

PHD Course - Consumer Culture Theory: Foundations, Frontiers and Application (7,5 ECTS)

Specific Course Syllabus

Responsible faculty from Stockholm Business School

Andrea Lucarelli
Jacob Östberg

Faculty Members

Sofia Ulver, Lund University
Jack Tillotson, University of Vaasa
Nathan Warren, BI Norwegian Business School
Szilvia Gyimothy Mørup-Petersen, Copenhagen Business School

Aim of the course

The aim of course is to introduce early-stage doctoral students in marketing and business studies to the field of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT). Over the last couple of decades CCT has established itself as one of the core areas within Consumer Research and Marketing. It is not limited to this area, however, as CCT scholars are not only publishing within marketing but also within organization studies, critical management studies, sociology, and political philosophy. CCT is a heterogenous research domain including alternative approaches, theories and methods in order to understand marketing and consumption phenomena, as well as the creation and emergence of markets. Furthermore, CCT gives fresh, theoretical perspectives on many of the large challenges societies are struggling with in the world—climate change, immigration, political polarization and global pandemics—challenges that future business leaders must understand. CCT is inspired by theoretical perspectives from the social sciences and humanities more broadly, such as anthropology, sociology and cultural studies. Within CCT these perspectives are applied to critically assess issues such as the creation of businesses and markets, marketing communication, trend research and consumer-driven innovation, but also to gain mature reflections upon the role of businesses in the world and consumer society.

Statement of learning activities and teaching methods

The course is structured as a combination of lectures, seminar discussions, workshops, student presentations, and written assignments. The language of instruction and examination is English.

The course consists of four different parts/modules

- 1) Foundations (i.e. historical and contextual) dimension of the emergence of CCT as a research domain, (digital via Zoom)
- 2) Frontiers (i.e. contemporary development) of CCT as an expanding field of research (physical at Stockholm University during the intensive week)
- 3) Applications (i.e. usage and usefulness) of CCT as an “academic house”. research (physical at Stockholm University during the intensive week)
- 4) Solutions on writing in CCT and final seminar/workshop where the contents of the entire course is discussed in relation to the PhD students’ own work (digital via Zoom)

The Modules will be evenly distributed during two months – May and June 2025 with Modules 2 and 3 placed during an intensive week at Stockholm University. This will give student that time to read and prepare before module 2 and 3 and to reflect on the application based on their own doctoral project (module 4).

Assessment

Instruction takes place primarily through lectures and seminars and workshops. The structure of the course requires regular attendance and ongoing participation.

The course assessment consist of active participation, oral presentations and the production of two written reports;

1. A diary (2000 words) where each student should reflect on how to use/not use CCT in his/her own studies and
2. A manuscript (e.g., a tentative chapter from the thesis or a section of an article) where CCT is applied in relation to the thesis project.

The two final written reports along with all the other activities generate the final grade for the course with is PASS/FAIL

Learning materials

The reading list is composed of one core book that takes a Nordic approach to theoretical topics, empirical sites and methodologies. This is complemented with a specific series of articles related to each specific module. The reading list below is tentative and will be updated before the start of the course.

Book:

Askegaard, S., & Östberg, J. (eds.) (2019). *Nordic Consumer Culture: State, Market and Consumers*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

This book should be use as sort of handbook which give some foundations and connect the different lectures. Some lectures are more heavily relating to some specific chapters whereas other they only touch some issues.

Module 1) Foundations (digital)

5/5 10-12 Lecture 1: Genealogy (History) of CCT and its foundations (Lucarelli)

Reading list

Tadajewski, M. (2006). Remembering motivation research: toward an alternative genealogy of interpretive consumer research. *Marketing Theory*, 6(4), 429-466.

Sassatelli, R. (2007). Consumer culture: History, theory and politics. Sage. Only Chapter 1-2

12/5 10-12 Lecture 2: Ideological debates and philosophical underpinnings of CCT (Östberg)

Reading List

Askegaard, S., & Scott, L. (2013). Consumer culture theory: The ironies of history. *Marketing Theory*, 13(2), 139-147.

Bode, Matthias and Per Østergaard (2013), “‘The Wild and Wacky Worlds of Consumer Oddballs,’” *Marketing Theory*, 13(2), 175–92

Belk, R. W., Wallendorf, M., & Sherry Jr, J. F. (1989). *The sacred and the profane in consumer behavior: Theodicy on the odyssey*. *Journal of consumer research*, 16(1), 1-38.

Holbrook, M. B., & Hirschman, E. C. (1982). *The experiential aspects of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun*. *Journal of consumer research*, 9(2), 132-140.

----- Intensive week in Stockholm -----

19/5 13-15 Kick off intensive week-students get to engage in discussing the foundations of CCT (foundation) and reflect on own project

Module 2) Frontiers

19/5 15-17 Lecture 3: CCT as theory, ontology and epistemology (Ulver)

Reading list is divided in

Text about theory, ontology and epistemology which has to be read fully and *Example of certain theory, ontology and epistemology which has to be read as example (thus skimmed rather than fully read)*

Arnould, E. J., & Thompson, C. J. (2005). Consumer culture theory (CCT): Twenty years of research. *Journal of consumer research*, 31(4), 868-882.

Thompson, C. J., Locander, W. B., & Pollio, H. R. (1989). Putting consumer experience back into consumer research: The philosophy and method of existential-phenomenology. *Journal of consumer research*, 16(2), 133-146.

Moisander, Johanna, Valtonen, Anu and Hirsto, Heidi (2009) 'Personal interviews in cultural consumer research -post-structuralist challenges', *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 12:4, 329 — 348

Askegaard & Linnet (2011) “Towards an epistemology of consumer culture theory: Phenomenology and the context of context” *Marketing Theory*, 11(4) 381-404

Thompson, C. J., Arnould, E., & Giesler, M. (2013). Discursivity, difference, and disruption: Genealogical reflections on the consumer culture theory heteroglossia. *Marketing Theory*, 13(2), 149-174.

Earley, A. (2014). Connecting contexts: A Badiouian epistemology for consumer culture theory. *Marketing Theory*, 14(1), 73-96.

Fitchett, J. A., Patsiaouras, G., & Davies, A. (2014). Myth and ideology in consumer culture theory. *Marketing Theory*, 14(4), 495-506.

Joel Hietanen, Oscar Ahlberg and Andrei Botez (2022) The 'dividual' is semiocapitalist consumer culture' *Journal of Marketing Management*, 38 (1-2) 165-18

Bradshaw, Alan (2023) commentary (attached in this mail because difficult to find)

EXAMPLES

McCracken, G. (1986). *Culture and consumption: A theoretical account of the structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods*. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13(1), 71-84.

Belk, R. W., Sherry Jr, J. F., & Wallendorf, M. (1988). A naturalistic inquiry into buyer and seller behavior at a swap meet. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14(4), 449-470

Bajde, D. (2013). Consumer culture theory (re) visits actor-network theory: Flattening consumption studies. *Marketing theory*, 13(2), 227-242

Jones, H., & Hietanen, J. (2023). The r/wallstreetbets 'war machine': Explicating dynamics of consumer resistance and capture. *Marketing Theory*, 23(2), 225-247

Ulver, Sofia & Osanami Törngren, Sayaka (2023) "The Empty Body..." *Journal of Marketing Management*. 1-25 (example of how we see different things when using different lenses) Attached in this mail because just came out

20/5 10-12 Lecture 4: CCT in contemporary marketing and adjacent disciplines (Tillotson)

Reading list (*in italics the articles that have to be skimmed rather than fully read*)

Rokka, J. (2021). Consumer Culture Theory's future in marketing. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 29(1), 114-124.

Llewellyn, N. (2021). The Embodiment of Consumer Knowledge. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 48(2), 212-234.

Robinson, T. D., Veresiu, E., & Babić Rosario, A. (2021). Consumer Timework. *Journal of Consumer Research*.

Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). Most people are not WEIRD. *Nature*, 466(7302), 29-29.

Puntoni, S., Reczek, R. W., Giesler, M., & Botti, S. (2021). Consumers and artificial intelligence: An experiential perspective. *Journal of Marketing*, 85(1), 131-151.

Arnould, E., & Press, M. (2019). Systemic small-player market exclusion in an east African context. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 22(5-6), 508-527.

Marcoux, Jean-Sébastien. "Souvenirs to forget." *Journal of Consumer Research* 43, no. 6 (2017): 950-969.

Mimoun, L., Trujillo-Torres, L., & Sobande, F. (2021). Social emotions and the legitimization of the fertility technology market. *Journal of Consumer Research*.

Nardini, G., Rank-Christman, T., Bublitz, M. G., Cross, S. N., & Peracchio, L. A. (2021). *Together we rise: How social movements succeed. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 31(1), 112-145.*

Module 3) Application

20/5 13-15 Lecture 5: CCT as critical and emancipatory research approach/agenda (Gyimóthy)

Reading list (*in italics the articles that have to be skimmed rather than fully read*)

Steinfeld, L., Sanghvi, M., Zayer, L. T., Coleman, C. A., Ourahmoune, N., Harrison, R. L., ... & Brace-Govan, J. (2019). Transformative intersectionality: Moving business towards a critical praxis. *Journal of Business Research, 100*, 366-375.

Veresiu, E., & Giesler, M. (2018). Beyond acculturation: Multiculturalism and the institutional shaping of an ethnic consumer subject. *Journal of Consumer Research, 45(3)*, 553-570.

For the case discussion:

Jeff Bowersox (2022) Playing with diversity: racial and ethnic difference in playmobil toys, *Consumption Markets & Culture, 25:2*, 139-158, DOI: 10.1080/10253866.2022.2046563

Arsel, Z., Crockett, D., & Scott, M. L. (2022). Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the *Journal of Consumer Research: A curation and research agenda. Journal of Consumer Research, 48(5)*, 920-933.

Eckhardt, G.M., Belk, R., Bradford, T.W., Dobscha, S., Ger, G. & Varman, R. (2022) Decolonizing marketing, *Consumption Markets & Culture, 25:2*, 176-186, DOI: 10.1080/10253866.2021.1996734

20/5 15:30-17:30 Lecture 6: CCT and methodological reflexivity (Warren)

Reading list (*in italics the articles that have to be skimmed rather the fully read*)

Lindberg, F., & Østergaard, P. (2015). Extraordinary consumer experiences: Why immersion and transformation cause trouble. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 14(4)*, 248-260.

Lindberg, F., & Mossberg, L. (2019). Competing orders of worth in extraordinary consumption community. *Consumption Markets & Culture, 22(2)*, 109-130.

Thompson, C. J. (1997). Interpreting consumers: A hermeneutical framework for deriving marketing insights from the texts of consumers' consumption stories. *Journal of marketing Research, 34(4)*, 438-455.

Figueiredo, Bernardo, Ahir Gopaldas, and Eileen Fischer. "The construction of qualitative research articles: A conversation with Eileen Fischer." *Consumption Markets & Culture 20.4* (2017): 297-305.

21/5 9-15 Group work in various empirical locations where students will be studying and analyzing consumer culture phenomena.

21/5 15-17 Joint workshop where experiences from the group work will be discussed.

22/5 9-12 Workshop on application of CCT and how it has potential to further contribute to the students' interdisciplinary research endeavors.

-----End of Intensive Week in Stockholm-----

Module 4) Solutions (digital)

28/5 10-12 Lecture 7: Terminal Marketing (Östberg)

Reading list

Ahlberg, Oscar, Jack Coffin, and Joel Hietanen “Bleak Signs of Our Times: Descent into ‘Terminal Marketing,’” *Marketing Theory*, 22(4), 667-688.

Cova, Bernard, Pauline Maclaran, and Alan Bradshaw (2013), “Rethinking Consumer Culture Theory from the Postmodern to the Communist Horizon,” *Marketing Theory*, 13(2), 213–25.

Gabriel, Yiannis (2015), “Identity, Choice and Consumer Freedom – the New Opiates? A Psychoanalytic Interrogation,” *Marketing Theory*, 15(1), 25–30.

4/6 10-12 Lecture 8: Wring CCT as outcome of research endeavors (Lucarelli)

Reading list (*in italics the articles that have to be skimmed rather the fully read*)

Lucarelli, A, Shariar H, Ulver, S and Egan-Wyer, (2023) Research Contributions in Interpretivist Marketing and Consumer Research Studies: A Kaleidoscopic Framework, *Marketing Theory* (forthcoming) (ask the instructor for a pdf)

Belk, R., & Sobh, R. (2019). No assemblage required: On pursuing original consumer culture theory. *Marketing Theory*, 19(4), 489-507.

Bajde D and Gopaldas A (2019) What makes a good paper? Analytic and Continental ideals in consumer culture theory. Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal 22(3): 270-277.

Fischer E, Gopaldas A and Scaraboto D (2017) Why papers are rejected and how to get yours accepted: Advice on the construction of interpretive consumer research articles. Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal 20(1): 60-67.

Gisler, M and Craig J Thompson (2016) “A Tutorial in Consumer Research: Process Theorization in Cultural Consumer Research”, Journal of Consumer Research, 43(4); 497-508.

11/6 9-12 Final Workshop (Lucarelli & Östberg)

Students get to engage in discussing the main core issues presented during the course. They will also have an opportunity to discuss their proposed final assignments, that will be handed in after the workshop.