

SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES IN CONSUMER RESEARCH: FROM BUYER BEHAVIOR TO CONSUMPTION STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

At least four perspectives on the study of consumer behaviour have been adopted over the last 40 years: Buyer Behaviour, Consumer Behaviour, Consumer Research, and Consumption Studies. With few exceptions this transition has not been studied. This paper introduces a framework for how these different approaches can be analysed by examining these four ideal types of approach towards the consuming individual. These four ideal types represent a historical development. This analysis shows how the three first ideal types: buyer behaviour, consumer behaviour, and consumer research all have the single consuming individual as their topic although they are different in many other aspects. The fourth ideal type called consumption studies deviates from the three earlier approaches because the analysis extends beyond the single consuming individual. It is said that the consuming individuals do not know what they need, want, or desire. By choosing what they do not want, the consuming individuals use products and consumption to create a metaphysical universe where they are looking for recognition from other members in their tribe. The perspective for this new approach towards a theory for behaviour of the consuming individual is outlined. It is also discussed how studying the behaviour of the consuming individual based on the consumption studies approach will be possible.