

Editorial overview: Consumer behavior

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For a complete overview see the [Issue](#)

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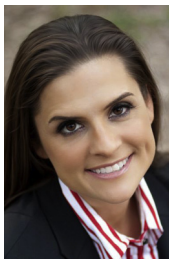
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The field of consumer behavior addresses a rich array of basic and applied issues of interest to a wide range of scholars. The present collection of 30 articles reviews state of the art research in four broad domains of consumer behavior including: firstly, perception (e.g. aesthetics, attitudes, brands, judgement and decision-making, metacognition, numbers, sensory marketing); secondly, goals and motivation (e.g. evolutionary motives, identity, intertemporal tradeoffs, goals, materialism, self-control); thirdly, interpersonal processes (e.g. collaborative consumption, consumer-brand relationships, power, prosocial consumer behavior, service failures); and finally, societal level issues (e.g. corporate social responsibility, culture and diversity, environmentalism, health behavior, social media marketing and the digital self). As a set, these reviews highlight the exciting, dynamic, and far reaching nature of consumer behavior.

Two consumers walk into a shopping mall. One, Asher, aspires to go hipster. Though he is deep in debt, he is determined to stand out this year. The other, Breah, is driven by a desire to get in shape for the summer. With a slightly heavy build, she does not look the part on the outside, but she is strong and ready on the inside. How might these two consumers respond to the vast array of persuasive appeals, sights, sounds, smells, and even company policies in their environment? And, as they approach contrasting brands, competing prices, and interact simultaneously online and offline, how will their values, goals, motivations, social network, and identity influence their consumer experience and, ultimately, their decision-making, for not only themselves, but possibly close others as well?

Answers to these questions represent a small taste of what readers will learn from the rich and varied topics covered in this special issue on consumer behavior. The field of consumer research is itself incredibly broad and diverse. This issue highlights numerous exciting and novel research streams emerging in the field, as detailed by the leading scholars in each area. It was truly a privilege for us to work with these experts to create a collection that illustrates the diversity and interdisciplinary nature of the field, and sheds new light on basic and applied issues, as well as those that are long-standing and newly emerged. Each article featured in this special issue pushes boundaries, providing readers with a fascinating array of future research directions.

We have organized the articles this special issue into intrapersonal, interpersonal, and societal-level domains. The topics covered in this issue include evolutionary-based motives for consumption; the actual, imagined, and digital self; consumers' shifting identities; self-control and goal-directed behaviors; branding; the role of aesthetics and sensory inputs; attitudes and persuasion; decision-making processes; happiness; prosocial consumption;

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and societal level concerns such as health behavior, diversity, sustainability and corporate social responsibility. In the remainder of this introduction, we provide a brief synopsis of the three broad themes and clarify how each article addresses processes central to each.

Intrapersonal processes

Research on the influence of intrapersonal processes on consumer behavior considers how phenomena such as attitudes, persuasion, social cognition, and the self-concept influence decision-making. This section features reviews of emerging research focused on how the intra-individual processes of both perception and goals and motivation guide consumer choice.

Perception

Eight articles deal broadly with how consumers perceive stimuli within the external environment (e.g. brands, numbers, package design, sights, sounds, smells) and interpret their own mental processes (e.g. attitudes, preferences). One article also takes a look deep inside the consumer to reveal neuroscientific mechanisms underlying consumer behavior.

For example, [Krishna *et al.*](#) discuss research revealing how marketers can engage consumers through the five senses, including studies showing that ads simulating motion through dynamic imagery enhance consumer evaluations of advertised products, and research illustrating how consumers can mentally simulate touch. In another closely related article, [Patrick](#) reviews the notion of everyday consumer aesthetics, showing how elements like package design, the presence of art, logo completeness, and perceived dynamism and embodiment affect consumer evaluations and choices while [Baghchi and Davis](#) zero in on the marketing implications of the numerosity heuristic, or the finding that consumers tend to infer greater quantity when some property (e.g. weight) is divided into a larger number of units (e.g. in ounces as opposed to pounds). Rounding out the discussion of consumer responses to external stimuli, [Sprott and Liu](#) discuss consumer-brand psychology, first reviewing work on brand name linguistics (e.g. Jelly-Belly), luxury brands, and brand extensions, and subsequently considering the application of psychological theories to consumer-brand psychology, including attachment theory, embodied cognition, identity, and implicit self-theory.

The remaining articles in this section shift attention inward, concentrating on consumers' mental processes (e.g. attitudes, preferences, meta-cognition, and neural circuitry). [Tu and Hsee](#), for example, consider differences between preferences which are inherent (e.g. for high fat over low fat food) and preferences which are learned (e.g. for French over Californian wine), providing evidence that the former are less susceptible to social comparison and adaptation. [Tormala](#) discusses how consumers' level of attitude certainty impacts persuasion, revealing that while attitude certainty leads to a more durable impact, attitude uncertainty can stimulate consumers to seek out and process new information. In their closely related article, [Labroo and Pocheptsova](#) explain how meta-cognitive judgments of fluency lead consumers to experience positive affect, whereas meta-cognitive judgments of disfluency lead consumers to experience arousal and interest, and how these judgments differentially affect product evaluations based on consumers' processing goals (for certainty versus stimulation). In another article, [Karmarkar and Yoon](#) delve into the neuropsychological mechanisms underlying affective experiences, value judgments, persuasion, and attention, shedding light on novel methods for capturing processes that can oftentimes be difficult to directly measure.

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