (alpha = 0.78 (service), 0.70 (hassle), 0.67 (cost)). Therefore, all responses that indicated an answer were used in analysis for *H5*.

Results

All analyses and tables presented here are based on Chi-square statistics. In order to be able to present the data in relatively parsimonious form, we dichotomized our measures by splitting them at the sample mean. Owing to item non-response the sample sizes vary slightly among tables.

Significant influence

For past purchasing behavior, neither age nor class year had a significant influence on the likelihood of purchasing textbooks online. Gender, however, did have a significant influence ($p \leq 0.001$), with men much more likely to have purchased textbooks online in the past (Table I). For planned future purchasing, neither gender, age, nor class year had a significant influence on the decision to purchase textbooks online.

The relationship between privacy concerns and online textbook purchasing was also examined. As predicted, there was no relationship between privacy concerns and previous online textbook purchase. Similarly, although there was a weak association, there was no relationship between privacy concerns and planned future online textbook purchase.

H1 states that previous positive online purchase is positively correlated with the likelihood of an individual purchasing textbooks online. The data show a

	Men		Women		Total	
	(%)	*n*	(%)	*n*	(%)	*n*
Did not purchase textbooks online	44.3	31	72.9	62	60.0	93
Did purchase textbooks online	55.7	39	27.1	23	40.0	62
Total	100.0	70	100.0	85	100.0	155

Table I. Gender vs online textbook purchasing

significant positive link between previous purchase of any goods or services and previous online textbook purchase ($p \leq 0.05$) and future planned online textbook purchase ($p \leq 0.05$) (Tables II and III).

Effect of social influence

H2 and *H3* predicted the effect of social influence from friends and professors on the likelihood of purchasing textbooks online. *H2* was partially supported. There was no link found between general online purchasing by friends and either personal previous online textbook purchase or planned future online textbook purchase. Although there was only a small, non-significant, relationship between talking about online shopping with friends and previous online textbook purchase, there was a strong, significant positive association between talking and planned future online textbook purchase ($p \leq 0.01$). Similarly, while there was no significant relationship between previous online textbook purchase by friends and personal previous online textbook purchase, there was a significant positive association between previous online textbook purchase by friends and personal planned future online textbook purchase ($p \leq 0.05$) (Tables IV and V).

In addition to friends, professors also seemed to have a positive influence on the likelihood of making an online textbook purchase, as was suggested in *H3*.

	Infrequent previous online purchase		Frequent previous online purchase		Total	
	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n
Infrequent previous online textbook purchase	71.0	66	54.0	34	64.1	100
Frequent previous online textbook purchase	29.0	27	46.0	29	35.9	56
Total	100.0	93	100.0	63	100.0	156

Table II. Previous online purchase vs previous online textbook purchase

	Infrequent previous online purchase		Frequent previous online purchase		Total	
	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n
Low likelihood for future online textbook purchase	56.5	52	38.1	24	49.0	76
High likelihood for future online textbook purchase	43.5	40	61.9	39	51.0	79
Total	100.0	92	100.0	63	100.0	155

Table III. Previous online purchase vs planned future online textbook purchase

	Infrequent online purchase by friends		Frequent online textbook purchase by friends		Total	
	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n
Low likelihood for future online textbook purchase	62.0	31	43.0	43	49.3	74
High likelihood for future online textbook purchase	38.0	19	57.0	57	50.7	76
Total	100.0	50	100.0	100	100.0	150

Table IV. Online textbook purchase by friends vs planned future online textbook purchase

	Infrequent discussion of online textbook purchasing		Frequent discussion of online textbook purchasing		Total	
	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n
Low likelihood for future online textbook purchase	60.8	45	38.3	31	49.0	76
High likelihood for future online textbook purchase	39.2	29	61.7	50	51.0	79
Total	100.0	74	100.0	81	100.0	155

Table V. Discussion of online textbook purchasing vs planned future online textbook purchase

A professor's concrete suggestion to purchase the required textbook for the course online was unrelated to previous online textbook purchase. The same was true for planned future online textbook purchasing. Professors allowing time in the first weeks of the semester to make online textbook purchases ($p \leq 0.05$) and professors making a general suggestion to use the Internet to buy textbooks had a significant influence on previous online textbook purchase ($p \leq 0.05$). Again, time allowance and suggestion by professors was not significantly correlated with planned future online textbook purchasing (Tables VI and VII).

H4 suggested that awareness of one or more online textbook retailers would be positively correlated with the likelihood of an individual purchasing textbooks online. The data strongly and fully support *H4*. A clear positive trend was found: those who could name more Web sites that sold new or used textbooks were far more likely to have purchased textbooks online in

Clear positive trend was found

	Professor did not allow sufficient time to purchase textbooks online		Professor did allow sufficient time to purchase textbooks online		Total	
	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n
Infrequent previous online textbook purchase	70.1	61	54.5	36	63.4	97
Frequent previous online textbook purchase	29.9	26	45.5	30	36.6	56
Total	100.0	87	100.0	66	100.0	153

Table VI. Professor allowance of sufficient time to purchase textbooks online vs previous online textbook purchase

	Professor did not suggest Internet as textbook source		Professor suggested Internet as a textbook source		Total	
	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n
Infrequent previous online textbook purchase	70.0	70	53.6	30	64.1	100
Frequent previous online textbook purchase	30.0	30	46.4	26	35.9	56
Total	100.0	100	100.0	56	100.0	56

Table VII. Professor suggestion of Internet as textbook source vs previous online textbook purchase

the past ($p \leq 0.01$), and far more likely to plan on purchasing textbooks online in the future ($p \leq 0.01$), than those who could not name as many sites. Alternatively, the data could be interpreted to read, those who had purchased textbooks online in the past or planned to do so in the future were able to recall far more sites that sold textbooks than those who had never purchased online and/or did not plan to do so in the future (Tables VIII and IX).

Needs will be met

H5 proposes that the perception that needs will be met by shopping online will increase the likelihood of making an online textbook purchase. The data support this hypothesis. There is a significant positive relationship between the perception that one will receive better service online and both previous online textbook purchase ($p \leq 0.01$) and planned future online textbook purchase ($p \leq 0.01$). Similarly, the data show a positive association between perception that online shopping is less hassled and previous online textbook purchase that, while not significant, is still interesting. The link between perception that online shopping is less hassled and planned future online textbook purchase is significant and positive ($p \leq 0.05$). The data on perception that money will be saved online is not significant for either previous online textbook purchase or planned future online textbook purchase (see Tables X-XII).

Summary and discussion

This study aimed to add to the current body of research by investigating social and perceptual influences that are underrepresented in current online consumer marketing research. It presents important implications for marketing and online retailing.

All of the hypotheses in this study were at least partially supported. Specifically, those who could name many sites were far more likely to have made an online textbook purchase in the past, and were also far more likely to express intent to do so in the future. Alternatively, those who shop online

	Low ability to name online textbook retailers		Hig ability to name online textbook retailers		Total	
	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n
Infrequent previous online textbook purchase	77.4	48	54.8	51	63.9	99
Frequent previous online textbook purchase	22.6	14	45.2	42	36.1	56
Total	100.0	62	100.0	93	100.0	155

Table VIII. Ability to name online textbook retailers vs. previous online textbook purchase

	Low ability to name online textbook retailers		High ability to name online textbook retailers		Total	
	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n
Low likelihood for future online textbook purchase	62.3	38	40.9	38	49.4	76
High likelihood for future online textbook purchase	37.7	23	59.1	55	50.6	78
Total	100.0	61	100.0	93	100.0	154

Table IX. Ability to name online textbook retailers vs. planned future online textbook purchase

	Low perception that customer service is better online		High perception that customer service is better online		Total	
	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n
Infrequent previous online textbook purchase	76.3	61	50.7	37	64.1	98
Frequent previous online textbook purchase	23.8	19	49.3	36	35.9	55
Total	100.0	80	100.0	73	100.0	153

Table X. Perception that customer service is better online vs. previous online textbook purchase

	Low perception that customer service is better online		High perception that customer service is better online		Total	
	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n
Low likelihood for future online textbook purchase	58.8	47	37.5	27	48.7	74
High likelihood for future online textbook purchase	41.3	33	62.5	45	51.3	78
Total	100.0	61	100.0	93	100.0	152

Table XI. Perception that customer service is better online vs. planned future online textbook purchase

	Low perception that online shopping is less hassled		High perception that online shopping is less hassled		Total	
	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n
Low likelihood for future online textbook purchase	57.0	45	39.4	28	48.7	73
High likelihood for future online textbook purchase	43.0	34	60.6	43	51.3	77
Total	100.0	79	100.0	71	100.0	150

Table XII. Perception that online shopping is less hassled and planned future online textbook purchase

frequently are much more able to name sites that sell textbooks. Either way, from a marketing standpoint this finding is interesting. It illustrates the importance of branding and name recognition. It seems that if consumers can remember the name of a site, they are somewhat more likely to purchase from it. As such, marketing professionals should take care to choose memorable names and they should focus their campaigns on name recognition. The name recognition factor seems to be one of the more important influences in the decision to shop online.

Strong correlation

For *H5*, the data showed a strong correlation between perception that needs, such as good customer service and a hassle-free shopping environment, would be met online and likelihood to make an online purchase. Again, this correlation was strong for both past purchasing behavior and future intended purchasing behavior. It is interesting to note here that cost was not considered an important factor in the decision to purchase online. Subjects

seemed to make online purchases regardless of whether or not they thought they were getting a better deal online.

Again, this finding has interesting marketing implications. Based on this data, marketing strategies of online textbook retailers should focus on the service-related benefits of shopping online, including good customer service and a hassle free shopping environment, rather than low cost. Campus bookstores would do well to advertise the same service-oriented benefits, in order to draw customers away from the online competition.

Strong enough to show a trend

The remaining three hypotheses were all partially supported – at least one of the measures associated with the hypothesis yielded significant results. For *H1*, the data show a significant correlation between previous online purchase of any good or service, and both previous online textbook purchase and planned future online textbook purchase. Although the correlation between satisfaction with service and product quality in previous online purchase and likelihood of online textbook purchasing is not significant, there is a strong enough correlation to show a trend: previous positive online purchase is associated with higher likelihood to make an online textbook purchase. This finding would imply that e-commerce is self-perpetuating; as consumers make online purchases they become more likely to make other online purchases. The challenge for e-commerce sites, then, is to recruit new buyers in order to expand their market base.

H2 and *H3* both dealt with social influence factors. Although neither was fully supported, both were partially supported and showed interesting trends. With regard to the social influence of friends (*H3*), the strongest correlation existed between talking with friends about online shopping and intent to purchase textbooks online in the future. The remaining measures, including having friends who shop online, did not yield significant results on past behavior, though were significant influences on predicted future behavior. It would seem that creating a positive social environment is important for the success of online textbook retailers. Marketing professionals should focus on promoting a positive image of online shopping, and use tools to encourage discussion of online shopping in order to increase the likelihood of individuals making an online textbook purchase in the future.

Social influence of professors significant

The social influence of professors turned out to be significant with regards to past online textbook purchasing behavior but not to future intended textbook purchasing behavior. Those who had professors who allowed sufficient time for students to get textbooks online and who suggested the Internet as a textbook purchasing resource were quite a bit more likely to have made a previous online purchase. Professor influence did not have a significant effect on planned future textbook purchasing behavior. Logically, this pattern of significance makes sense in this case. Students are more likely to purchase textbooks online the semester that their professor suggests that they do so, however they will not do so in subsequent semesters when they no longer have that professor.

From a marketing standpoint, it seems that professors can play a key role in increasing online textbook sales. Marketing professionals should target professors in their campaigns, in order to increase the likelihood of the professor creating a supportive environment for online textbook purchasing. This includes professors making general recommendations for purchasing books online and allowing enough time in the beginning of the semester for students to make online purchases.

This study presents interesting results for consumer and e-commerce marketing. It outlines important social and perceptual reasons that people shop online. Future research should investigate similar social and perceptual influences using different products and populations in order help practitioners fully understand the potential of the Web as a tool for consumer marketing.

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This summary has been provided to allow managers and executives a rapid appreciation of the content of this article. Those with a particular interest in the topic covered may then read the article in toto to take advantage of the more comprehensive description of the research undertaken and its results to get the full benefit of the material present

Executive summary and implications for managers and executives

Online buying – coming to a campus near you!

The sale of books has been one area of relative success in terms of e-commerce. This success holds for both general and specific areas and reflects the relative ease of cataloguing, storage and despatch as well as behavioural factors relating to the purchase of books. Foucault and Scheufele examine purchasing behaviour within one niche area of book selling – textbooks.

Buying textbooks isn't done for pleasure (in most cases at least). In most cases the student would be unlikely to purchase the book other than as part of studying for a particular course. The purchase isn't achieved through browsing but with reference to a list provided for the course. Because of the way in which textbooks are purchased, campus bookshops have an in-built advantage over other outlets because they are able to stock the books required by courses and are convenient given their location on campus.

The development of online bookselling has seen the emergence of specialised sellers focusing on textbooks. While the stock issue is more difficult since the online seller doesn't have access to professorial book lists for every course at every university, it is safe to assume a fair degree of congruence between these lists. In most cases there will be a very limited number of recognised textbooks for a given subject, something the online bookseller can easily research.

Foucault and Scheufele examine the factors that encourage students to turn away from the campus bookstore to the online bookseller. Factors such as ease of use and convenience are considered, as are the perennial issues of security and privacy in buying online. More importantly the authors look at how social factors influence the purchasing behaviour of students in this context.

Peers, professors and access to the Internet

Both peers (especially friends) and professors have an impact on the likelihood of a student purchasing textbooks online. The professor says you can get the textbooks online and makes facilities or time available to do so. As a result more students are tempted by this alternative to the campus store. Similarly friends who have made purchases using the Internet act as influencers by making fellow students aware of the opportunity presented by on-line buying.

It is clear that, as student access to the Internet increases, the social pressure will begin to have a greater effect on the propensity for those students to use the technology to purchase textbooks. If a student does not have ready access to the Internet it is unlikely that they will use that scarce access to buy textbooks when there is a familiar and convenient place to buy the books on campus (the campus bookstore). Where the student has ready access and is familiar with the Internet, the chances of using the technology to buy textbooks is increased.

The role of professors is short-term since they influence only one course. Here, the authors show that the fact of one professor saying that the course textbooks can be bought online only influences behaviour in respect of buying books for that professor's course. If a professor on a later course advises students to buy at the campus bookstore that will act as a positive endorsement of the traditional route.

I've done it once so I can do it again
The first time I abseil down a cliff, I'm scared witless. Subsequent occasions (assuming I'm fool enough to take these opportunities up) are less scary as I've done it before and it wasn't so scary after all. These feelings can be translated to online purchasing. Foucault and Scheufele demonstrate that students with experience of buying online are more likely to use the Internet to purchase textbooks. We can anticipate that this momentum will be maintained as more and more young people have Internet access and are therefore more likely to have purchased online.

All this suggests that the market for buying textbooks online will increase and that commercial pressures will face campus bookstores as they face this loss of trade. Indeed the social processes described in this article must contribute to a very different situation in the future. Whether the campus bookstore will survive depends very much on how it responds to the challenge presented by the online purchase of textbooks.

The campus store could respond by adopting online techniques itself – either in partnership or via such opportunities as a university intranet. Indeed, this may enable the bookstore to offer a far faster delivery turnaround than would be possible for a remote online bookseller. A well-organised campus store ought to be able to arrange delivery in a few hours rather than a few days.

The campus store (and some have done this) can also adopt the techniques used by mainstream booksellers such as discounting and investing in the environment of the store. Indeed, some bookstores are now more akin to a coffee shop that sells books rather than the traditional image of the bookshop. In addition, the bookstore can extend its offering beyond textbooks and other course related material to encompass more general interest material. Finally, and some campus stores have done this too, the bookstore can embrace the Internet age by providing Internet access similar to that found in a cyber café.

Online purchasing – widening consumer choice
The impact of the Internet has been to widen consumer choice through offering another medium for purchase and a broad range of information. Businesses need to respond to the challenges presented by e-commerce through adopting it themselves and through adapting their method of business and business model to encompass the changing behaviours indicated by the growing access to and use of the Internet.

Businesses that fail to respond or believe themselves immune or protected from online competition will struggle to sustain themselves. Those businesses that adapt stand every chance of surviving through better customer service, new and innovative offerings and a concerted effort to attract and retain customers. There remains a long way to go before the Internet is truly ubiquitous but there is no doubt that its use will be nigh on universal in years to come with the result that the processes of adoption illustrated here will accelerate. Now is the time to respond rather than waiting until the Internet boom really hits in.

(A précis of the article ''Web vs campus store? Why students buy textbooks online''. Supplied by Marketing Consultants for Emerald.)

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