

# Consumer Research

CCT - Consumer Culture Theorizing perspectie

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# Consumer research – context and few perspectives

# The Consumer is King

THE CONSUMER IS KING.



@iPullRank

# CCT – Consumer Culture Theorizing research

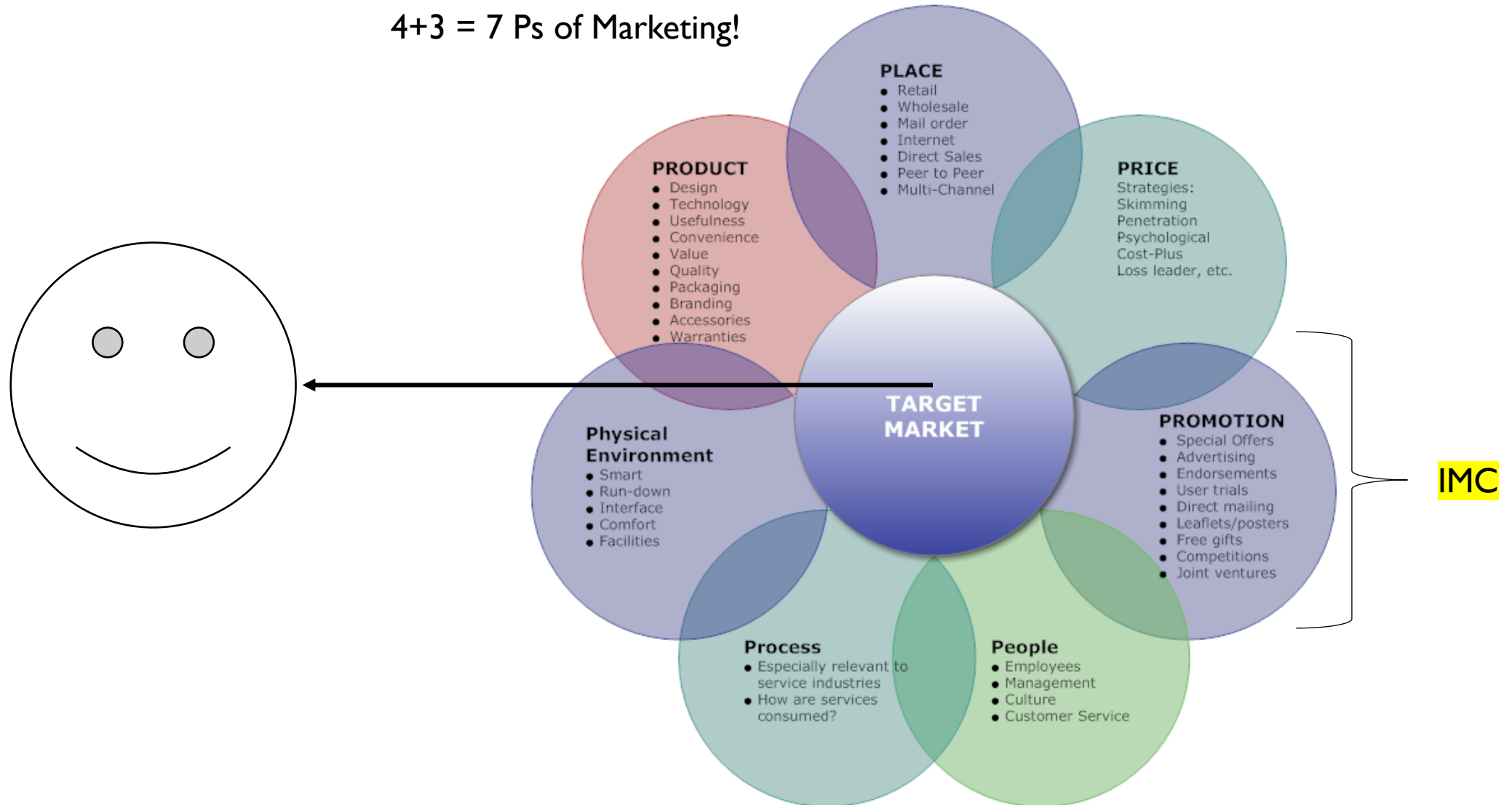
- What is it about?
- Lets start with some basic marketing postulates
- Marketing → a mean of **understanding** and **addressing** consumer/customer wants and needs. And, of course, make a ton of money for shareholders - while fulfilling consumer wants and needs 😊
- In mainstream marketing, the dominant theories we use to speak and address consumer wants and needs come from mainstream psychology

# How do we cater to consumer needs and wants?



# How do we cater to consumer needs and wants?

4+3 = 7 Ps of Marketing!





## What does this mean and what implications it has for marketing practice?

- Well, you all are aware of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, right?
- What does Maslow's hierarchy of needs tell us about us, **consumers**?
  - What is assumed about us, as consumers?
- How do different brands come into play across different hierarchical levels suggested in the figure?
  - How they are positioned and whom they are targeting?
- What kinds of brands tend to satisfy different consumer needs?
  - Differentiating + value proposition!
- How do different brands go about addressing specific needs?
  - How do they position, what is their value proposition, whom they are after - segment?

Lets take few minutes to talk about this framework



# Self-actualization

desire to become the most that one can be

# Esteem

respect, self-esteem, status, recognition, strength, freedom

# Love and belonging

friendship, intimacy, family, sense of connection

# Safety needs

personal security, employment, resources, health, property

# Physiological needs

air, water, food, shelter, sleep, clothing, reproduction

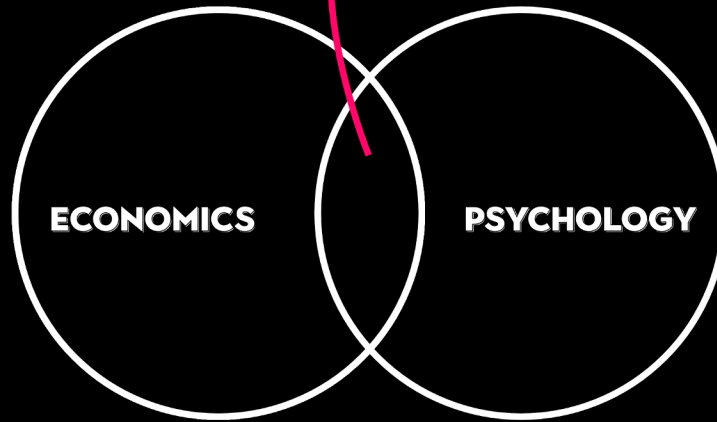
# Some assumptions

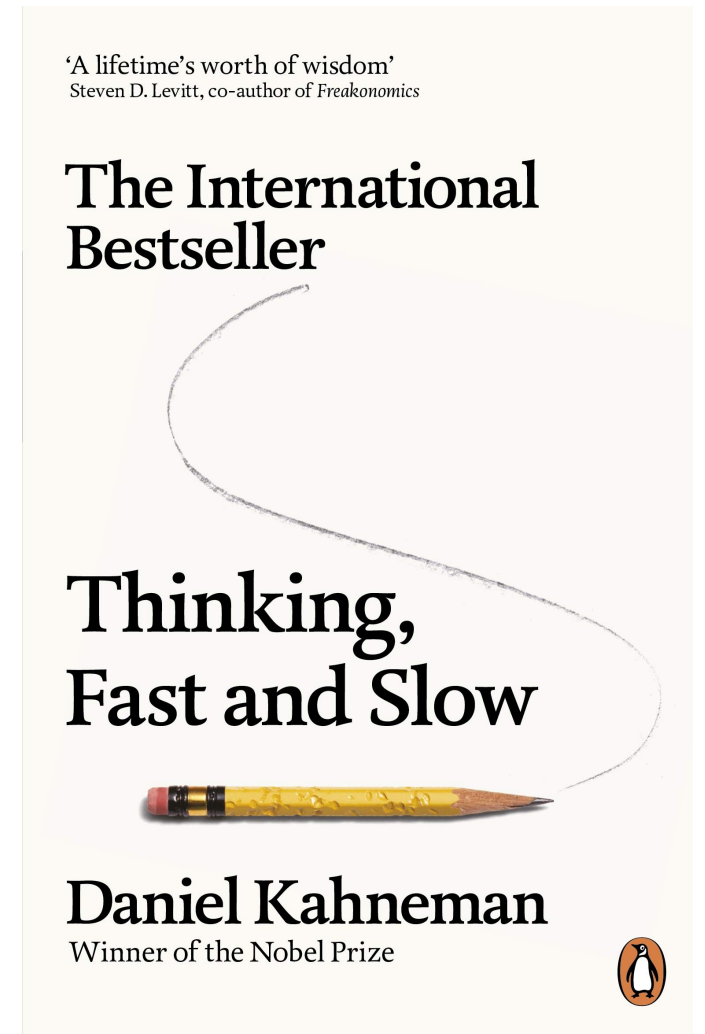
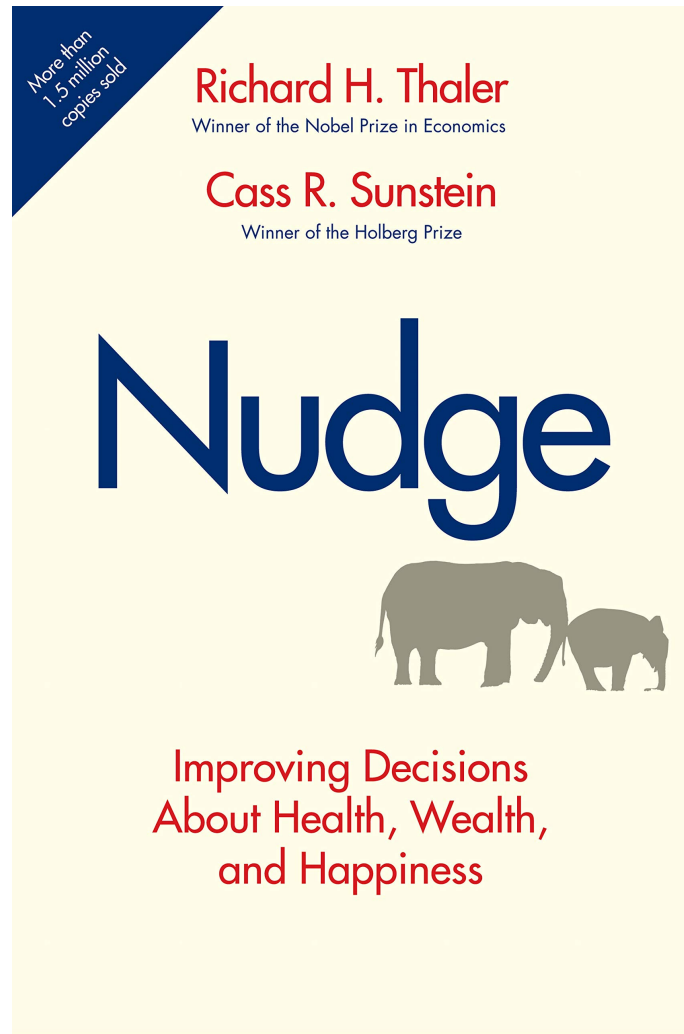
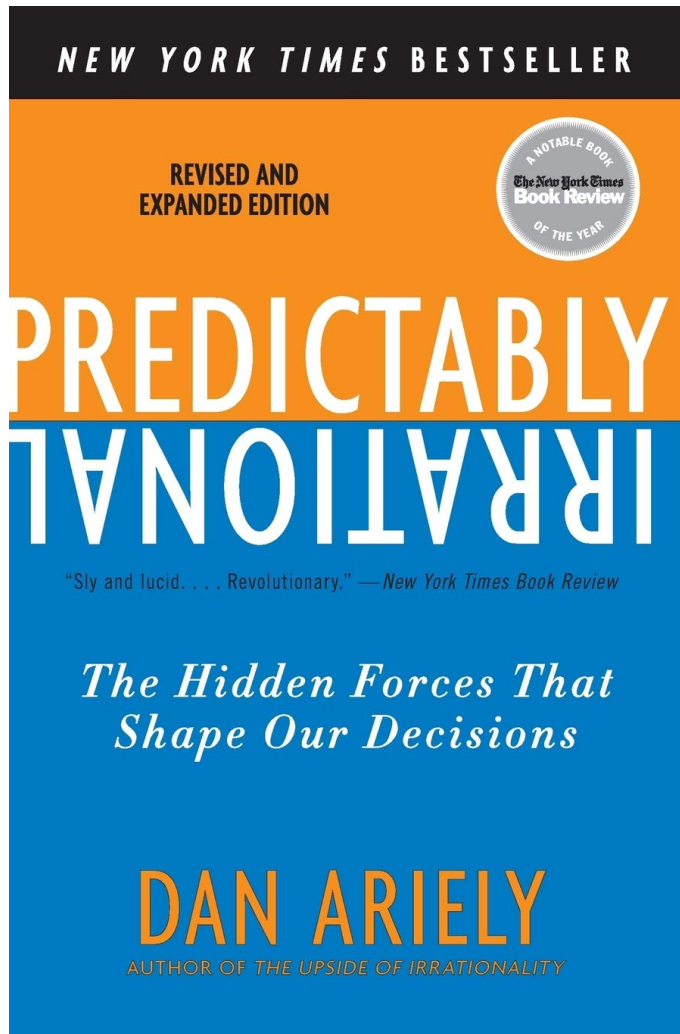
- Consumers behave based on their needs
- Consumers' satisfaction of the "needs" influences behavior
- Motivation/*drive* = consumers' attempt to fulfil the needs identified by them (*a natural tendency*)
- Needs are hierarchical in order, from bottom up
  - *Universal/generalist view!*
- Consumers depicted as *rational decision* makers

# So what, then?

- Adherence to these kinds of assumption, by and large, influences how you do market/consumer research + also how you look at brands
- Because needs and wants are assumed to be *universal*, then, your consumer/market research efforts will reflect these kinds of assumptions
- Methods of doing consumer/market research:
  - Deductive (top down: theory → assumptions → survey questions → administration → (quant)analysis → objective reporting → managerial decision making
  - Surveys, structured predominantly + lab experiments
  - Generate consumer insights → make a marketing decision

# BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS





# Behavioral economics

- *Attack on rationality* as depicted by the previous perspective
- Consumers not that rational after all
- Consumer (human) brain under scrutiny
- Specifically, decision making processes
- Still, a single individual under scrutiny
- System one and two thinking
  - System one thinking → impulse decisions making
  - What influences system one decision making → biases, a lot of them
  - What is proposed, system two thinking – a rational way of decision making



# Some biases

- Self-interested biases → what's in it for me
- Confirmation bias → additional options/experiences apart from yours
- Anchoring bias → where did the benchmark for your decision come from... more analysis on benchmarks
- Halo effect bias → just because a person is successful in one area will be as successful in your area (influencers advice!)

...



# What is this perspective good for?

- Good for you, as future top-notch marketers, supposedly
- When you become big marketing shots in the near future, it is expected of you to make well informed decisions
- Enter, behavioral economics perspective
- Managerial tool/heuristic
- Also, use sensibilities from behavioral economics to do consumer/market research
- Consumer experiments as a tool to **study** consumer behavior
- Individualist view → *experiments as a main tool*
- Consumer insights → marketing decision making

Consumer Culture Theorizing research

**CCT**

# CCT – Consumer Culture Theorizing research

- What is it about?
- So, instead of talking about human wants and needs as Maslow would have it, or the behavioral economics view, we study consumer behavior (wants, needs and so on) from sociological, anthropological and cultural theories, by and large
- Wants and needs, and therefore consumer behavior, does not, *per se*, follow the “universalist” idea as Maslow and mainstream marketing theory would have have it
  - From universalism and *individualism* to particularism and context (Culture)
- There are a lot of theories informing CCT research, obviously
- You will learn more about CCT as you progress in your studies

- Instead of viewing consumers (humans) as **single** rational entities, capable of making (bounded) rational decision geared toward satisfying their needs, ...
- Instead of trying to study consumers through structured surveys, questionnaires, lab experiments ...
- We view consumer behavior as **influencing and influenced** by the culture in which they find themselves in
- We try to **understand** consumer wants and needs and why and how they pursue them in different **contexts**
- Research methods/tools, then, → ethnography, long-open-ended interviews, netnography and so on
- **Instead of studying consumers, we learn from them (deduction vs. induction)**

- Reversed kind of a logic from previous perspectives
- Learn from consumers
- Understand their needs and wants from their point of view
- Generate insights
- Make a marketing decision

Bottom – up approach!

“The consumption of market-made commodities and desire-inducing marketing symbols is central to consumer culture [...]

CCT conceptualizes culture as the very fabric of experience, meaning, and action [...]

[T]o broaden their focus to investigate the neglected experiential, social, and cultural dimensions of consumption in context”

“Consumer culture theory explores how consumers actively rework and transform symbolic meanings encoded in advertisements, brands, retail settings, or material goods to manifest their particular personal and social circumstances and further their identity and lifestyle goals

[T]he marketplace provides consumers with an expansive and heterogeneous palette of resources from which to construct individual and collective identities”

Arnould and Thompson (2005: 870-871)

# What do we study in CCT?

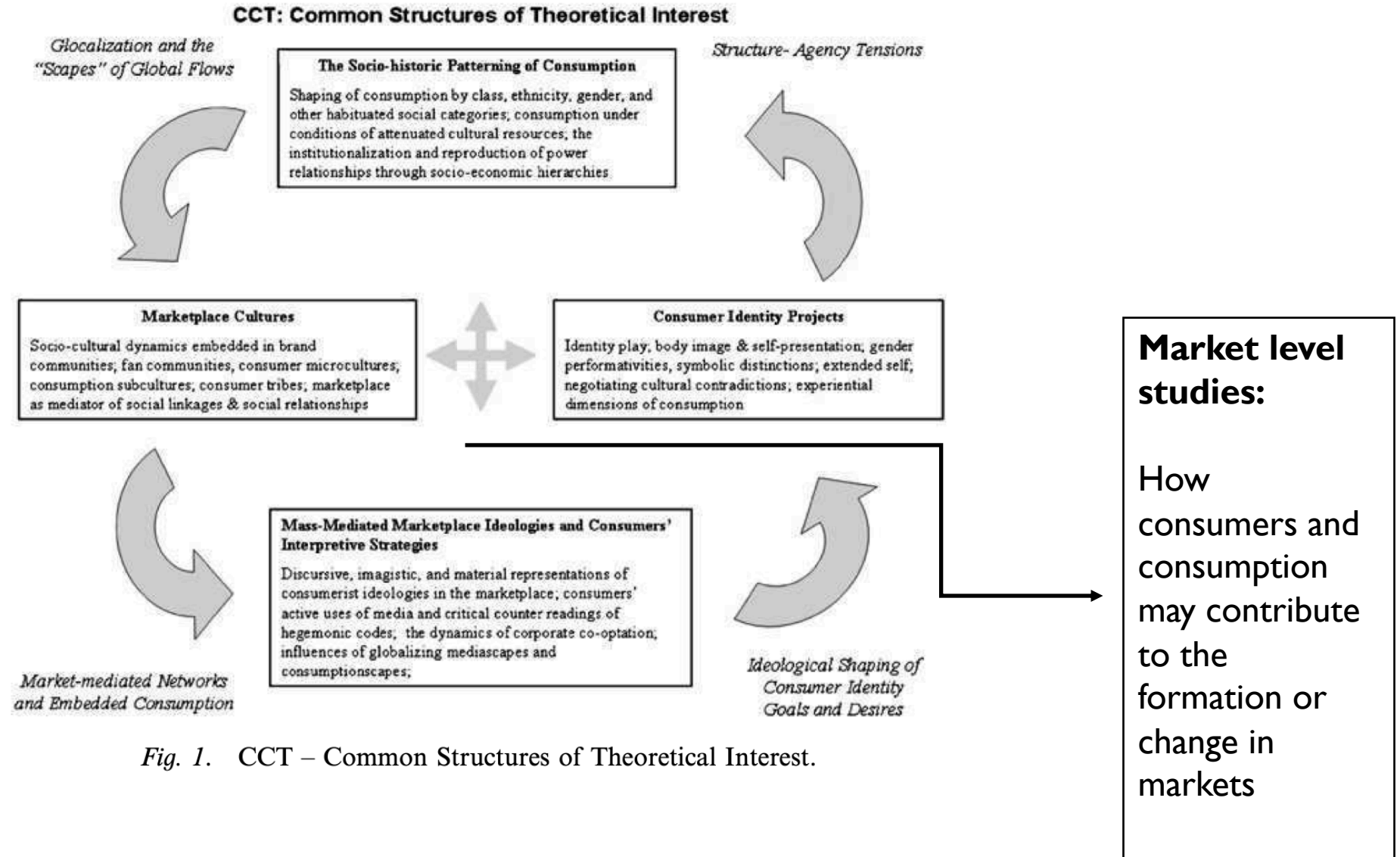


Fig. 1. CCT – Common Structures of Theoretical Interest.

# Consumer identity projects

- Marketplace as a repertoire through which we pick and choose brands to construct as sense of self or personal identity
- Consumers as identity seekers
- Marketplace → scripts + brands - consumer identity projects
- Marketplaces offer scripts (*symbolic* value) and props (brands) – consumers *choose* which scripts to ride on and with that, choose brands that best help perform a particular sense of self/identity





**BURTON**



American Psycho (2000) – movie.



Yappie!



Lumberjack!



Hipster!

So what does this mean for marketing practice?

- If the future, brand(s) you may manage belong to an **identity brand category**, then, learnings from CCT might be a fruitful approach to a successful development and management of brands
- Always learn what (symbolically) rocks consumers' boats, then, offer a brand that helps them perform their identity projects
- Other brands will seek to do the same
- The point is that you do it better than competitors
- Method of market/consumer research: learn from consumers → ethnographies, in-depth-open-ended interviews, netnographies → generate insights → from insights marketing decision making → strategy and implementation

# Marketplace cultures

What is foregrounded/what are we looking at:

- Consumers as cultural producers → “Influencers”
- Subcultures of consumption → “brand communities”



**FASHION INFLUENCERS**  
TO FOLLOW ON  
INSTAGRAM



 **adinject** BETA



**DanTDM**  
Digital Star, Vlogger

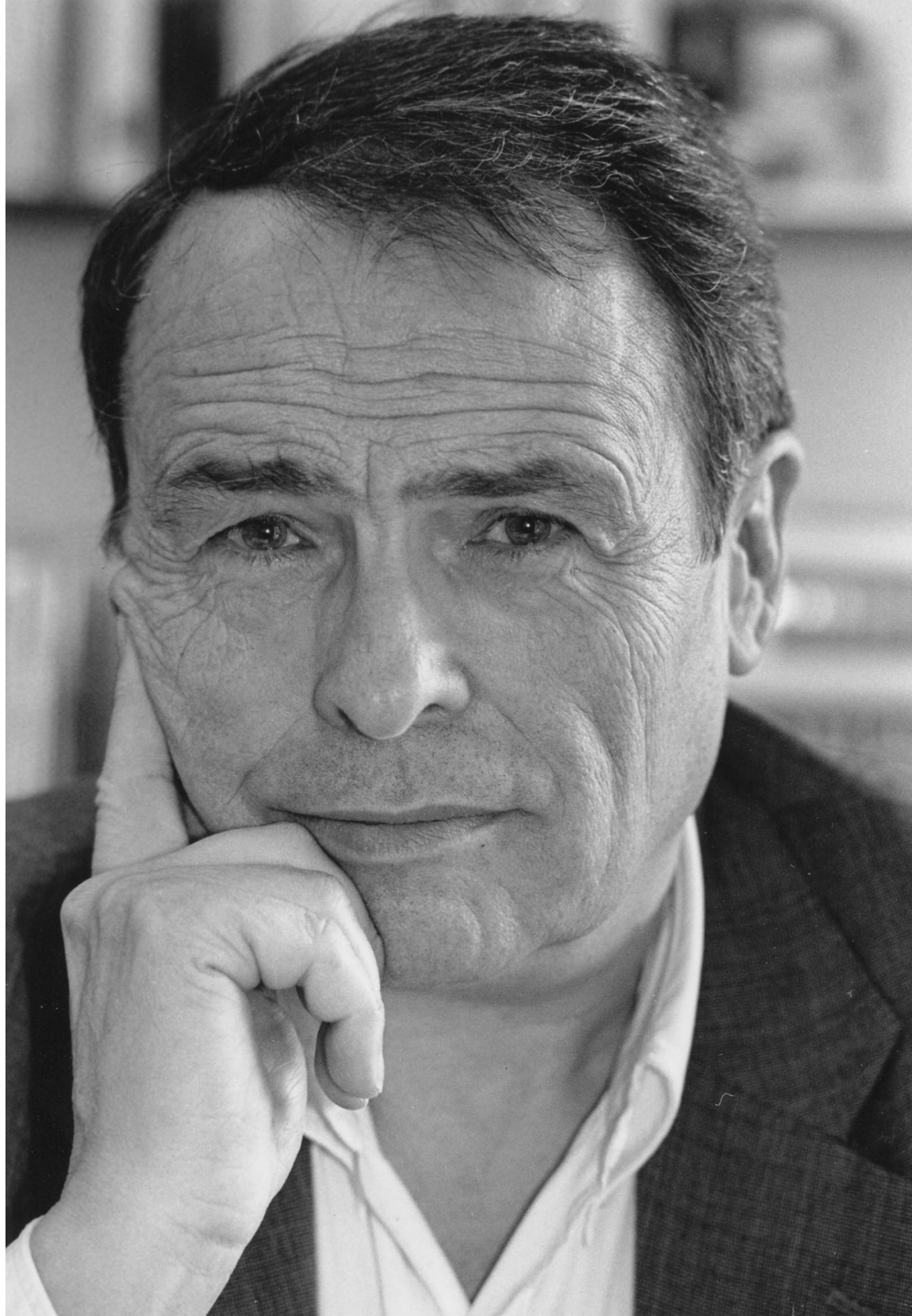




- Informed understanding of influencers from this perspective may give you good ideas and insights about how to utilize them, for example, as endorses in a campaign → celebrity endorsement, product placement, PR and so on...
- Brand communities → understanding the hierarchies and values within a brand community may help you with branding strategy and branding efforts

# The Socialhistoric Patterning of Consumption

“The third domain that CCT addresses is the institutional and social structures that systematically influence consumption, such as **class**, **community**, **ethnicity**, and **gender** ... consumer culture theorists investigate the processes by which consumption **choices** and **behaviors** are shaped by social class hierarchies ” – Arnould and Thompson (2005: 874)



## Pierre Bourdieu

1 August 1930 – 23 January 2002  
French sociologist, anthropologist  
and philosopher

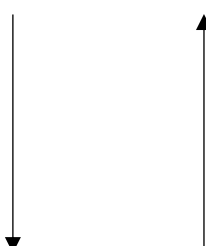
Some main concepts:

- Class
- Field
- Cultural capital
- Social capital
- Institutional capital

- This perspective may give you good ideas about how consumers sociohistoric patterning may influence choice
- Good for segmenting
- Good for positioning
- Good for developing consumer insights

# Mass-Mediated Marketplace Ideologies and Consumers' Interpretive Strategies

“Consumer culture theory examines consumer ideology—systems of meaning that tend to channel and reproduce consumers' thoughts and actions in such a way as to defend dominate interests in society (Hirschman 1993).” Arnould and Thompson (2005: 874)

- Critical marketing research
  - E.g.: sustainability and greenwashing
- What **normative** messages do commercial media transmit about consumption (*macro*)  

- How consumers make sense of these messages and formulate critical responses (*micro*)

# Speaking of Fashion: Consumers' Uses of Fashion Discourses and the Appropriation of Countervailing Cultural Meanings

CRAIG J. THOMPSON  
DIANA L. HAYTKO\*

*Exemplar*

This article explores the ways that consumers use fashion discourse to inscribe their consumption behaviors in a complex ideological system of folk theories about the nature of self and society. Verbatim texts of 20 phenomenological interviews concerning consumers' perceptions and experiences of fashion are interpreted through a hermeneutic process with specific consideration given to gender issues. Whereas critics of consumer culture frequently argue that fashion discourses enshroud consumer perceptions in a common hegemonic outlook, our analysis suggests that this ideological system offers a myriad of countervailing interpretive standpoints that consumers combine, adapt, and juxtapose to fit the conditions of their everyday lives. By appropriating fashion discourse, consumers generate personalized fashion narratives and metaphoric and metonymic references that negotiate key existential tensions and that often express resistance to dominant fashion norms in their social milieu or consumer culture at large. A theoretical model is derived that portrays a dialogical relationship between consumers and this cultural system of countervailing fashion meanings. The implications of this model for future research on the meaning transfer process and the sociocognitive dimensions of consumer beliefs are discussed.

- Good for understanding consumer behavior
- How they understand and interpret particular market discourses
- And so on...



**Q&A!**