

Consumer Behavior

Currently available topics for your Master's Thesis

1. **Just One More and I'll Be Fine. – Exploring the Drivers and Consequences of Compensatory Consumption Behavior**
 2. **How the Present Shapes the Past: Exploring the Role of Implicit Theories in Dynamic Customer-Firm Interactions**
 3. **Exploring Potential of Using Phenomenology in Marketing Research**
 4. **The World is Dynamic, and So is Pricing? Investigation of Factors Influencing Fairness Perceptions of Dynamic Pricing**
 5. **(N)ever Be the Same Again? Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Consumer Behavior**
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Just One More and I'll Be Fine. – Exploring the Drivers and Consequences of Compensatory Consumption Behavior

Despite the rise of connectivity on a global level enabled by digital technologies, people today feel more socially isolated than ever before. Moreover, living in a consumption society has created a space for individuals to compensate, at least in the short term, for some of the things they perceive to lack through increased consumption. For instance, a socially isolated individual may be more likely to buy a product with anthropomorphic features, while individuals with higher perceived self-threat tend to spend more on products which signal high-status. Due to its increased relevance, it is important to investigate factors which drive compensatory consumption, and derive subsequent implications for marketing practitioners. First, this thesis should provide a comprehensive literature review focusing on antecedents of compensatory consumption behavior. Subsequently, a theoretical model relating underlying drivers of compensatory consumption and behavioral measures shall be designed and experimentally tested. Finally, implications for marketing theory and practice shall be derived.

Format: Literature Review, Experiment

Advisor: [Aleksandar Blečić](#)

Literature:

Garg, Nitika and Jennifer S. Lerner (2013), „Sadness and consumption,“ *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 23(1), 106-113.

Kim, Soo and David Gal (2014), „From Compensatory Consumption to Adaptive Consumption: The Role of Self-Acceptance in Resolving Self-Deficits,“ *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41(2), 526-542.

Kim, Soo and Derek D. Rucker (2012), „Bracing for the Psychological Storm: Proactive versus Reactive Compensatory Consumption,“ *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39(4), 815-830.

Rucker, Derek D. and Adam D. Galinsky (2008), „Desire to Acquire: Powerlessness and Compensatory Consumption,“ *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(2), 257-267.

How the Present Shapes the Past: Exploring the Role of Implicit Theories in Dynamic Customer-Firm Interactions

For a long time, psychologists have known that people's memories can be influenced by present knowledge, beliefs, and feelings. One potential consequence of such influence is the „consistency bias“, which entails that people overestimate the consistency between their past and present beliefs, attitudes, and feelings. For instance, people tend to adjust their initial evaluations of political parties or relationship partners to be more congruent with the present. However, there is an important caveat: whether a retrospective bias in evaluations will take the form of consistency seems to depend on individuals' implicit theories. When people believe that important aspects of the past have changed over time, they tend to overestimate the difference between past and present evaluations.

This thesis aims to explore the relationship between retrospective bias in evaluations and implicit theories in the consumer behavior context. For example, how customers' evaluations of the present experiences influence their past evaluations, and how are these effects moderated by implicit personal theories? After a literature review, a theoretical model shall be proposed and tested in an experiment. Theoretical and managerial implications shall be derived.

Format: Literature Review, Experiment

Advisor: [Aleksandar Blečić](#)

Literature:

Murphy, Mary C. and Carol S. Dweck (2016), „Mindsets shape consumer behavior,“ *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 26(1), 127-136.

Ross, Michael (1989), „Relation of Implicit Theories to the Construction of Personal Histories,“ *Psychological Review*, 96(2), 341-357.

How Customers Remember Their Experiences: Investigating the Conflict Between Experiencing and Remembering

Over the past two decades, researchers have been studying the distinction between „experienced“ and „remembered utility“ and its implications for decision-making. While experiences are fleeting over time, memories are what we get to keep from them. In addition, the process of remembering experiences does not merely entail passive retrieval of stored information. Rather, remembering seems to be an interactive and reconstructive process. Research in the field of retrospective experience evaluations suggests that memories tend to be biased estimates of actually perceived events. Moreover, memories and „remembered utility“ might represent the basis for consumer decision-making. It is therefore necessary to investigate the nature of retrospective evaluations of customer experiences more closely. This thesis aims to address this issue by obtaining insights from consumers, including their recollections and depictions of prior customer experiences. In the first part of the thesis, a thorough literature review on the intersection between retrospective evaluations and customer experiences should be provided. Finally, focus groups with customers should be used to address the main research questions.

Format: Literature Review, Focus Groups

Advisor: [Aleksandar Blečić](#)

Literature:

Ariely, Dan (1998), „Combining Experiences Over Time: The Effects of Duration, Intensity Changes and On-line Measurements on Retrospective Pain Evaluations,“ *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 11(1), 19-45.

Fredrickson, Barbara L. and Daniel Kahneman (1993), „Duration Neglect in Retrospective Evaluations of Affective Episodes,“ *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65(1), 45-55.

Loewenstein, George F. and Drazen Prelec (1993), „Preferences for Sequences of Outcomes,“ *Psychological Review*, 100(1), 91-108.

Exploring Potential of Using Phenomenology in Marketing Research

To date, there is much disagreement in academic circles regarding the exact definition of phenomenology. While some see it as a philosophy, there have been several attempts in the last two decades to define and describe phenomenology as a qualitative research method in social sciences. In simple terms, phenomenology is a study of the human experience, as experienced from the first-person point of view. While phenomenology might turn out to be a rich method for investigating consumer experience, research on this topic in marketing remains scarce. The aim of this thesis is two-fold. First, the thesis should try to provide a summary of the phenomenology as a research method, drawing from marketing and other social science research. Second, the thesis should elaborate on the potential of using phenomenology as a qualitative method in marketing and consumer behavior research. Finally, a small-scale consumer research project shall be conducted using phenomenology as a research method.

Format: Literature Review

Advisor: [Aleksandar Blečić](#)

Literature:

Goulding, Christina (2005), "Grounded Theory, Ethnography, and Phenomenology: A Comparative Analysis of Three Qualitative Strategies for Marketing Research," *European Journal of Marketing*, 39(3), 294-308.

Thompson, Craig J., William B. Locander and Howard R. Pollio (1989), "Putting Consumer Experience Back into Consumer Research: The Philosophy and Method of Existential-Phenomenology," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16(2), 133-146.

The World is Dynamic, And So Is Pricing? Investigation of Factors Influencing Fairness Perceptions of Dynamic Pricing

Dynamic pricing is a pricing technique that has gained popularity amongst companies in the past decades. But what do customers think about dynamic pricing, and do they perceive that it is fair that different customers are offered different prices at different points in time? Research in this field has concluded that dynamic pricing tactics are often times accepted by customers, but their acceptance depends on numerous factors, especially customer- and company-related factors. Thus, this thesis should first (1) provide a comprehensive literature review focusing on dynamic pricing and on factors influencing fairness perceptions. Subsequently, (2) the impact of such factors on the perceived fairness of dynamic pricing should be conceptually designed and empirically tested in an experimental setting. Finally, (3) implications for research and companies that use or plan to implement dynamic pricing tactics and avenues for future research shall be derived.

Format: Literature Review, Experiment

Advisor: [Alexander Rupertus](#)

Literature:

Alderighi, M., Nava, C. R., Calabrese, M., Christille, J.-M., & Salvemini, C. B. (2022). Consumer perception of price fairness and dynamic pricing: Evidence from Booking.com. *Journal of Business Research*, 145(June), 769–783. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.03.017>

Haws, K. L., & Bearden, W. O. (2006). Dynamic pricing and consumer fairness perceptions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 33(3), 304–311. <https://doi.org/10.1086/508435>

Seele, P., Dierksmeier, C., Hofstetter, R., & Schultz, M. D. (2021). Mapping the Ethicality of Algorithmic Pricing: A Review of Dynamic and Personalized Pricing. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 170(4), 697–719. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04371-w>

Xia, L., Monroe, K. B., & Cox, J. L. (2004). The price is unfair! A conceptual framework of price fairness perceptions. *Journal of Marketing*, 68(4), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.68.4.1.42733>

(N)ever Be the Same Again? Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Consumer Behavior

In the last two years, the global Covid-19 pandemic has dominated people's lives and changed long-existing behavior and habits. Lockdowns, closed businesses, short-time work, and mandatory facial masks were just some of the measures that have been put in place. How have the experiences of the last two years affected consumer behavior? Which behavior patterns will remain, and which are likely to disappear? First, (1) this thesis shall provide a comprehensive literature review focusing on consumer behavior changes that might occur during crises such as Covid-19. Subsequently, (2) semi-structured interviews shall explore potential behavior changes by investigating relevant dimensions of consumer behavior. Based on the findings, a framework shall be developed and discussed. Finally, (3) implications for marketing theory, practice, and future research should be derived.

Format: Literature Review, Interviews

Advisor: [Alexander Rupertus](#)

Literature:

Hall, M. C., Prayag, G., Fieger, P., & Dyason, D. (2021). Beyond panic buying: consumption displacement and COVID-19. *Journal of Service Management*, 32(1), 113–128. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-05-2020-0151>

Kirk, C. P., & Rifkin, L. S. (2020). I'll trade you diamonds for toilet paper: Consumer reacting, coping and adapting behaviors in the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Business Research*, 117(May), 124–131. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.05.028>

Moldes, O., Dineva, D., & Ku, L. (2022). Has the COVID-19 pandemic made us more materialistic? The effect of COVID-19 and lockdown restrictions on the endorsement of materialism. *Psychology and Marketing*, 39(5), 892–905. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21627>

Vătămănescu, E. M., Dabija, D. C., Gazzola, P., Cegarro-Navarro, J. G., & Buzzi, T. (2021). Before and after the outbreak of Covid-19: Linking fashion companies' corporate social responsibility approach to consumers' demand for sustainable products. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 321(February). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2021.128945>