

Introduction and course practicalities

Consumer Research

Fall 2020, period 1



Aalto-yliopisto
Aalto-universitetet
Aalto University

About me

- McS, Aalto University
- Work experience 2014-2018
 - Brand marketing and category management, Danone Finland
 - Strategic marketing and marketing management, S-group
- Start of academic career in 2018
 - PHD researcher at the marketing department
 - Research interests: access-based consumption, ownership
 - Contexts of WIP studies: Clothing libraries, handbag consumption practices



Broad learning goals of the course

- Developing a multi-faceted understanding of what is consumer behavior and research
- Understanding what are the best approaches to study specific areas of consumer behavior & designing research projects
- Elaborating on how studying consumer behavior relate to business advantages

In short, you will develop your skills as an academic researcher and familiarize yourself with some of the most important topics of consumer research.

Understanding the research process, methods and style of academic writing is only the first step. The more familiar you are with different topics of research, the better you will get in spotting interesting research ideas.



RESEARCHER SKILL

Further...

A deep understanding of consumers and consumption will allow you to build brands with deeper marketplace resonance, identify new business opportunities, outmaneuver the competition when trends change, build lasting value propositions, enhance products into services, and recruit consumers

→ Relevance of the course topics to many business world careers (business and marketing management, consultancy etc.)



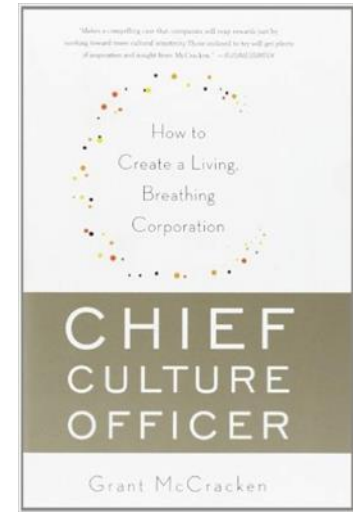
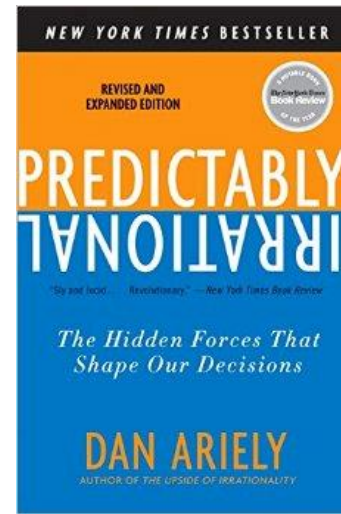
Readings

Each class will have a number of compulsory readings.

Some are based on two books:

- Ariely, Dan. (2008) Predictably irrational. New York: HarperCollins.
- McCracken, Grant. (2011) Chief culture officer: How to create a living, breathing corporation. Basic Books

Others are journal articles.



Grade structure

Group work (55%)

- Research pitch (video) (10%)
- Written report of research proposal (25%)
- Presentation of research proposal (video) (20%)

Individual assignments (45%)

- Written academic article analysis x2 (20%)
- Learning diary (25%)

ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES

17.9. DUE: Article analysis 1 (individual). Submit file to Mycourses.

24.9. DUE: Research pitch, film and submit via Mycourses.

1.10. DUE: Article analysis 2 (individual). Submit file to Mycourses.

13.10. DUE: Presentation of research proposal - submit video to Mycourses.

15.10. DUE: Written research proposal (group work). Submit file to Mycourses.

16.10. DUE: Learning diary (individual). Submit file to Mycourses.

Form groups of 5 people after class, and let me know your group members!

If you don't have a group, let me know asap. I will allocate you to a group.

Group work (1/2)

Research pitch 5 min

- In groups of 5 person, you will decide a research idea and initiate the project. Through a 5 min pitch, you're objective is to try to convince that this research is worth doing!
- Answer at least the following questions: What is your research objective? Why is it relevant (what do we not know that we absolutely should know more about?). How are you planning to study it?
- Utilize the learnings from the presentation on pitches! Try to make it as engaging as possible!

Submission via video! → film your pitch and send it via MyCourses!

Note: maximum length is 5min!!

Group work (2/2)

A. Written report of research proposal (10 pages)

- **Utilize the format of research proposals:**
 - Background to research
 - Research objectives & questions
 - Positioning of the research (by giving a brief review of prior literature, illustrate a research gap and position your research idea in relation to prior research) → *this is the place to build the argument and convince why this research is important and necessary*
 - Research methods & data collection plan. Specify also your target group/ context selection and justify it!
 - Expected findings and theoretical contributions & managerial relevance

B. Presentation of research proposal (10-15min). **Submission via video! → film your presentation and send it via MyCourses!**

Individual work (1/2): Written academic article analysis x2 (2 pages each)

1. Choose an article that triggers your interest

- The article should be published in a high-quality journal (check ABS ratings) and its topic should relate to one topic covered in this course (consumer culture or psychology).

2. Review article's key points:

- What is the research objective?
- How is the research gap formulated (review of past literature)?
- What methods are used? Do you think they are accurate?
- Key findings and theoretical contribution
- Managerial/ business relevance (even though all journals do not list these, try to identify them yourself)

Individual work (2/2): Learning diary (max 8 pages)

Out of all the topics covered on this course, choose 2-3 topics you want to write about.

- Give a short summary of the topic: what different theories were covered? Remember to cite course readings!
- What did you learn? Was there something you didn't understand / agree on? Reflect analytically and do not hesitate to state your opinions!
- Compare the topics to each other. Try to identify research ideas or real-life cases relating to the topics. For example, if you would choose identity as one of your topics, you could elaborate on whether you identify the different theories of identity in your own or other's lives. You could also identify some research contexts where identity work would be especially interesting to study.
- The more you provide analytical reflection, your own analysis, ideas and opinions, the better the grade! A good summary of the topics will only get you half-way.

Instructions on formatting

1. Written assignments: 1,5 spaced, standard margins, 12-point font, Times New Roman
2. Group pitch: no ppt, only video.
3. Group presentation: Ppt format + video. No expected slide amounts, but make sure you apply the time limit! After you have made the ppt presentation, film it via Teams/ Zoom / Panopto and submit via MyCourses.

IMPORTANT! THE VIDEOS SHOULD NOT EXCEED THE TIME LIMITS SO MAKE SURE YOU PRACTICE THEM MULTIPLE TIMES BEFORE MAKING THE VIDEO!

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Readings</i>	<i>Assignment deadlines</i>
LECTURE 1	8.9.	15.15-17	Course Practicalities and Introduction to Consumer Research	Holbrook, M. B. (1987). What is consumer research?. Journal of Consumer Research, 14(1), 128-132.	
LECTURE 2	10.9.	15.15-17	Methods and Designing Consumer Research Projects	Book Chapter "What is Qualitative Research?" Lee, N., Saunders, J., & Goulding, C. (2005). Grounded theory, ethnography and phenomenology. <i>European journal of Marketing</i> .	
LECTURE 3	15.9.	15.15-17	Academic Reading and Writing & How to make Pitches	Knopf, J. W. (2006). Doing a literature review. PS: Political Science and Politics, 39(1), 127-132.	
LECTURE 4	17.9.	15.15-17	Behavioral Perspective to Consumer research: Starting with the Mind	Book Chapters 1 and 2 from "Predictably Irrational", Dan Ariely	<i>Article analysis (individual) due. Submit file to Mycourses.</i>
LECTURE 5	22.9.	15.15-17	Cultural Perspective to Consumer Research: Consumer Culture	Arnould, E. J., & Thompson, C. J. (2005). Consumer culture theory (CCT): Twenty years of research. Journal of consumer research, 31(4), 868-882.	
LECTURE 6	24.9.	15.15-17	PITCHES DUE: NO LECTURE	<i>No readings</i>	<i>Research pitch due, film and submit via MyCourses.</i>
LECTURE 7	29.9.	15.15-17	Continuing with the Mind: Attitudes, Emotions and Judgement & The Mind in the Marketplace	Book Chapters 5, 6 and 9 from "Predictably Irrational", Dan Ariely	
LECTURE 8	1.10.	15.15-17	Continuing with the Cultural Perspective: Self, Identity and Gender	Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. Journal of consumer research, 15(2), 139-168 Ahuvia, A. C. (2005). Beyond the extended self: Loved objects and consumers' identity narratives. Journal of consumer research, 32(1), 171-184.	<i>Article analysis (individual) due. Submit file to mycourses.</i>
LECTURE 9	6.10.	15.15-17	Continuing with the Cultural Perspective: Personality, Values, Social Class, Lifestyles, and Subcultures	Weijo, H. A. (2019). Democracies of Taste Ruled by the Law of Jante? Rudiments of a Nordic Sociology of Consumption. In Nordic Consumer Culture (pp. 25-47). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. Ahuvia, A., Carroll, B., & Yang, Y. (2006). Consumer culture theory and lifestyle segmentation. Innovative Markets, 2, 33-43.	
LECTURE 10	8.10.	15.15-17	Modes of Exchange: from Ownership to Access-based forms of Consumption	Belk, R. (2010). Sharing. Journal of consumer research, 36(5), 715-734 Bardhi, F., & Eckhardt, G. M. (2017). Liquid consumption. Journal of Consumer Research, 44(3), 582-597.	
LECTURE 11	13.10.	15.15-17	INDIVIDUAL WORK, NO LECTURE	<i>No readings - PREPARE YOUR GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS</i>	<i>Presentation of research proposal due. Presented in class. Submit file also to mycourses.</i>
LECTURE 12	15.10.	15.15-17	INDIVIDUAL WORK, NO LECTURE	<i>No readings - PREPARE YOUR GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS</i>	<i>Written research proposal (group work) due. Submit file to mycourses.</i>
	16.10.				<i>Learning diary (individual) due. Submit file to mycourses.</i>



Introduction to Consumer Research



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What is consumer research?

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

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,

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.

Holbrook (1985): What is consumer research?

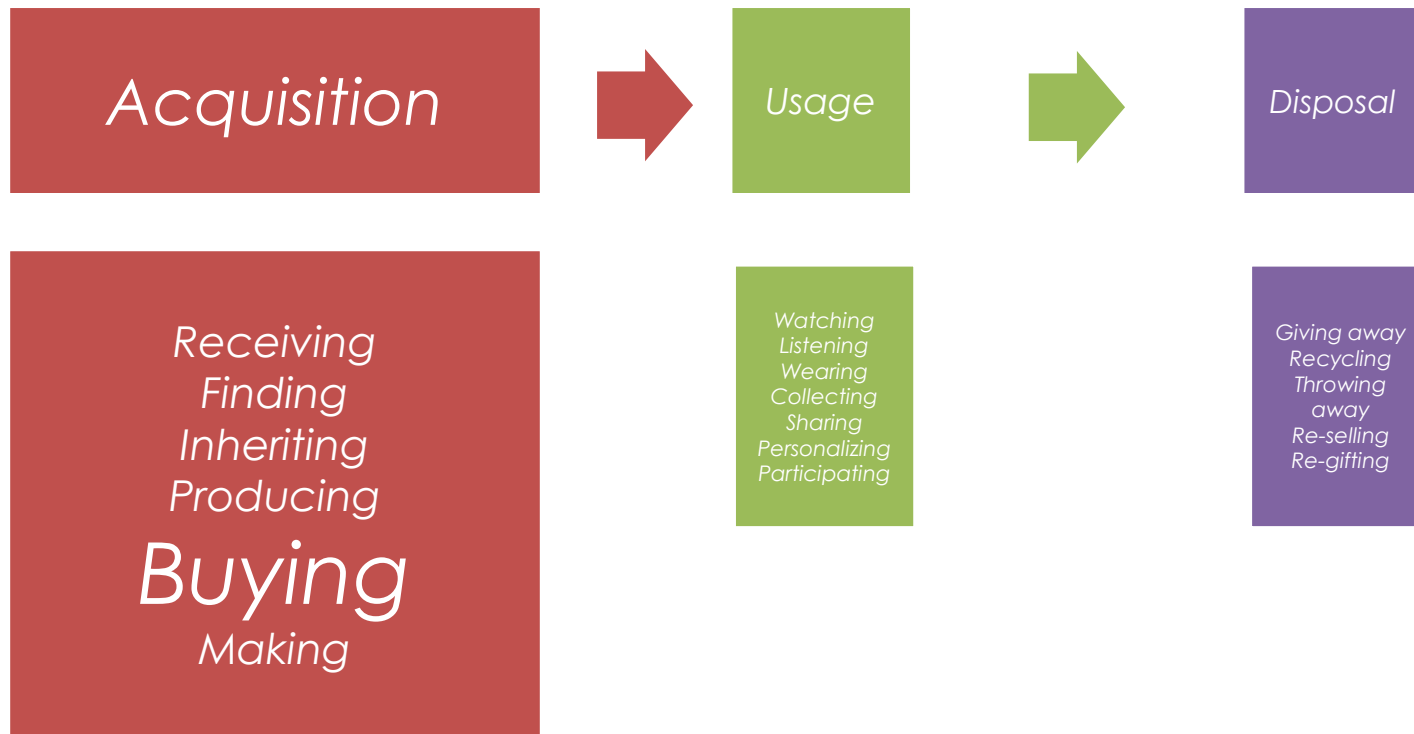
1. Consumer research studies consumer behavior
2. Consumer behavior entails **consumption**
3. Consumption involves the **acquisition, usage, and disposition of products**
4. Products are goods, services, ideas, events, or any other entities that can be acquired, used, or disposed of in ways that potentially 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.

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)

In other words...



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

“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.**

The process of consumption

Acquisition



Usage



Disposal



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 Attitudes, biases 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

Commercial consumer research

Produces information for an individual business for their practical needs

- 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, no theory-building
- Not peer reviewed
- Expenditure expected to produce income

Academic consumer research

Basic, “pure” research → Meant to produce new knowledge for “all” and constructs theory

- 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
- Generally have long lead times to publication
- No overarching agenda (objectivity)
- Academic layout and language

The two main perspectives covered during this course

Consumer psychology & Consumer Culture



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BEHAVIORAL PERSPECTIVE



CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

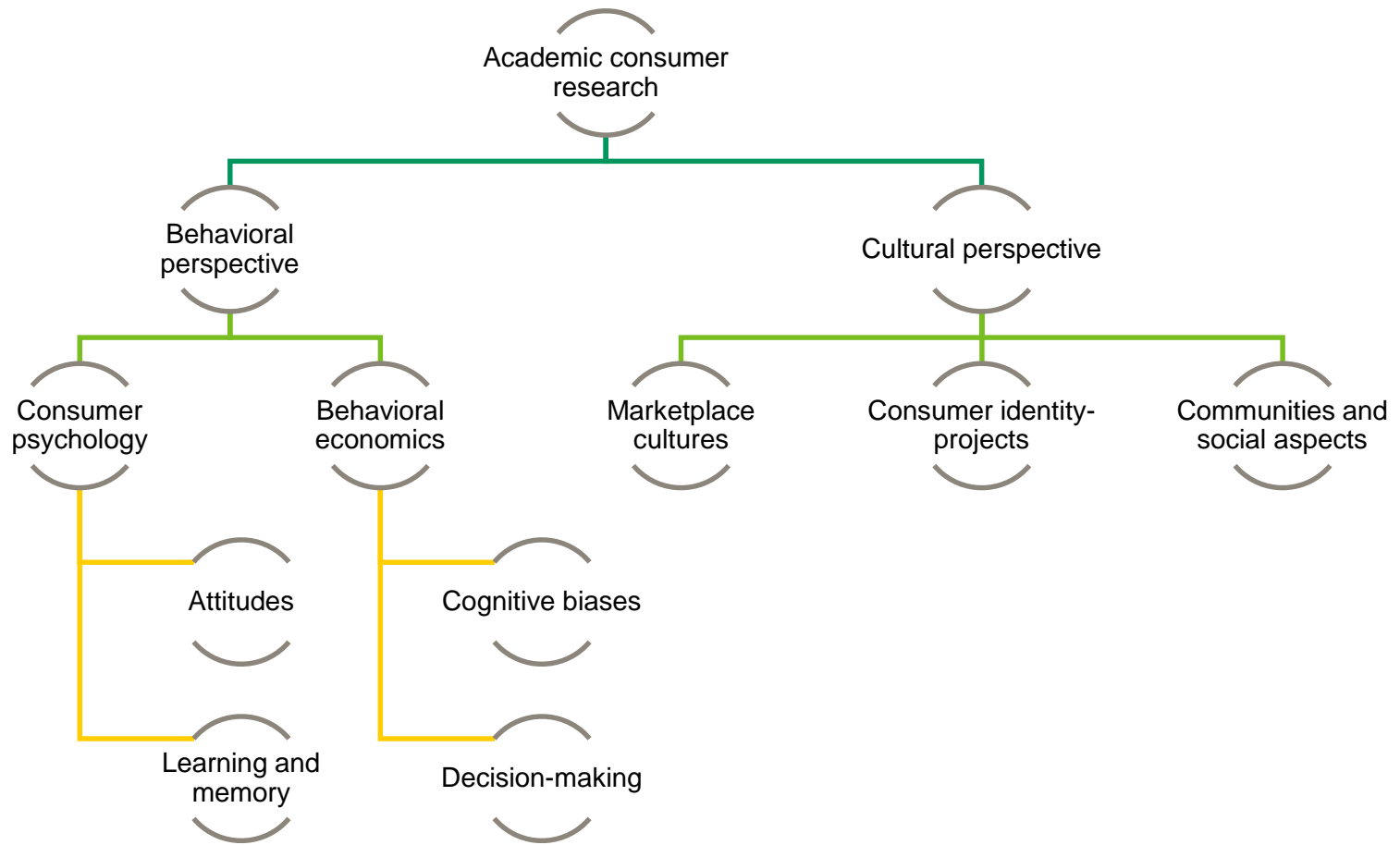


Behavioral perspective

- Behaviorism = systematic approach to understanding the behavior of humans. It assumes that all behaviors are
 - reflexes produced by a response to certain stimuli in the environment
 - effects of psychological, cognitive, emotional factors (for example learning, motivation, intelligence, perception, reasoning processes etc.)
- Methods typically: quantitative methods, experiments

Cultural perspective

- Consumer research which addresses “the sociocultural, experiential, symbolic, and ideological aspects of consumption” (Arnould & Thompson 2005)
 - Consumer identities
 - Marketplace cultures
 - The Sociohistoric Patterning of Consumption
 - Mass-Mediated Marketplace Ideologies
- Methods typically: qualitative (in-depth interviews, ethnographic methods, discursive and visual analysis etc. etc. etc.)



Thank you!



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