

## **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. Getting liberals and conservatives to buy green? Investigating the role of nudges in sustainable consumer behavior**
-

**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.

**Getting liberals and conservatives to buy green? Investigating the role of nudges in sustainable consumer behavior**

A growing body of marketing research points to the remarkable effects of political ideology on consumer behavior. In this regard, sustainable consumption has yet to receive more attention. Research on “green nudges” reveals promising results in giving consumers a soft push towards more sustainable decision making. The basic idea of nudging is to change the consumers’ behavior by simply making subtle changes to the contexts in which they make decisions. The goal of this master thesis is to establish an empirical link between political ideology and nudging. First, a literature review covering the state of research on political ideology and “green nudging” shall be conducted. Subsequently, a conceptual model shall be developed and tested to address the following core question: How can companies steer their customers towards sustainable consumption through nudges designed taking the aspect of political ideology on board? In conclusion, relevant implications for future research as well as marketing practitioners should be drawn.

**Format:** Literature Review & Experiment

**Advisor:** [Eric Klebeck](#)

**Literature:**

Jung, Jihye and Vikas Mittal (2020), “Political Identity and the Consumer Journey: A Research Review,” *Journal of Retailing*, 96(1), 55–73.

Kidwell, Blair, Adam Farmer and David M. Hardesty (2013), “Getting Liberals and Conservatives to Go Green: Political Ideology and Congruent Appeals,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(2), 350–367.

Lehner, Mathhias, Oksana Mont and Eva Heiskanen (2016), “Nudging – A promising tool for sustainable consumption behaviour?,” *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 40, 166–177.