

## Consumers' Perceptions of Pirated Textbooks: The Moderating Role of Quality

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### ABSTRACT

Pirated textbook usage has become an unstoppable and widespread activity particularly among college students who have been little deterred by legal actions. The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between different types of textbooks and quality on consumer behavior. This article presents the results of a scenario-based experiment in which two types of textbook (original vs. pirated) and two types of quality (low vs. high) were tested among 98 undergraduate students. The results clearly show that pirated textbooks lead to higher levels of willingness to buy, commitment, and satisfaction than original textbooks. Contrary to expectations, consumers have higher levels of willingness to buy for low quality pirated textbooks than high quality original textbooks.

**KEYWORDS:** Textbook piracy, Consumer behavior, Scenario-based experiment

### Introduction

Textbook piracy is a huge global concern for businesses specifically for publishers. This type of piracy has been identified as one of the worst problems publishers are facing today because companies lose potential profits because of pirated textbooks. The practice of textbook piracy has posed a significant threat not only to the development of the publishers but also to the growth of the textbook industry.

Consumers are faced with the many opportunities to pirate. How consumers perceive pirated textbooks and the factors affecting the decision to pirate is important to know for companies. An understanding of consumers' behavior regarding pirated book use would help businesses in developing strategies that may aid them to reduce textbook piracy. Researchers from different disciplines such as business ethics, marketing, and information systems have explored piracy behavior in the digital or software piracy contexts. Less work has been done to study textbook piracy. Despite these facts, surprisingly few studies have examined the determinants of textbook piracy and little attention has been given to this form of consumer behavior towards pirated textbooks.

Given these gaps in the literature, the purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between both types of textbooks (i.e., pirated and original), and quality on consumer behavior. The current research is guided by the following research questions: What is the effect of pirated textbooks on consumer behavior levels? What is the effect of textbook types on consumer behavior at different quality levels?

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. First, literature review is conducted and hypotheses were developed. Next, experimental methodology and the results are discussed. Finally, the article concludes by offering a discussion of the findings, research and managerial implications, and suggestions for future research.

### **Literature Review**

Consumer attitudes and behaviors have been studied in the context of piracy in the marketing literature (e.g. Cesareo and Pastore 2014; Cheung and Prendergast 2006; Tan 2002). This study focuses on willingness to buy, consumer commitment, and consumer loyalty. Willingness to buy is defined as the possibility of a consumer's willingness to purchase a specific product (Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal 1991). Churchill and Surprenant (1982) defined satisfaction as the buyer's comparison of the rewards and costs in relation to the anticipated consequences. Commitment is defined as "an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship" (Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande 1992, p. 316).

Previous studies examining the consumers' piracy perceptions mainly investigated consumers' willingness to buy. Miyazaki et al. (2009) explored consumers' willingness to purchase pirated media products. Pahu et al. (2009) examined the effect of personality factors on consumers' willingness to purchase counterfeit luxury brands. Similarly Romani et al. (2012) studied consumers' luxury counterfeit perceptions and found that luxury pirated products can increase consumers' willingness to pay for well-known original brands.

There are different types of piracy. For example Jacobs et al. (2001) present four different type of international piracy: counterfeiting, brand piracy, near brand usage, and intellectual property. Counterfeiting is manufacturing copyrighted/patented goods. Brand piracy refers to cheap imitations or even to high quality merchandises. Near brands are looking very similar in appearance to the original product but not exactly same. Intellectual property piracy is copying copyrighted software, music, books, etc. (Jacobs et al. 2001). Counterfeiting is also examined as a separate concept rather than being a type of piracy. Ang et al. (2001) state that counterfeits are reproduced copies that look alike original products. Stephens and Swartz (2013) highlight that consumers are aware of the fact that pirated goods are fakes but they do not know that counterfeits are. This study focuses on intellectual property piracy by exploring textbook piracy. For the purpose of this study, pirated textbooks are defined as low-priced and unauthorized duplicates of copyrighted textbooks.

Previous studies found a weak relationship between moral reasoning and piracy because consumers do not perceive piracy as an ethical problem (Husted 2000). Price plays an important role in the appeal of pirated products. So the main reason for this weak relationship is the attractive price of pirated products (Ang et al., 2001). Numerous past studies found that low prices of pirated products influence the tolerance of questionable behavior by consumers (Dodge et al., 1996; Ang et al., 2001; Cockrill & Goode, 2012). In short pirated goods trigger consumers' willingness to buy an illegal variant of the product to get a low price (Hill 2007). However, literature so far focused mainly on software piracy (e.g. Givon et al. 1995; Tan 2002; Wang et al. 2005), and consumers' perception of low-

priced pirated products is not clear (Ho and Weinberg, 2011). Therefore, based on the existing literature the following hypotheses were tested:

H1 a) Pirated textbooks lead to higher levels of willingness to buy than original textbooks.

H1 b) Pirated textbooks lead to higher levels of commitment than original textbooks.

H1 c) Pirated textbooks lead to higher levels of satisfaction than original textbooks.

Unlike other forms of pirated products, such as duplication of the software, making illegal copies of textbooks may result in degradation of the quality of the product (Husted, 2000). Quality of the product and its physical appearance are important to consumers buying pirated products. Previous studies present that consumers are more likely to buy a pirated product if its quality and appearance look similar to the original product (Phau et al., 2001; Prendergast et al., 2002; Cockrill and Goode, 2012). For example quality of DVDs can be examined by the artwork on the packaging (Cockrill & Goode, 2012). Similarly, quality of a textbook can easily be examined with visual quality of the paper. In this study, a high-quality textbook is defined as a durable textbook (the pages of textbooks do not show yellowing or tearing easily) that is made of high-quality paper, which provides high visual quality. Pirated products can also be of a high quality, and it can be hard for consumers to identify them (Jacobs et al. 2001). In some cases consumers who buy pirated products are willing to sacrifice quality or any product warranty that comes with the original products (Ang et al., 2001). Karaganis (2011) found that there is a large demand from consumers for low-quality and low-priced pirated products. Therefore, it is important to examine consumers' perceptions on quality of textbooks. The following hypotheses are presented in the context of consumer behavior research:

H2 a) An increase in quality leads to higher levels of willingness to buy.

H2 b) An increase in quality leads to higher levels of commitment.

H2 c) An increase in quality leads to higher levels of satisfaction.

Another point is evaluating quality based on the price level is a very common perception for consumers (Dionísio et al. 2013), which means consumers may believe that high-priced original textbooks refer to high quality and low-priced pirated textbooks refer to low quality. So it is important to explore the interaction effect of textbook type and quality. Therefore, based on the literature review the following hypotheses were tested:

H3 a) An increase in quality positively moderates the relationship between textbook type and willingness to buy.

H3 b) An increase in quality positively moderates the relationship between textbook type and commitment.

H3 c) An increase in quality positively moderates the relationship between textbook type and satisfaction.

## Methodology

Participants were 98 undergraduate students at a major university in Turkey. To translate the questionnaire from English into Turkish "back-translation" method (Green and White 1976, Deshpande et al. 1986) was applied. Seven participants failed manipulation check questions, or showed a pattern (i.e. all questions were marked 1 or 7 on the Likert scale across different measures). Therefore, 91 participants remained for data analysis. The age of the participants ranged from 19 to 28, with a mean age of 21.77 years. Of the participants 58% were male. As Hair et al. (2010) suggested the experiment meet the minimum requirement of 20 participants per cell.

For the purpose of the study a scenario-based experiment was conducted in a 2 (original vs. pirated textbook) x 2 (low vs. high quality) factorial design to develop four different treatment conditions in total. After a short introduction, participants were randomly assigned to one of four treatment conditions. Participants read a scenario that describes an exchange relationship between a seller and consumers. The scenario included manipulations of textbook type and quality levels. Textbook type was manipulated as original and pirated, such that in the original type, the seller was described as selling only original textbooks that are authorized copyrighted textbooks and these original textbooks are high-priced whereas in the pirated type the seller was described as selling only pirated textbooks that are unauthorized duplicates of copyrighted textbooks and these pirated textbooks are low-priced. High quality was manipulated by describing the textbook as durable (the pages of textbooks do not show yellowing or tearing easily) and made of high-quality paper which provides high visual quality while in low quality level, the textbook was described as not durable (the pages of textbooks show yellowing or tearing easily) and made of low-quality paper which provides low visual quality. After reading the scenario, participants were asked how they think a typical consumer would react to the scenario. This projective method helps researchers to construct indirect questions that are not significantly affected by social desirability bias (Fisher 1993). Another important point is social desirability bias is a prevalent concern for piracy studies, where participants may want to provide favorable answers instead of their own beliefs. Experiments are less likely to be affected by a social desirability bias because respondents are unlikely to predict the purpose of the research (Mohr et al. 2001).

All the dependent variable measures were adapted from established scales. The willingness to buy measure was adapted from Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal (1991). The commitment measure was adapted from Beatson, Coote, and Rudd (2006). The satisfaction measure was adapted from Sung and Choi (2010). All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Willingness to buy items were measured on a scale ranging from "very low" to "very high", while the other items were measured on a scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Manipulation and realism check measures were used to ensure the experimental manipulations were successful and to determine if scenario projected a real world situation respectively.

### Scale Purification

Scale purification was used to evaluate convergent validity, reliability and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was determined by using principal component analysis. A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin score of 0.905 and a significant Bartlett's test of sphericity suggested that items and correlations are sufficient for each factor (Leech et al. 2015). Factor analysis was conducted to check the loadings of the items on the three dependent variables. The items formed into the three groups and factor loadings were not cross-loaded and had strong loadings (over 0.5) on the intended variables (Hair et al. 2010). Internal reliability was assessed using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. Per Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), the recommended value for alpha is 0.80, and all of the constructs exceeded this level (see Table 1) which suggests that the items satisfactorily captured the constructs (Churchill 1979).

**Table 1.** Factor Loadings, and Coefficient  $\alpha$

Measurement Items (Scale items)	Loadings	Source
<b>Willingness to Buy</b> ( $\alpha=0.94$ )		Dodds et al. (1991)
The typical consumer's willingness to purchase from this seller is very high.	0.84	
The typical consumer is very likely to purchase from this seller.	0.90	
The probability that the typical consumer would consider purchasing from this seller is very high.	0.90	
<b>Consumer Commitment</b> ( $\alpha=0.94$ )		Beatson et al. (2006)
The typical consumer would plan to return to this seller.	0.80	
The typical consumer's relationship with this seller is something the consumer intends to maintain.	0.85	
The typical consumer's relationship with this seller will last a long time.	0.86	
Maintaining a long term relationship with this seller is important to the typical consumer.	0.88	
<b>Consumer Satisfaction</b> ( $\alpha=0.97$ )		Sung and Choi (2010)
The typical consumer feels satisfied with the relationship with this seller.	0.82	
The typical consumer's relationship with this seller does a good job of fulfilling the consumer's needs.	0.85	
The typical consumer's relationship with this seller makes the consumer very happy.	0.87	
The typical consumer's relationship with this seller is close to ideal.	0.82	

Average variance extracted (AVE) was assessed to determine if the constructs have discriminant validity. The AVE values were compared with the squared correlations for the different pairs of constructs. As suggested, AVE values are over 0.5 (Hair et al. 2010), and greater than the squared correlations (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Overall, the results offer support for discriminant validity. The AVE values and squared correlation values are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Average Variance Extracted

	WTB	Commitment	Satisfaction
WTB	0.864		
Commitment	0.292	0.840	
Satisfaction	0.452	0.517	0.875

*Diagonal: Average variance extracted; Lower Matrix: Squared correlations*

Manipulation checks are performed in order to determine that the subjects did respond the way the researcher planned. The results suggest that the experimental manipulations were successful and worked as intended in the experiment. Mean scores for each group were consistent with the intended manipulation grouping (Moriginal textbook=6.00 >Mpirated textbook=2.02; Mhigh quality=5.69 >Mlow quality=1.88). Realism checks were also performed to determine if the scenarios were perceived by the subjects to be realistic (Louviere, Henser, and Swait 2000). Dabholkar's (1994) two-item realism check measure was included at the end of the questionnaire. The participants were asked if the situation described in the scenario was realistic and if they could imagine themselves in the described situation. The average responses to the realism measures were 6.13 (on a 7-point scale), demonstrating that participants perceived the scenario as realistic (Dabholkar 1994).

### Main Analysis

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine if independent variables have a significant main effect on dependent variables. As predicted, main effects of textbook type (Wilks' lambda = 0.469; F = 32.04; p < 0.001) and quality (Wilks' lambda = 0.407; F = 41.32; p < 0.001) were observed. The hypothesized interaction between textbook type and quality were also statistically significant (Wilks' lambda = 0.581; F = 20.47; p < 0.001). Analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were performed to gain additional insights. Table 3 presents the overall ANOVA results. Dependent variable cell means are presented in Table 4.

**Table 3.** ANOVA Results for Main and Interaction Effects

Effects	WTB	COM	SAT
	<i>F</i> -statistic	<i>F</i> -statistic	<i>F</i> -statistic
Textbook Type (T)	39.98 ( $p < 0.001$ )	25.02 ( $p < 0.001$ )	73.58 ( $p < 0.001$ )
Quality (Q)	31.72 ( $p < 0.001$ )	43.32 ( $p < 0.001$ )	101.29 ( $p < 0.001$ )
T x Q	5.06 ( $p = 0.027$ )	16.91 ( $p < 0.001$ )	57.57 ( $p < 0.001$ )

**Table 4.** Dependent Variable Cell Means

Dependent Variable	Textbook Type	Quality	Mean
Willingness to Buy	Original	Low	3.197
		High	5.097
	Pirated	Low	5.264
		High	6.079
Commitment	Original	Low	3.057
		High	5.313
	Pirated	Low	4.979
		High	5.500
Satisfaction	Original	Low	1.830
		High	5.542
	Pirated	Low	5.229
		High	5.750

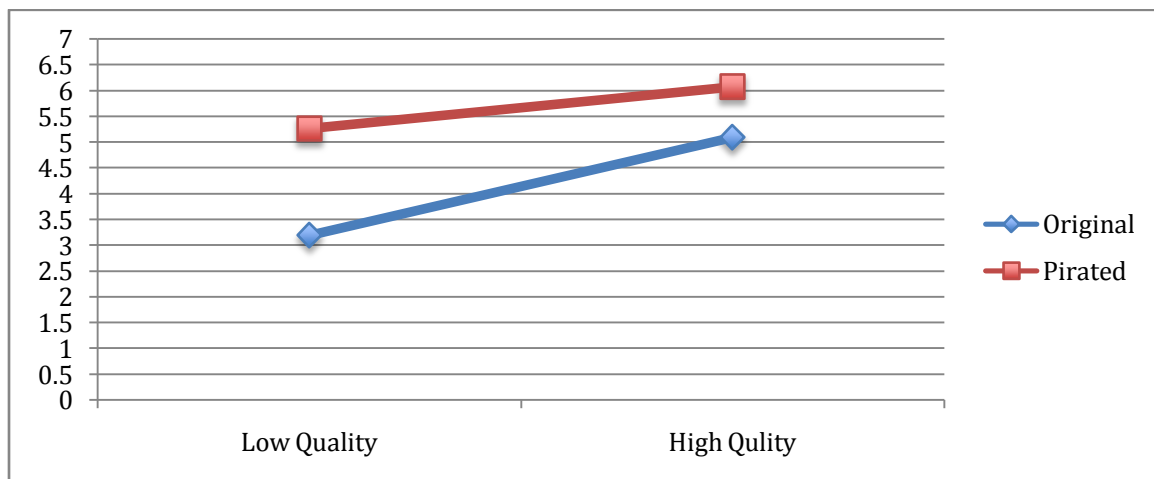
**Table 5.** Univariate Results for Main and Interaction Effects



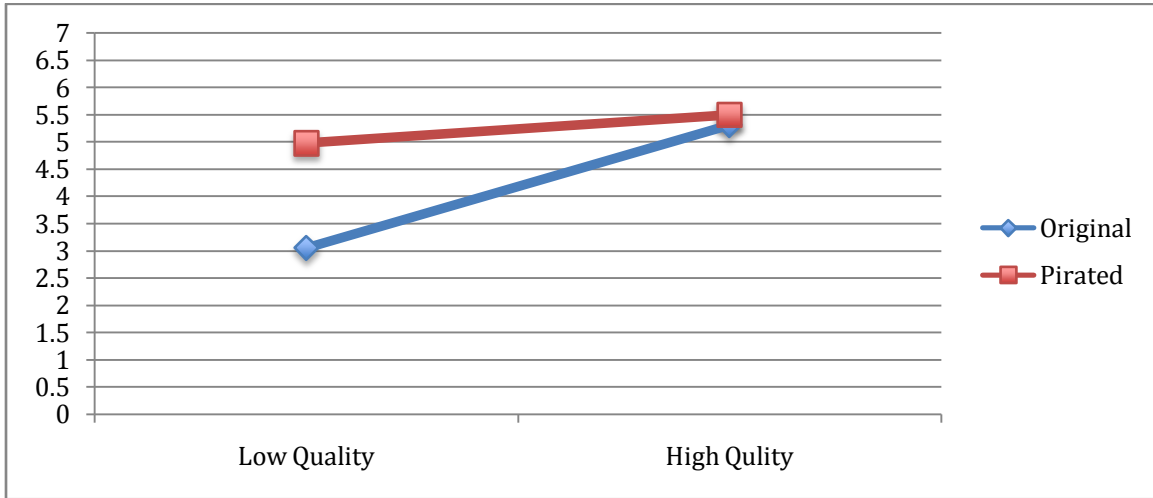
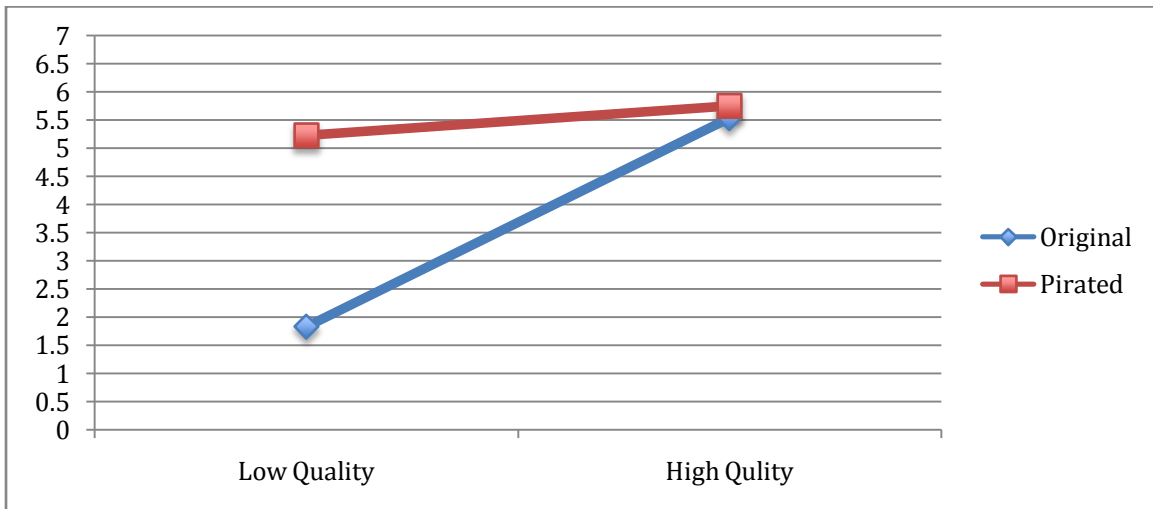
Effects	WTB	COM	SAT
	<i>F</i> -statistic	<i>F</i> -statistic	<i>F</i> -statistic
Textbook Type (T)	39.98 ( $p < 0.001$ )	25.02 ( $p < 0.001$ )	73.58 ( $p < 0.001$ )
Quality (Q)	31.72 ( $p < 0.001$ )	43.32 ( $p < 0.001$ )	101.29 ( $p < 0.001$ )
T x Q	5.06 ( $p = 0.027$ )	16.91 ( $p < 0.001$ )	57.57 ( $p < 0.001$ )

The results showed that pirated textbooks lead to higher levels of willingness to buy ( $F=39.98$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), commitment ( $F=25.02$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), and satisfaction ( $F=73.58$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) than original textbooks. Therefore, H1a, H1b, and H1c were supported. In support of H2a, H2b, and H2c the results reveal that an increase in quality leads to an increase in willingness to buy ( $F=31.72$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), commitment ( $F=43.32$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), and satisfaction ( $F=101.29$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). The findings also offer support for H3a, H3b, and H3c showing that an increase in quality positively moderates the relationship between textbook type and willingness to buy ( $F=5.06$ ;  $p = 0.027$ ), commitment ( $F=16.91$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), and satisfaction ( $F=57.57$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). The univariate results for the main and interaction effects can be seen in Table 5. The interaction effects of textbook type and quality on willingness to buy, commitment, and satisfaction are shown in Figures 1-3. A summary of outcomes for hypotheses is presented in Table 6.

**Figure 1.** Two-way Interaction of Textbook Type and Quality on Willingness to Buy





**Figure 2.** Two-way Interaction of Textbook Type and Quality on Commitment**Figure 3.** Two-way Interaction of Textbook Type and Quality on Satisfaction

**Table 6.** Summary of Outcomes for Hypotheses

#	Hypothesis	Finding
H1	a) Pirated textbooks lead to higher levels of willingness to buy than original textbooks.	Supported
	b) Pirated textbooks lead to higher levels of commitment than original textbooks.	Supported
	c) Pirated textbooks lead to higher levels of satisfaction than original textbooks.	Supported
H2	a) An increase in quality leads to higher levels of willingness to buy.	Supported
	b) An increase in quality leads to higher levels of commitment.	Supported
	c) An increase in quality leads to higher levels of satisfaction.	Supported
H3	a) An increase in quality positively moderates the relationship between textbook type and willingness to buy.	Supported
	b) An increase in quality positively moderates the relationship between textbook type and commitment.	Supported
	c) An increase in quality positively moderates the relationship between textbook type and satisfaction.	Supported

## General Discussion

This study was designed to test the effects of pirated textbooks and quality on consumer behavior. Experimental data implies that textbook type and quality are related to consumer behavior. Per Hypothesis One, pirated textbooks lead to higher levels of willingness to buy, commitment, and satisfaction than original textbooks. Previous research has supported these findings suggesting that attitude towards to pirated products is positive (Dodge et al., 1996; Ang et al., 2001; Cockrill and Goode, 2012). Results show that an increase in quality leads to higher levels of willingness to buy, commitment, and satisfaction. The experimental data also suggests that an increase in quality positively moderates the relationship between textbook type and willingness to buy, commitment, and satisfaction. Previous research has suggested that quality is related to positive attitudes towards pirated products (Prendergast et al. 2002; Tom et al. 1998; Wee et al. 1995). Several insightful implications can be obtained from this research, and these are presented below.)

## Implications, Future Research and Limitations

This article makes contributions to the overall body of knowledge in piracy research. Piracy studies have been limited to mainly software piracy and research on textbook piracy has been sparse in consumer behavior literature. So this study contributes to that knowledge and will help generating additional research in the future. By utilizing a scenario based behavioral experiment, which is not widely employed; this study also makes a methodological contribution to piracy research. The results of the behavioral experiment

extend the body of knowledge by indicating that consumers prefer pirated textbooks to original ones.

This research provides several important insights for managers. Given the widespread use of pirated textbooks, this study offers a fresh perspective that has the potential to be useful for managers. First, managers need to be aware of the demand for pirated textbooks. As results of this study suggest that pirated textbooks lead to higher levels of willingness to buy, commitment, and satisfaction than original textbooks. One reason for that may be the price of the pirated textbooks. Consumers have a tendency to prefer low priced products. Therefore pirated textbooks are more preferable than original textbooks. Second, quality of textbooks is important for consumers. The results suggest that quality has a positive impact on consumer behavior. Finally, quality of the product positively moderates the relationship between textbook type and consumer behavior. This finding is particularly important, as Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3 depicts even in the high quality scenario consumers prefer pirated textbooks to original textbooks. Moreover, consumers have higher levels of willingness to buy for low quality pirated textbooks than high quality original textbooks. Therefore, marketing managers need to formulate strategies focusing on price of the products. Managers who understand how lowering the price of the textbooks might be perceived by consumers, can have the desired outcomes in the long run.

By utilizing a behavioral experiment this research was able to address precision and control. However, this method is limited with regards to generalizability. Future studies can obtain more generalizable results by using survey methodology. This study used a student sample of undergraduates from an emerging economy, Turkey. Given the global nature of piracy, future research is needed that goes beyond Turkey, in order to help managers better understand the piracy perceptions of consumers and some of those contextual factors, specifically national culture. Another future study possibility emerged from pirated textbook manipulations. Pirated textbooks are defined as low-priced unauthorized duplicates of copyrighted textbooks. Future studies can separate price component from the definition to explore the effect of pirated products separately in depth. Consequently, more research needed in piracy-consumer context to help marketers determine the best strategy to cope with increasing threat of piracy.

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