

QUALITATIVE CONSUMER RESEARCH

REVIEW OF MARKETING RESEARCH

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QUALITATIVE CONSUMER RESEARCH

EDITED BY

RUSSELL W. BELK

York University, Toronto, Canada



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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

<i>Ayşe Gül Bayraktaroğlu</i>	Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business, Dokuz Eylül University, Izmir, Turkey
<i>Birgit Bosio</i>	Management Center Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria
<i>Jakob Braun</i>	Vackar College of Business & Entrepreneurship, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX, USA
<i>Terence A. Brown</i>	School of Business Administration, Penn State Harrisburg, Middletown, PA, USA
<i>Larry D. Compeau</i>	School of Business, Clarkson University, Potsdam, NY, USA
<i>Douglas C. Friedman</i>	Department of Business Management, East Stroudsburg University, Stroudsburg, PA, USA
<i>A. Fuat Fırat</i>	Vackar College of Business & Entrepreneurship, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX, USA
<i>Burcu Genç</i>	Independent Researcher, Izmir, Turkey
<i>Candice R. Hollenbeck</i>	Marketing Department, Terry College of Business, University of Georgia, Athens, GA, USA
<i>Lisa Carola Holthoff</i>	Chair of Marketing, Mercator School of Management, University of Duisburg-Essen, Duisburg, Germany
<i>Emine Tugba Kocabiyik</i>	Department of International Trade and Marketing, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Gediz Üniversitesi, Izmir, Turkey

<i>Dan Li</i>	Stan Richards School of Advertising & Public Relations, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, USA
<i>Natalie A. Mitchell</i>	Girard School of Business, Merrimack College, North Andover, MA, USA
<i>Vanessa M. Patrick</i>	C.T. Bauer College of Business, University of Houston, Houston, TX, USA
<i>Katharina Rainer</i>	Marketing Manager, More than Metrics GmbH, Innsbruck, Austria
<i>Carolyn Scheiben</i>	Chair of Marketing, Mercator School of Management, University of Duisburg-Essen, Duisburg, Germany
<i>Angeline Close Scheinbaum</i>	Stan Richards School of Advertising & Public Relations, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, USA
<i>Marc Stickdorn</i>	Founder and CEO, More than Metrics GmbH, Innsbruck, Austria
<i>Zinaida Taran</i>	Department of Management, Marketing, and Business Administration, Delta State University, West Cleveland, MS, USA
<i>Astrid Van den Bossche</i>	Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK
<i>Wan Wang</i>	Stan Richards School of Advertising & Public Relations, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, USA
<i>Fei L. Weissstein</i>	Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH, USA
<i>Mohammadali Zolfagharian</i>	Vackar College of Business & Entrepreneurship, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX, USA

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AD HOC REVIEWERS

Birgit Bosio

Education and Research, More than Metrics GmbH, Innsbruck, Austria

Astrid Van den Bossche

Department of Marketing, Said School of Business, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

Jakob Braun

Vackar College of Business & Entrepreneurship, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX, USA

Larry D. Compeau

School of Business, Clarkson University, Potsdam, NY, USA

Douglas C. Friedman

Department of Business Management, East Stroudsburg University, Stroudsburg, PA, USA

A. Fuat Fırat

Vackar College of Business & Entrepreneurship, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX, USA

Burcu Genç

Independent Researcher, Izmir, Turkey

Candice R. Hollenbeck

Marketing Department, Terry College of Business, University of Georgia, Athens, GA, USA

Lisa Carola Holthoff

Department of Marketing, Mercator School of Management, University of Duisburg-Essen, Duisburg, Germany

Emine Tugba Kocabiyik

Department of International Trade and Marketing, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Gediz Üniversitesi, Izmir, Turkey

Natalie A. Mitchell

Girard School of Business, Merrimack College, North Andover, MA, USA

Carolin Scheiben

Department of Marketing, Mercator School of Management, University of Duisburg-Essen, Duisburg, Germany

INTRODUCTION: GAINING NEW INSIGHTS AND INFLUENCING FUTURE RESEARCH

Overview

Review of Marketing Research, now in its 14th volume, is a publication covering the important areas of marketing research with a more comprehensive state-of-the-art orientation. The chapters in this publication review the literature in a particular area, offer a critical commentary, develop an innovative framework, and discuss future developments, as well as present specific empirical studies. The first 13 volumes have featured some of the top researchers and scholars in our discipline who have reviewed an array of important topics. The response to the first 13 volumes has been truly gratifying and we look forward to the impact of the 14th volume with great anticipation.

Publication Mission

The purpose of this series is to provide current, comprehensive, state-of-the-art articles in review of marketing research. Wide-ranging paradigmatic or theoretical, or substantive agendas are appropriate for this publication. This includes a wide range of theoretical perspectives, paradigms, data (qualitative, survey, experimental, ethnographic, secondary, etc.), and topics related to the study and explanation of marketing-related phenomenon. We reflect an eclectic mixture of theory, data, and research methods that is indicative of a publication driven by important theoretical and substantive problems. We seek studies that make important theoretical, substantive, empirical, methodological, measurement, and modeling contributions. Any topic that fits under the broad area of “marketing research” is relevant. In short, our mission is to publish the best reviews in the discipline.

Thus, this publication bridges the gap left by current marketing research publications. Current marketing research publications such as the *Journal of Marketing Research* (USA), *International Journal of Marketing Research* (UK), and *International Journal of Research in Marketing* (Europe) publish academic articles with a major constraint on the length. In contrast, *Review of Marketing Research* can publish much longer articles that are not only theoretically

rigorous but also more expository, with a focus on implementing new marketing research concepts and procedures. This also serves to distinguish this publication from *Marketing Research* magazine published by the American Marketing Association (AMA).

Articles in *Review of Marketing Research* should address the following issues:

- Critically review the existing literature
- Summarize what we know about the subject – key findings
- Present the main theories and frameworks
- Review and give an exposition of key methodologies
- Identify the gaps in the literature
- Present empirical studies (for empirical papers only)
- Discuss emerging trends and issues
- Focus on international developments
- Suggest directions for future theory development and testing
- Recommend guidelines for implementing new procedures and concepts

Chapters in This Volume

This special issue focuses on qualitative and conceptual consumer research and the chapters represent an eclectic mix of methodological approaches and substantive issues.

Van den Bossche proposes cognitive literary criticism as a bridge between cognitive approaches to the study of persuasion, and literary traditions in consumer research. Cognitive literary theory focuses on the cognitive processes of interpretation, while keeping an eye on the aesthetic properties of the text. This attempt to marry positivist cognitive constructs to interpretivist cultural theory presents new opportunities for the study of persuasion.

Genç and Bayraktaroğlu explore the country of origin effect by following a qualitative design with in-depth analysis of consumption experiences. They find that the country of origin effect is product specific, and when it exists, it is intrinsically constituted by individual perceptions of and attitudes toward brands, countries, and experiences. It is also extrinsically constituted with socially created perceptions nurtured by media, marketplace myths, and popular culture.

Compeau examines bad credit experiences in the context of identity in order to understand the entanglement between bad credit and the deformation of identity. He employs depth interviews and hermeneutical analysis and finds that bad credit plays a critical role in reshaping identity. Identities are deformed by restricting or eliminating identity construction and maintenance through consumption. Bad credit consumes consumers' time, energy, patience, lifestyle, relationships, social connections, and more importantly, it consumes their

identity as it strongly inflects their sense of who they are. Thus, bad credit is overwhelmingly consumptive of consumers.

Brown, Friedman, and Taran examine “showrooming,” a phenomenon in which shoppers use mobile devices in retail stores to check prices and other data on products that they then may buy online. They identify four distinct behavioral groups of customers and six strategies that small retailers use to address the potential problems of showrooming. They also identify a new type of reference pricing, where instead of using other products at the store as the reference prices, the consumer uses the prices of every store that sells the item on the Internet as the referents.

Kocabiyik explores how supermarketization structures consumption of poor people and its socio-cultural and moral consequences in Turkey. This study finds that not only in economic but also in social, moral, and cultural terms, these subaltern consumers cannot survive without neighborhood stores that carry a wide range of both food and non-food items in less than 100 square meters of floor space (bakkals). This research is relevant for developing useful coping strategies for poverty in confronting marketplace forces by reflecting on the grocery consumption patterns of subalterns.

Bosio, Rainer, and Stickdorn show how mobile ethnography tackles customer experience by assessing data in a holistic way in real-time. They describe the innovative implementation of technology in a mobile ethnography project in a tourist destination, including recruitment of participant, data collection, data analysis, and the derivation of insights. The mobile ethnography project yielded deep insights into the customers’ journeys, in this case in a ski experience context — data that would be difficult or infeasible to come by without the technology employed here.

Hollenbeck and Patrick investigate the virtual exchanges in survivor networks and examine whether these exchanges are valued for the economic, symbolic, or expressive worth. They find that innovations in technology can aid survivorship when the exchanges are meaningful as interactions within gift systems and are valued for their expressive worth. Such exchanges are established based upon the ideal of selfless gifts where the giver expects nothing in return. Furthermore, biographical narratives are useful tools for creating an expressive environment; givers become more giving after engaging in selfless acts. Digital technologies allow global connections enabling survivors to find others with similar needs, with whom they can meet, interact with, and extend their aggregate selves.

Zolfagharian, Weisstein, and Firat probe the meanings of price to consumers, especially its deeper meanings in contrasts to the conventional economic meanings of price. They find that, in addition to its conventional meanings, price is related to how consumers perceive themselves and/or their lives in the socioeconomic order they inhabit. This implies that pricing strategies that yield greater satisfaction for consumers can be discovered, implemented, and welcomed by consumers.

Scheiben and Holthoff investigate factors affecting convenience orientation and barriers to the consumption of food and non-food convenience products. Convenience orientation comprises dimensions that have not previously been considered in marketing research. They find, in addition to the known factors of time and effort saving, consumers buy convenience products because of the flexibility they provide. Concerns for health, environment, and quality are important barriers that prevent consumers from buying and consuming convenience products. Consumer convenience orientations are likely to depend at least partly on the product category and thus, future research should explore domain-specific convenience orientation.

Braun takes a different perspective on customer experience. He explores the nature and role of presence, which is defined as the “feeling of ‘being there’ in the present, the here and now of a physical or virtual world.” A conceptual approach is developed drawing upon the literature in marketing and communications and is used to identify the underlying components of presence and to explore how this construct relates to customer experience. His findings suggest that presence has a spatial structure with two aspects. First, the level of physicality or virtuality may affect presence. Second, the presence may change based on whether someone is perceiving stimuli in the external environment (that is present in the physical or virtual space) or are absent physically and virtually and instead reside in the internal world of dreams, thoughts, and imaginations.

Mitchell, Scheinbaum, Li, and Wang explore the phenomenon of counterfeit consumption through the in-home “purse parties” channel. Attitudes toward purse parties and counterfeit luxury products reveal five emerging themes: the distinctness of in-home consumption settings, obligatory attendance, social engagement, curiosity, and disregard for legalities of counterfeit consumption/disdain for purse parties. The social legitimization of counterfeits is greatly enhanced by the combination of these factors.

Together these chapters demonstrate the usefulness of qualitative research leading to new insights. In disciplines such as education, it is common to initially assess interventions like curriculum changes in terms of controlled experiments and standardized before and after test measures. However, ethnographic research is needed in order to understand how such interventions impact learning styles, social aspects of learning, and teaching styles. Only with such data are the impacts of changes on processes of learning able to be assessed. It is hoped that collectively the chapters in this volume will substantially aid our efforts to understand more about both the firm and the consumer and to provide a broader arsenal of consumer research methods as well as fertile areas for future research. The *Review of Marketing Research* continues its mission of systematically analyzing and presenting accumulated knowledge in the field of marketing as well as influencing future research by identifying areas that merit the attention of researchers.