

Aalto University
School of Business

23C59000 - Consumer research

Introduction

Ilona Mikkonen

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The instructors

Ilona Mikkonen, PhD

Senior Lecturer, Department of Marketing

- Teaches consumer research and qualitative research methods
- Supervises theses (BA and Master's)
- Consumer culture researcher (specific interests in consumer resistance, gender issues, consumer well-being, and "dark" side of consumption)

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The instructors

Hedon Blakaj, PhD

Lecturer, Department of Marketing

- Teaches consumer research, integrated marketing communications, and qualitative research methods
- Consumer culture researcher (specific interests: Cultural production, cultural intermediaries, market dynamics and market emergence)



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Agenda

- **Short introduction of the course**
 - Goals and objectives of the course
 - Course assignments and grading
- **Introduction to consumer research**
 - What is a consumer? What is consumption?
 - What are different perspectives to consumer research?
 - Practical and academic consumer research – guest speaker Hannu Uotila from Sailer

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Course practicalities

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Things you need to know about this course

1. This course is a **rather labor intensive**
→ **a lot of work** to do!
2. You will **learn a lot** 😊

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Goals and objectives of the course

- To appreciate how **understanding consumers** can lead to **competitive advantages**
- To introduce current knowledge of **both substantive findings and theory about consumer behavior**
- To **provide concepts for understanding consumer reactions** to (marketing) stimuli
- To improve the ability to **identify potential applications of consumer behavior concepts** and to utilize those concepts in analyzing marketing problems and determining marketing strategy
- To teach you to **read and understand academic research and to apply its methods** to more practical market and consumer research.

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Practicalities

- **Classes on Tuesday and Thursday, 13.15 am to 14.45ish**
 - **No compulsory attendance**, but are expected to turn in learning diaries based on what you have learned on the course
- **Communication should mostly take place through MyCourses**
 - Please use the discussion forum **for all questions regarding course practicalities**, readings, assignments etc. → do not email!
 - Official announcements etc. will be posted in the News forum. Make sure you check it periodically
 - Contact the course instructors by email if your matter is urgent and/or personal

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Grade structure

On the course you can earn **100 points**, ie. 100% of the grade.

Individual assignments



Learning diaries
25% of the final grade

Collaborative assignments



Perusall readings
25% of the final grade

Groupwork assignments



Groupwork project
50% of the final grade

Learning diary (25%)

A learning diary is NOT

- your notes from the lectures
- a summary of the lecture materials

It IS

- a **reflective tool** to enhance your learning
- what did you learn,
- what was interesting (and **why**?)
- did you disagree with something (and **why**?)



Five diary entries, max. 5 points each

Graded on a four-point scale:

Excellent: 5 points

Good: 3 points

Fair: 1 point

Insufficient: 0 points

Perusall (25%)

Perusall is a **collaborative** e-reader platform

- As you read the assigned texts, you annotate the text, i.e. leave comments and questions
- You collaborate by responding to posts by others

→ Ideally you start meaningful discussions and/or debates



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Perusall instructions

1. Create an account on Perusall.com
2. Join the course by inserting the course code: MIKKONEN-2VYDL
3. Complete the assignments before the deadline

Your Perusall score depends on (in the order of importance):

1. **Posing thoughtful questions** and comments that **elicit responses from classmates**
2. **Answering questions/comments** from others
3. **Getting upvoted**
4. **Upvoting** thoughtful questions and helpful answers
5. Reading **all the way to the end** of the assigned reading

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Perusall

Note! Comments such as and similar to...

"I agree!"
"Great point!"
"So true!"

do not constitute meaningful
 contributions and will be deleted!

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Group project (50%)

- During the course, you will be working on developing consumer-research idea **with practical and/or policy implications** for a for-profit or not-for-profit organization.
- You will work in groups of 3 to 4 to first **pitch** your research idea in the beginning of the course, **give a presentation** of your final proposal at the end of the course, and finally write **a full, theory-based (i.e. academic) research plan**.

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Group project topics

Your group will have two different options for topics:

Option 1: A real world marketing problem

- You assume a role of market-research consultants
- For this option, **you will have to find a company to work with**
- Together with the company representative, you will **identify an actual marketing problem that can be solved through consumer research.**



→ i.e. you propose a research project to a company, and this research is for their specific use

Group project topics

Option 2: Real-world social problem

- For this option you do not need find an organization to with
- Here you assume a role of an advocate group who is writing a grant proposal for a non-profit organization or a foundation

→ you are seeking funding for a research project, which will have implications for policymakers



National Drug Overdose Deaths Involving Any Opioid, Number Among All Ages, by Gender, 1999-2017



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, Multiple Cause of Death 1999-2017 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released December 2018



Group project deliverables: Pitch & idea paper (5%)

Pitch = a **maximum 5-minute presentation** followed by 5 minutes a Q&A

In this pitch presentation you should:

- Outline the **consumer-behavior phenomenon** your group has chosen (scale of the phenomenon, market structure, etc. relevant information)
 - Convince the importance of the topic **for your chosen organization**
 - Provide you initial idea on how you would carry out the research in practice
- assume you're pitching to the company/not-for-profit organization

A maximum of two-page idea paper containing

- your tentative project title
- the option you are choosing;
- the specific topic of your project
- your argument for the importance of the topic.



Group project deliverables: Presentation and final report

Online presentation of research proposal (10%)

A max 10-minute PowerPoint presentation of your research proposal

Written report (35%)

A max 15-page document

- Background to research
- Research objectives & questions
- Positioning of the research necessary
- Research methods & data collection plan
- Expected findings and practical relevance (what's in it for them)

Active, meaningful participation is welcome (can earn you up to 5 more points)

ACTIVE IN CLASS

- Ask questions,
- Make comments



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The points will be converted to the final grade:

POINTS (PERCENTAGE)	GRADE
90 points and over	5
80 to 89 points	4
70 to 79 points	3
60 to 69 points	2
50 to 59 points	1
49 points and under	Fail

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Assignment deadlines

Date	Deadline
March 11 @ 13.00	Perusall 1
March 14 @ 23.55	Learning diary 1 (submit via MyCourses)
March 16 @ 13.00	Perusall 2,
March 21 @ 23.55	Learning diary 2 (submit via MyCourses)
March 25 @ 13.00	Idea paper (submit via MyCourses)
April 22 @ 13.00	Perusall 3
April 25 @ 23.55	Learning diary 3 (submit via MyCourses)
April 29 @ 13.00	Perusall 4
May 2 @ 23.55	Learning diary 4 (submit via MyCourses)
May 6 @ 13.00	Perusall 5
May 9 @ 13.00	Learning diary 5 (submit via MyCourses)
May 25 @ 23.55	Final research proposal (submit via MyCourses)

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Questions, comments, grievances?

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What is consumer research?

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What is the difference
between
a **consumer** and
a **customer**?

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What Is Consumer Research?

MORRIS B. HOLBROOK*

I, long before the blissful hour arrives,
Would chant, in lonely peace, the spousal verse
Of this great consummation.

—William Wordsworth (1814)
The Recluse, lines 56–58

The field of consumer research in general and the *Journal of Consumer Research* in particular currently find themselves in a crisis of identity. Whatever the historical basis for its editorial policy, *JCR* has lately come to embrace a variety of topics once thought too arcane or abstruse for a scholarly publication devoted to the study of consumer behavior. Recent examples of this trend would include articles on ritual, materialism,

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studies consumer behavior; (2) consumer behavior entails consumption; (3) consumption involves the acquisition, usage, and disposition of products; (4) products are goods, services, ideas, events, or any other entities that can be acquired, used, or disposed of in ways that potentially provide value; (5) value is a type of experience that occurs for some living organism when a goal is achieved, a need is fulfilled, or a want is satisfied; (6) such an achievement, fulfillment, or satisfaction attains consummation; conversely, a failure to achieve goals, fulfill needs, or satisfy wants thwarts consummation; (7) the process of consummation (including its possible breakdowns) is therefore the fundamental subject for consumer research.

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Holbrook (1985): What is consumer research?

1. Consumer research studies consumer behavior
2. Consumer behavior entails **consumption**
3. Consumption involves the **acquisition, usage, and disposition** of products
4. **Products are goods, services, ideas, events, or any other entities** that can be acquired, used, or disposed of in ways that potentially provide value
5. Value is a type of experience that occurs for some living organism when a goal is achieved, a need is fulfilled, or a want is satisfied
6. Such an achievement, fulfillment, or satisfaction attains consummation; conversely, a failure to achieve goals, fulfill needs, or satisfy wants thwarts consummation
7. The process of consummation (including its possible breakdowns) is therefore the fundamental subject for consumer research.

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HOLBROOK (1987) WHAT IS CONSUMER RESEARCH?**The contribution of other disciplines**

Contributions	
Macroeconomics	National spending behavior and disposable income
Microeconomics	Price elasticity of demand, utility theory, various income effects on purchases in a particular product class
Psychology	Choice among brands (e.g. multiattribute attitude model, linear compensatory model) Memory, learning
Sociology	Social patterns of consumption (conspicuous consumption, subcultures)
Anthropology	Disposition and use; consumption practices, rituals, and mythology; symbolic meanings
Philosophy	Moral and ethical questions
Humanities	Gender, linguistic and discourse studies

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Which of the following entails consumption/consumer behavior?

1. Taking a life insurance
2. Attending university
3. Smoking
4. Joining a religious community
5. Buying a text book
6. Voting

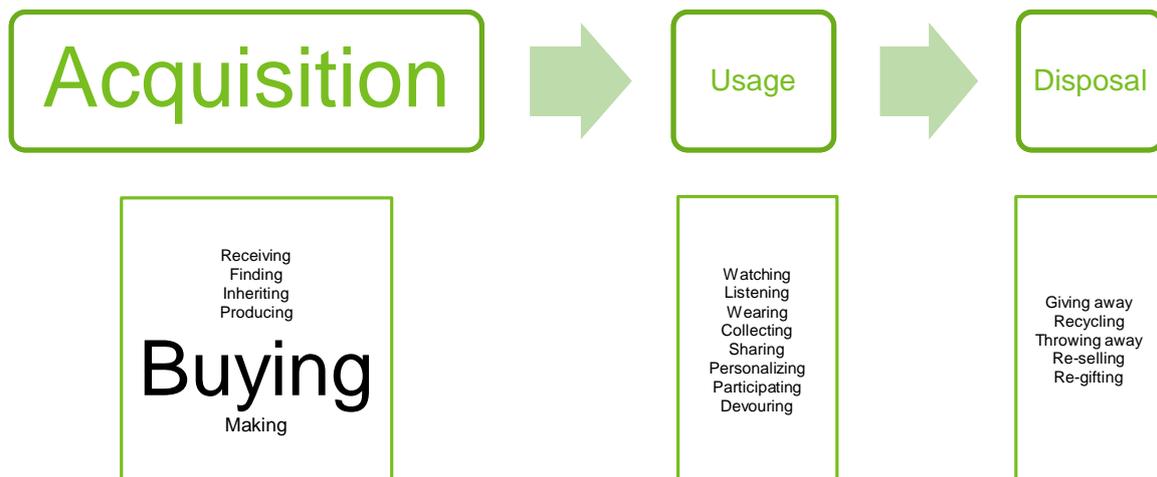
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Holbrook (1985): What's wrong with consumer research?

As implicitly recognized in Alderson's (1957) **distinction between "buying" and "consuming,"** a gulf exists between phenomena involved in purchasing decisions and those pertaining to consumption experiences.

Yet, even while acknowledging the conceptual primacy of the latter, consumer researchers too often put the cart before the horse and preoccupy themselves with the former. Typically, we study **brand choice at the expense of product usage** (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982); we dwell on **buying behavior instead of consuming behavior** (Belk 1984); **we obsess over choosing and ignore using** (Holbrook, Lehmann, and O'Shaughnessy 1983)

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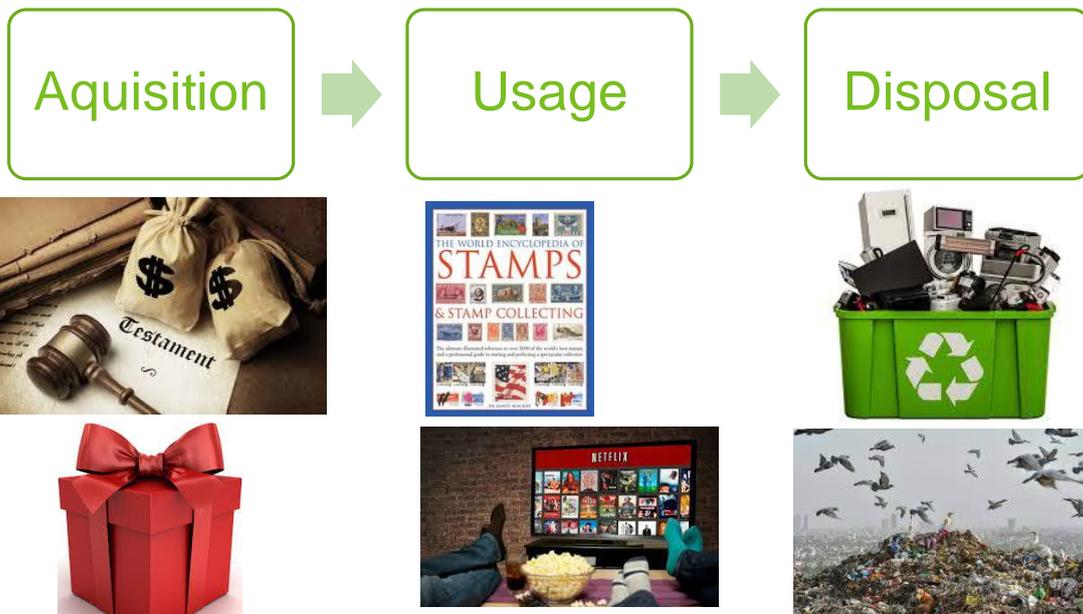


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WHAT IS WRONG WITH CONSUMER RESEARCH? (Holbrook 1985)

I therefore urge my fellow consumer researchers to regard our discipline as a field of inquiry that takes **consumption** as its central focus [as opposed to studying choosing and buying] and that therefore examines **all facets of the value** potentially provided when some living organism **acquires, uses, or disposes of any product** that might achieve a goal, fulfill a need, or satisfy a want.

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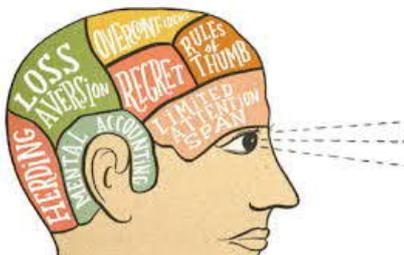


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The two main perspectives to consumer research on this course

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BEHAVIORAL PERSPECTIVE



CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE



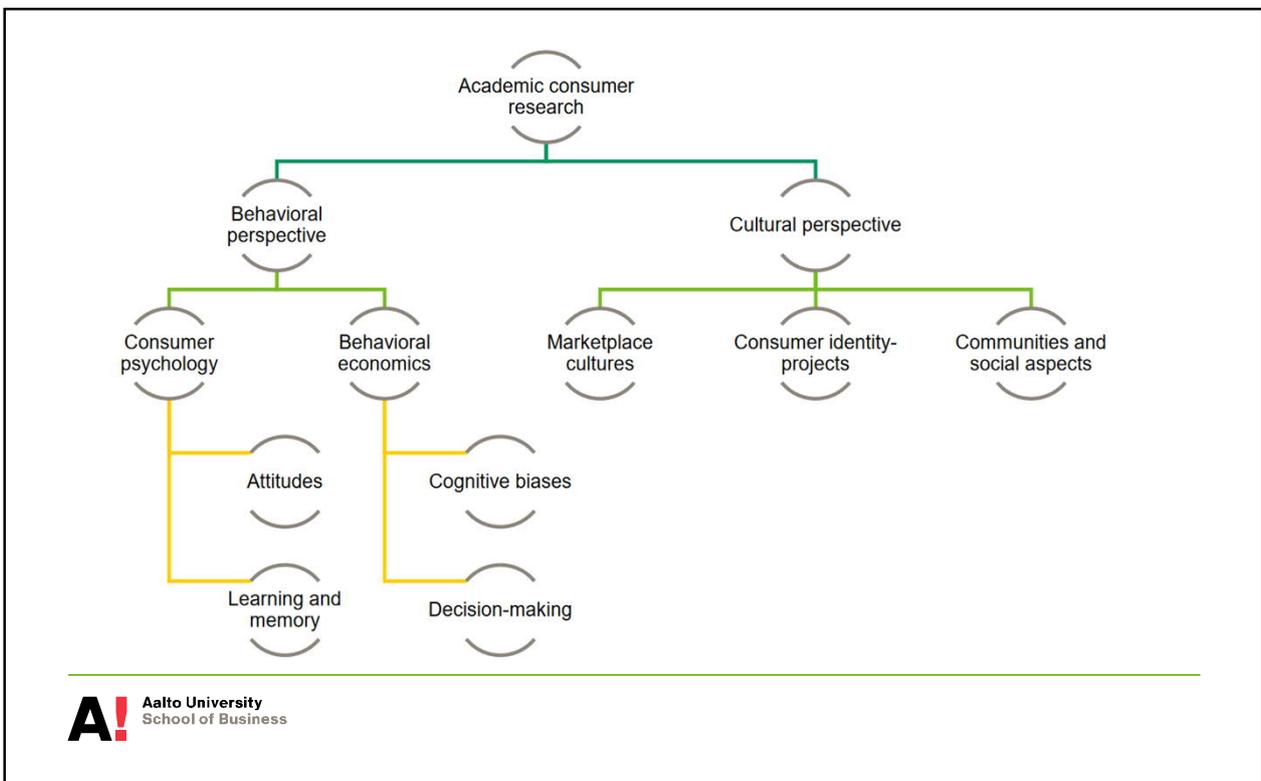
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<p>BEHAVIORAL PERSPECTIVE TO CONSUMER RESEARCH</p> <p>Behaviorism = systematic approach to understanding the behavior of humans. It assumes that all behaviors are</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) either reflexes produced by a response to certain stimuli in the environment 2) effects of psychological, cognitive, emotional factors (for example learning, motivation, intelligence, perception, reasoning processes etc.) <p>Methods typically: quantitative methods, experiments</p>	<p>CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE TO CONSUMER RESEARCH</p> <p>Consumer research which addresses “the sociocultural, experiential, symbolic, and ideological aspects of consumption” (Arnould & Thompson 2005)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer identities • Marketplace cultures • The Sociohistoric Patterning of Consumption • Mass-Mediated Marketplace Ideologies <p>Methods typically: qualitative (in-depth interviews, ethnographic methods, discursive and visual analysis etc. etc.)</p>
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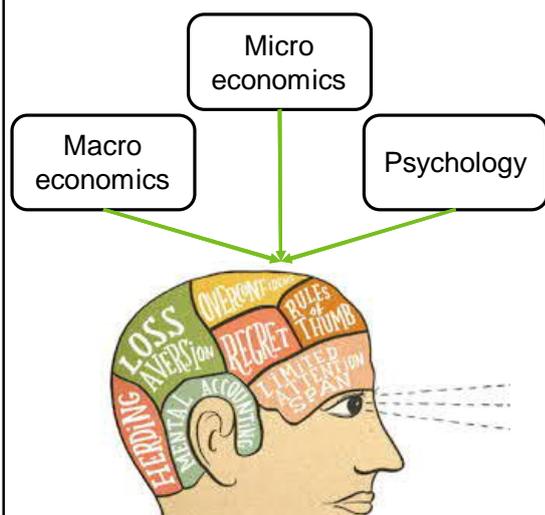
HOLBROOK (1987) WHAT IS CONSUMER RESEARCH?

The contribution of other disciplines

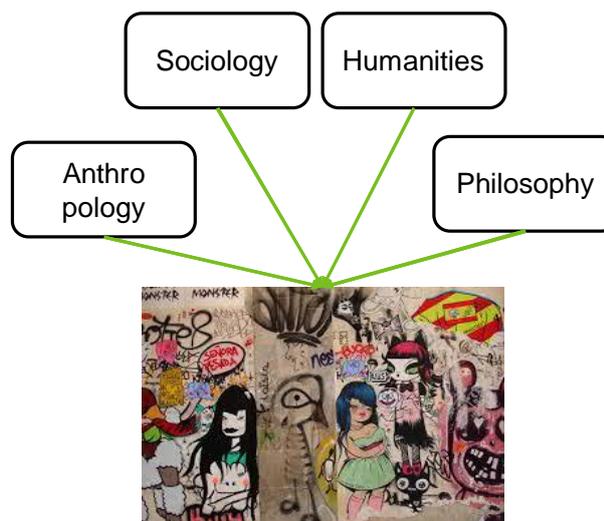
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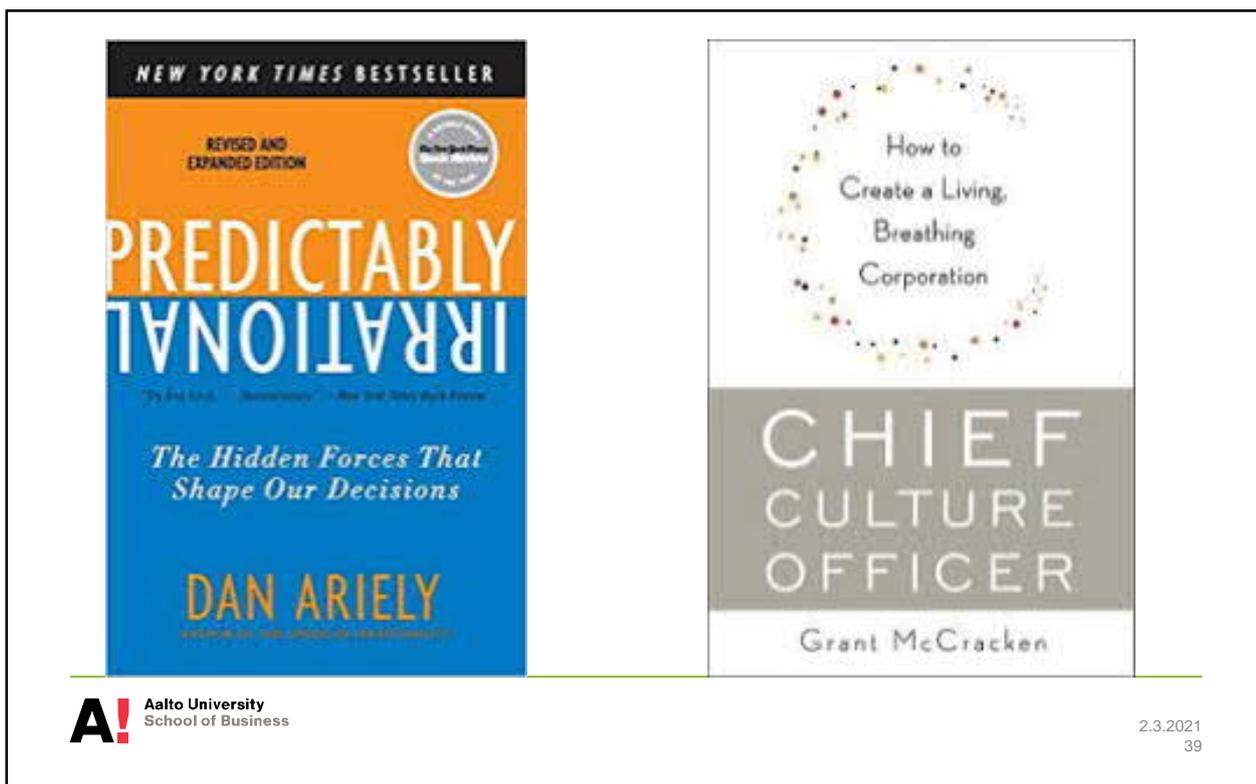
BEHAVIORAL PERSPECTIVE



CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE



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<p>COMMERCIAL consumer research</p> <p>Often closer to customer research</p> <p>Produces information for an individual business for their practical needs</p> <p>→ Done by market-research companies, consulting firms ect</p>	<p>ACADEMIC consumer research</p> <p>Basic research → Meant to produce new knowledge for “all”</p> <p>Constructs theory</p> <p>→ Done by universities and academic institutions</p>

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COMMERCIAL/BUSINESS RESEARCH

- **Need driven** and almost always applied
- Generally seeks **specific answers to specific problems**
- Often undertaken by consultants or research companies
- **Results not widely available**, may have confidentiality clauses
- **Tight timelines**
- Written in non-academic language
- Not peer reviewed
- Expenditure **expected to produce income**

ACADEMIC/BASIC RESEARCH

- **Enquiry driven**, theoretical and/or applied
- **Peer reviewed**, published in academic journals and books
- **Results shared** at conferences and in journals, also open-access journals
- May be **funded with Government sources**
- Ideally **widely available**
- Generally have **long lead times** to publication
- **No overarching agenda (objectivity)**
- **Academic layout and language**

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**Does academic consumer research
have **anything** to give
to pragmatic, commercial
consumer-research?**

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Hannu Uotila
founder and CEO



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Next step

- We'll assign you to groups of 3 to 4
- Next time: how to read academic articles, how to write academic text, how to pitch
- The passcode for all the following lectures is **CR2021**



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