

MACOMB COMMUNITY COLLEGE:
A MARKETING RESEARCH STUDY
TO DETERMINE PSYCHOLOGY 1010 BOOK PREFERENCES
AND BUYING INFORMATION

Prepared for
Macomb Community College Personnel

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Introduction and Research Objectives:

Introduction:

Over the course of the last two semesters of the Psychology-1010 course at Macomb Community College South Campus, teachers have observed that their students have purchased the textbook for the class. Normally this would be considered the right thing to do however, the Psychology-1010 textbook for the last two semesters at Macomb Community College South Campus has been offered online free. This has been possible due to a textbook change by the Macomb Community College Staff for the Psychology -1010 course. This has raised questions and concerns by the Macomb Community College Staff in that they are wondering why students would purchase the Psychology-1010 textbook when it is available free. Due to the growing concerns, we are conducting marketing research to determine what the causes for these occurrences are.

Background Situation:

Two semesters ago at Macomb Community College South Campus the psychology teaching staff involved in choosing textbooks decided to change from the current textbook to a different textbook by a different author and publishing company. This publishing company was Flat-World Knowledge and they were able to offer the Psychology-1010 textbook online for free to all Macomb Community College Students. This is one of the major influences that led the Psychology teaching staff to choose this book from several other options. They also were able to offer a hardcopy of the textbook at the Macomb Community College bookstore for a price of \$43.00. The previous Psychology -1010 cost well over \$100.00. Despite the price differences, different publishing companies, and author, the content of both books are the same.

Over the course of these past two semesters, Psychology-1010 teachers have seen that almost all the students in all of their classes have purchased the hardcopy of the Psychology-1010 textbook. Despite having a free online edition, students are choosing to purchase the \$43.00 hardcopy of the textbook. This has aroused some suspicions on whether or not students were aware that the online edition is available free.

Statement of the Problem:

Students in the Psychology-1010 course at Macomb Community College are buying the hardcopy of the textbook rather than using the online edition that is available free. Teachers noticed that almost every student in their classes had purchased the book. In addition, the Macomb Community College Bookstore had also notified the staff as well that all the students were purchasing the book.

Possible Sources of the Problem:

- Students may not have been aware that an online version was available free.
- Students chose to purchase the book over the online version for their own convenience
- Students didn't have the available resources to access the online version.
- Students chose to purchase hardcopy of text because of low price.
- Students may comprehend hardcopy textbooks better than online textbooks
- Students may be using more than one format of the textbook
- Students may refer to the textbook very much or not at all

General Purpose of the Report:

The purpose of this report is to understand why students are still purchasing the Psychology-1010 textbook when it is available online free. This information will be useful to the Macomb Community College staff so they can determine whether they still wish to continue to use this version of the Psychology-1010 textbook or try another version. It will also provide useful information in helping in the future choices of Macomb Community College textbooks.

Research Objective:

Conduct a survey based upon a convenience sample of college students currently taking the Psychology- 1010 course at Macomb Community College South Campus for the 2012 Winter Semester. The purpose is to determine information on the book buying process and whether or not theirs is intention to purchase the book when an online version is available free. It will be measured by multiple-choice categorical scale questions inferring whether students are interested in using online versions of the text and whether or not a price breaking point is an influencing factor on that decision. The information collected will be used when considering possible textbooks for future Psychology-1010 courses at Macomb Community College.

Method:

Conducting Research:

We used a questionnaire to find out the information necessary to determine how students went upon the buying process of textbooks for the Psychology -1010 course at Macomb Community College South Campus. We also collected pertinent background information on the subjects surveyed.

Sampling Plan:

For this questionnaire, we used a nonprobability sampling method using the convenience sample. Because of time restrictions and availability of resources, the convenience sample was most beneficial to use for our particular questionnaire

Sample Size:

Our sample was chosen from one of the multiple Psychology-1010 classes currently active for the Macomb Community College South Campus 2012 Winter Semester. It was distributed to all the students present in one particular class on one particular date when the questionnaire was handed out. It had a total of 22 responses.

A copy of the questionnaire can be found in the Appendix

Findings:

Our research for this questionnaire was based on the responses of 22 students in a random Psychology-1010 course picked from the 2012 Winter Semester at Macomb Community College South Campus.

Our first three questions on the questionnaire were gender, age, and how many years you have been in college.

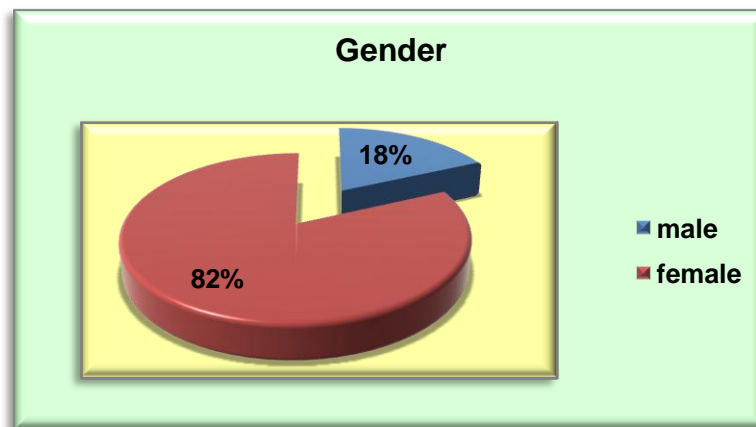
Question 1: How old are you?

Average(s) Age

Variable	Average	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Sample
Age	23.7	8.1	18	46	22

For age, we find that the youngest age was 18 and the oldest age was 46 that participated in taking this questionnaire. This gives an average age of 23.7 years. The standard deviation is quite high because the variety in the respondents ages.

Question 2: What Gender are you?



For gender, we find that 18% were male and 82 % were female. This translates to 4 males and 18 females who took this questionnaire.

Question 3: How many years have you been in college?

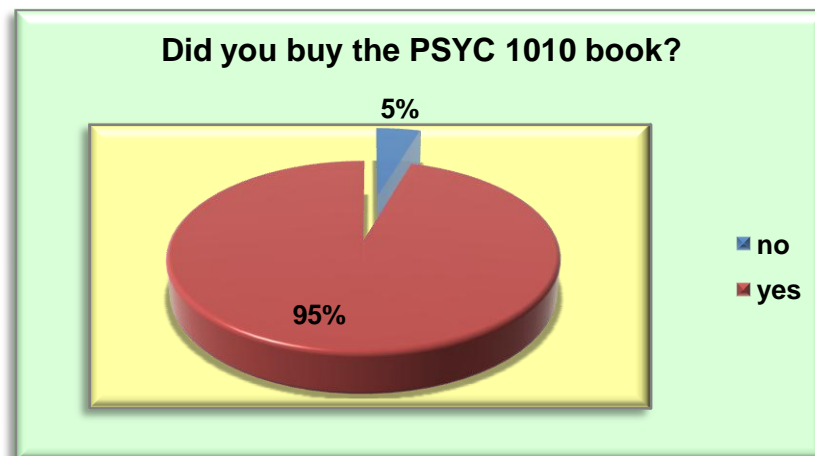
Average(s) Analysis Results For Years in College

Variable	Average	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Sample
Years in college	1.5	1.0	1	5	22

For how many years our respondents have attended college, we see that the minimum is 1 year of college and the maximum of 5 years of college. Our average is 1.5 years and the standard deviation is healthy at 1.0.

The next two questions of the questionnaire refer to if you have purchased the book and what methods you use to purchase your books.

Question 4: Did you buy the Psychology-1010 textbook?



We find that 95% of the class purchased the Psychology-1010 textbook and only 5% didn't. This converts into that only one person out of the 22 did not purchase the textbook.

Question 5: How do you pay for textbooks?

This question was a check all that apply so respondents were able to pick more than one option.

Source of payment (Financial Aid)		
Category	Frequency	Percent
no	15	68.2%
yes	<u>7</u>	<u>31.8%</u>
Total	22	100.0%

Source of payment (Grants)		
Category	Frequency	Percent
no	21	95.5%
yes	<u>1</u>	<u>4.5%</u>
Total	22	100.0%

Source of Payment (Personal Funds)		
Category	Frequency	Percent
no	10	45.5%
yes	<u>12</u>	<u>54.5%</u>
Total	22	100.0%

Source of Payment (Family Member)		
Category	Frequency	Percent
no	18	81.8%
yes	<u>4</u>	<u>18.2%</u>
Total	22	100.0%

Source of Payment (Scholarship)		
Category	Frequency	Percent
no	<u>22</u>	<u>100.0%</u>
Total	22	100.0%

Source of Payment (Employer)		
Category	Frequency	Percent
no	21	95.5%
yes	<u>1</u>	<u>4.5%</u>
Total	22	100.0%

For the most part most students used financial aid, personal funds, or a family member to purchase textbooks. One student used grants and one other student used their Employer. No students used scholarships to purchase textbooks. Only two students used multiple sources to pay for their textbooks.

Question 6: Which version of the textbook do you use?

This question refers to the student in that which format of the book they used, hardcopy, online, or neither. It was checks all that apply as well.

Text format (Physical Textbook)		
Category	Frequency	Percent
no	4	18.2%
yes	<u>18</u>	<u>81.8%</u>
Total	22	100.0%

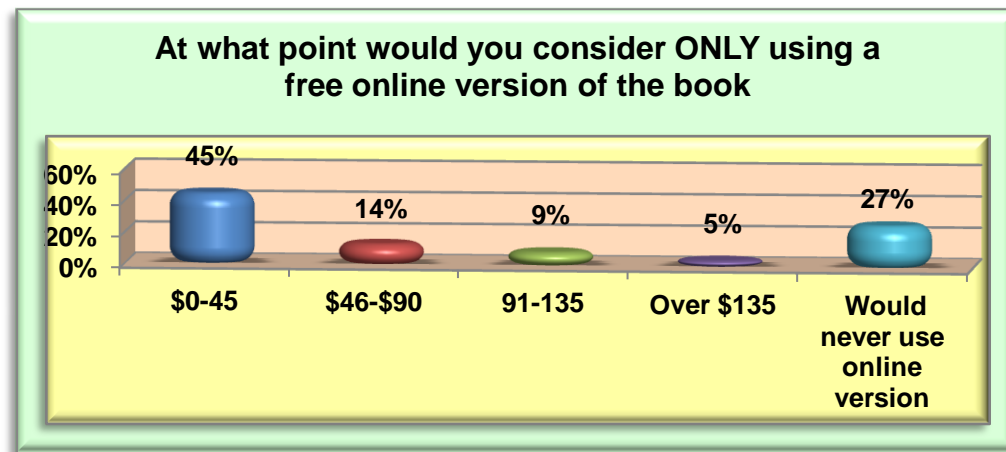
Text format (Online Book)		
Category	Frequency	Percent
no	19	86.4%
yes	<u>3</u>	<u>13.6%</u>
Total	22	100.0%

Text format (Do not use the textbook)		
Category	Frequency	Percent
no	19	86.4%
yes	<u>3</u>	<u>13.6%</u>
Total	22	100.0%

What we found is that most students are using the hardcopy of the textbook. Only three students used only the online book. In addition, the two students that used multiple formats used both the book and also checked they do not use the textbook.

Question 7: At what price point would you consider only using the online version?

This question was to determine whether the student had a price breaking point that would make them only use the online free edition of the textbook.



As you can see, most students prefer to spend only \$45 for the textbook before using only the online edition. This means that the cost of this particular Psychology-1010 book was right below most student's price break point. You can also see that 27% of the students would never use the online version of the textbook no matter how expensive the hardcopy was.

Question 8: Why wouldn't you use the online version?

The next question was for respondents that answered they would never use the online version ever. This question was to see what possible reasons were the causes for this. This question was a (check all that apply.)

Reason for not wanting to use online text (Portability)

Category	Frequency	Percent
no	8	61.5%
yes	<u>5</u>	<u>38.5%</u>
Total	13	100.0%

Reason for not wanting to use online text (Highlighting)

Category	Frequency	Percent
no	10	76.9%
yes	<u>3</u>	<u>23.1%</u>
Total	13	100.0%

Reason for not wanting to use online text (Difficult to use in class)

Category	Frequency	Percent
no	5	38.5%
yes	<u>8</u>	<u>61.5%</u>
Total	13	100.0%

Reason for not wanting to use online text (Eye Strain)

Category	Frequency	Percent
no	8	61.5%
yes	<u>5</u>	<u>38.5%</u>
Total	13	100.0%

For the most part the reasons students felt strongest why they would not want to use the online edition would be that it was difficult to use in class, it causes eye strain, and also it causes too many distractions when using the internet.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

From the results of the questionnaire, I can draw a few conclusions on whether students prefer a hardcopy of the textbook and whether or not they like using online editions of textbook. From the results of question 4, you can see that almost the whole class purchased the hardcopy of the textbook. Although this is only out of 22 respondents I would say this is a good representation on how students feel about using hardcopy of the textbook vs. online textbooks. Looking at the responses to question six, we can see that only a few students out of the 22 respondents even used the online edition of the textbook. I would say this is pretty convincing that most students having a choice would prefer the hardcopy of a textbook to an online version. On question 7, I see a couple concerns. 45% of the students would only use the hardcopy of the textbook if the price were under \$45.00. Meaning that if the book were \$50.00 they would use the online edition of the free textbook. I think this means that the price of \$43.00 was sufficient for the students to not mind spending to buy the hardcopy of the textbook. However, another concern from question 7 is that 27% of the students said they would never use the online version of the textbook no matter what the cost of the hardcopy of the textbook. This shows that many students don't like to use online versions of textbooks. Going onto question 9 you can see the reasons why and most feel that it would be a challenge to use an online textbook in class and that using one would eventually lead to eye strain and distractions.

My recommendations is that if the textbook is available for \$43.00 at the Macomb Community College Bookstore and the content is the same as the previous used \$100.00+ textbook to just keep the current textbook they are using now. If students would like to use the online free edition, they do have that option as well. If student's performance in grades remains consistent with previous semesters of the previous textbook I do not see a reason for Macomb Community College Psychology Department to find another textbook to use.

Limitations:

Although we tried to be as accurate as possible, all research studies have their faults. One fault I would like to address is that the sample size was not as large as I would have liked it to be. At only 22 responses, this is not as accurate if we would have had responses from every student in all of the Psychology-1010 courses at Macomb Community College South Campus. One reason we could not achieve this is time constrictions for the questionnaire to take place.

Another fault in our study is some of the persons who took the questionnaire seemed confused on how to respond to certain questions. On the question "Which format of the textbook do you use (check all that apply)" Some of the respondents checked they used the textbook but also checked they do not use the book at all. This could have been because we didn't word the questions right and caused confusion for the respondent. This could have also been respondent error, as they did not read the entire question.

The last question was only to be responded to if you had answered, "I would never use the online version" in the previous question. Although some respondents didn't choose this answer for the previous question, they still chose to respond to the last question as well. This could have been because we didn't word the questions right and caused confusion for the respondent. This could have also been respondent error, as they did not read the entire question.

Appendix:

Questionnaire:

Our Marketing 2080 class is conducting market research on how you purchase textbooks for your PSYC 1010 class. We are trying to discover if students would prefer a free online version of the textbook rather than a physical copy of the text. This information will not be disclosed to anyone besides our class who will be analyzing the information. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

How old are you?

What gender are you?

☐ Male ☐ Female

How many years have you been in college?

Did you buy the PSYC 1010 book?

☐ Yes ☐ No

How do you pay for your books? (Check all that apply)

☐ Financial Aid ☐ Grants ☐ Personal Funds

☐ Family Member ☐ Scholarship ☐ Employer

Which version of the book are you using? (Check all that apply)

☐ Physical Book ☐ Online Book ☐ Do Not Use The Book

At what point would you consider ONLY using a free online version of the book? (Choose one)

☐ \$0-\$45 ☐ \$46-\$90 ☐ \$91-\$135 ☐ >\$135

☐ I would never use the online version (if yes, see next question)

Why wouldn't you use the free online version? (Check all that apply)

☐ Portability ☐ Highlighting ☐ Difficult To Use In Class

☐ Eye Strain ☐ Distractions ☐ No Computer ☐ No Internet