

Project Description

This project will develop a conceptual manuscript to be submitted to the *Journal of Consumer Research* for publication (a top tiered journal in the field of consumer research).

In comparative markets, it would be rational to suspect that consumers from those markets would interpret and react to the same market signals, or informational messaging (i.e., pricing, labels, brand claims, or advertisements) in a homogeneous way. However, in those circumstances where it does not, explanations can prove strained. This research postulates that divergent responses from within comparative markets are most likely due to misunderstood embedded meanings within those markets that the signal, or message, treats as commonly understood for both. Embedding meanings as used here refer to the values, norms, and sharing meanings of a culture that are understood by those who live within that culture. By expanding upon existing works in consumer interpretation, identity, and valuation, this project will advance an analytic framework that seeks to demonstrate the usefulness of meaning-based evaluations in explaining how divergent responses come to exist within comparative markets. Along this journey, this project will attempt to clarify consumer trust, skepticism, and value. To achieve the aims as outlined, a theory-guided analytic demonstration will be used to illustrate its practical significance to marketing managers.

Measurable Goals / Objectives

1. Completion of a full manuscript suitable for submission to the *Journal of Consumer Research*.
2. Formal presentation of the completed manuscript to the University body at the Annual Research Symposium held in the Spring.
3. Integration of research insights into business and interdisciplinary courses.
4. A final project report to be submitted to the Faculty Research Development Committee (FRDC) committee and Faculty Affairs

Time frame

Work on this project will be conducted during Summer 2026. This is feasible within the proposed timeline because it builds on an already developed theoretical framework and ongoing scholarly writing. The project will culminate in a *Journal of Consumer Research* submission by the end of Summer 2026.

Institutional Benefits

If publication is successful, this project will enhance Lincoln University's research, teaching, and scholarly visibility in a top tiered journal of consumer research. This will only increase Lincoln's academic prowess and reputation in the field of business and will further foster opportunities for scholarly collaboration with other institutions and provide for further professional engagement outside of Lincoln. Overall, the intention of the work is to support faculty development and student learning while also enhancing Lincoln's research profile.

How Outcomes Will Be Measured

Demonstrating progress towards publication and research through manuscript drafts, submission confirmation, and teaching integration examples.

Dissemination Plan (How, When, Where, and With Whom Results Will Be Shared)

Results will be disseminated through scholarly and institutional channels. Upon completion of the manuscript, findings will be submitted to the *Journal of Consumer Research*. Consistent with FRDC expectations, results will be shared at the Annual Research Symposium held in the Spring. A report will also be prepared summarizing outcomes, progress towards publication, and how the manuscript will be incorporated into this faculty's courses.

APPENDIX

Related but uncited academic works in the proposal

- Alba, J. W. (2012). In defense of bumbling. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 38(6), 981–987.
- Arnould, E. J., & Wallendorf, M. (1994). Market-oriented ethnography: interpretation building and marketing strategy formulation. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 31(4), 484–504.
- Atkinson, L. & Rosenthal, S. (2014). Signaling the green sell: The influence of eco-label source, argument specificity, and product involvement on consumer trust. *Journal of Advertising*, 43(1), 33–45.
- Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 139–168.
- Escalas, J. E. (2004). Narrative processing: Building consumer connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(1-2), 168–180.
- Fiol, C. M. (1991). Managing culture as a competitive resource: An identity-based view of sustainable competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 191–211.
- Golder, P. N., Dekimpe, M. G., An, J. T., van Heerde, H. J., Kim, D. S. U., & Alba, J. W. (2022). Learning from Data: An Empirics-First Approach to Relevant Knowledge Generation. *Journal of Marketing*, 87(3), 319–336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429221129200> (Original work published 2023)
- Granovetter, M. (1985). Economic action and social structure: The problem of embeddedness. *American Journal of Sociology*, 91, 481–510.
- Kirmani, A., & Rao, A. R. (2000). No pain, no gain: A critical review of the literature on signaling unobservable product quality. *Journal of Marketing*, 64(2), 66–79.
- Lynch, J. G., Jr., Alba, J. W., Krishna, A., Morwitz, V. G., & Gurhan-Canli, Z. (2012). Knowledge creation in consumer research: Multiple routes, multiple criteria. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39(3), 473–485. <https://doi.org/10.1086/665047>
- Matsumoto, D. (2007). Culture, context, and behavior. *Journal of Personality*, 75(6), 1285–1320.
- 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.
- Oliver, R. L., & Swan, J. E. (1989). Consumer perceptions of interpersonal equity and satisfaction in transactions: a field survey approach. *Journal of Marketing*, 53(2), 21–35.

- Ostrom, A., & Lacobucci, D. (1995). Consumer trade-offs and the evaluation of services. *Journal of Marketing*, 59(1), 17-28.
- Reed Jr, A., Forehand, M. R., Puntoni, S., & Warlop, L. (2012). Identity-based consumer behavior. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 29(4), 310-321.
- Spiggle, S. (1994). Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21(3), 491-503.
- 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.
- Thompson, C. J., Pollio, H. R., & Locander, W. B. (1994). The spoken and the unspoken: a hermeneutic approach to understanding the cultural viewpoints that underlie consumers' expressed meanings. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21(3), 432-452.
- Zott, C., & Amit, R. (2008). The fit between product market strategy and business model: Implications for firm performance. *Strategic Management Journal*, 29(1), 1-26.