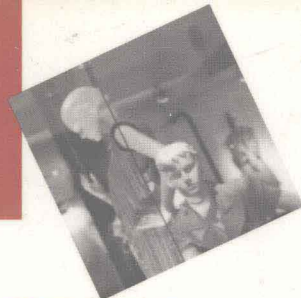
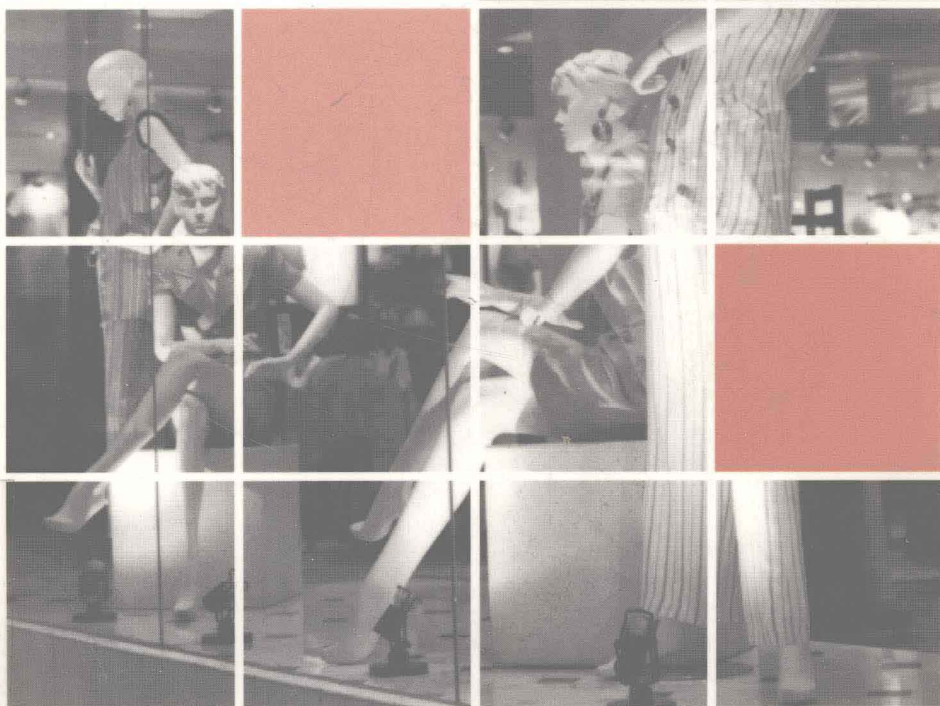


Editor
John F. Sherry, Jr.



Contemporary Marketing and Consumer Behavior



An Anthropological Sourcebook

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Contemporary Marketing and Consumer Behavior

*To our informants, those
consultants, collaborators, and friends
in the field*

Foreword: Does Marketing Need Anthropology?

Does marketing need anthropology? It is a pleasure to write a Foreword to this book in answer to this question. First, the editor, John Sherry, has been a colleague of mine at Kellogg School's marketing department for several years, building my appreciation of his substantial professional and personal qualities and therefore my anticipation of this volume. Second, I found the chapters in it enjoyable to read; they are absorbing, informative, and provocative. I was also glad to see this book because it significantly furthers the role of the anthropological approach to marketing and consumer research. While such literature has been growing by way of journal articles, this volume provides the chance to contemplate that role, and its potential, in a rich and concentrated manner. Before indicating the specific content the reader will encounter, I offer a preamble to indicate the experience and outlook that I bring to bear and thereby to provide a view of the background from which this volume grew.

If it is possible to be a little bit an anthropologist, I would like to make the claim. As a student with the Committee on Human Development at the University of Chicago many years ago, I obtained an interdisciplinary education that included classes with Robert Redfield and W. Lloyd Warner, and I read fairly widely in the field. (My friends are weary of hearing this again, but I ask their indulgence in hopes of reaching a wider audience.) Since that time, I have done many research projects of an anthropological nature in both the United States and abroad. Actually, these projects fell under the

heading of qualitative marketing research, as they were usually carried out with the goals of understanding particular facets of consumer behavior and furthering marketing goals. But the work also served scholarly and academic aims, finding expression in analyses and insights in my writing for the professional literature.

The context of this work was a demanding one. For a long period, from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, contributing qualitative work to the marketing field was a somewhat uphill task. In 1948, I began working with Social Research, Inc. This company (SRI) was founded in 1946 by a multidisciplinary group—Burleigh B. Gardner and W. Lloyd Warner (anthropologists), Robert Havighurst (educator), and William E. Henry (psychologist). Its work became an applied amalgam of behavioral science theory and method, using intensive interviewing, observation, and projective techniques, to illuminate social stratification, social roles, cultural change, and symbolism in the everyday life of the community. All respondents in marketing research studies were stratified according to Warner's concepts of social structure, using the Index of Status Characteristics he and his colleagues developed and reported in *Social Class in America* (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1949).

To support this work, it was necessary to find clients who were bright, inquisitive, innovative, and sufficiently powerful in their organizations to bring in research work that differed from the conventional—and too often, simple-minded—surveys that dominated the marketing research field. But progress was made. Many business people were receptive and willing to sponsor novel and venturesome projects. One such man was John Catlin, a vice president at Kimberly-Clark. Among his responsibilities was the marketing of Delsey tissue, for which he once proposed installing cameras in toilets to gain an unobtrusive record of how the product was used. (Amusingly, I heard Margaret Mead make a similar suggestion at a program at the University of Chicago, where she talked about using photography to acquire a record of “chunks” of behavior.) Catlin also raised the cross-cultural question of why the British preferred harder tissue than Americans did.

In 1958, we also did studies of women's attitudes toward menstruation and the use of “sanitary” or “feminine” protection. The variations in response by subcultural groups to the introduction of tampons by Kotex cast light on such issues as how cultural changes occur with immigration of various ethnic groups into American society, the diffusion of customs from one group to another (e.g., from sophisticated middle-class women accustomed to using Tampax to young first- and second-generation women who thought such consumer behavior was taboo), as well as the force of new technology,

products, and their promotion, in changing attitudes, self-concepts, and behavior on a large scale. Within a relatively few years, feminine protection moved from the status of a hush-hush, brown wrapper package to being casually advertised on television.

Another important client was MacFadden Publications, Inc., which sponsored a series of studies of working-class women. A full-scale report, of a markedly ethnographic character, was published as *Workingman's Wife* (New York: Oceana, 1959) in the vein of such social anthropological interpretations as *Boys in White* by Becker, Geer, Hughes, and Strauss (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

Along with the development of this work, there was also ferment in business schools, although academia was slower, more cautious, and more resistant to change. Some of the work being done in industry was reported in the trade press and at programs of the American Marketing Association. *Tide*, a newsmagazine of advertising, marketing, and public relations, told of the work of SRI in articles in October and December 1947 and in February 1948, referring to symbolic analyses of various cultural phenomena, such as the use of greeting cards and the significance of soap operas to their audiences. Under the rubric of "motivation research," this work gained growing attention among faculty. In 1957, Joseph Newman published his doctoral dissertation *Motivation Research and Marketing Management* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), and in 1958, Robert Ferber and Hugh Wales of the University of Illinois edited the volume *Motivation and Market Behavior* (Homewood, IL: Irwin). Neither work took particular note of the anthropological nature of the research being reported; Ferber and Wales focused especially on psychology.

Although much thinking and application went on from the time I started work at SRI in 1948, the pioneering text *Consumer Behavior*, by Engel, Kollatt, and Blackwell, did not emerge until 1968. A section of that book was devoted to asserting the importance of a societal perspective and the concept of culture. Before then, in 1961, I had been hired by the marketing department of the School of Business at Northwestern University (now the J. L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management) to teach about the application of behavioral sciences to marketing. Gradually, over the past 50 years, marketing personnel on all sides have become aware that their need to understand the marketplace and the consumers in it has had to be both broader and deeper. Professionals at universities and managers in companies, with their respective skills and financial resources, addressed their common interest in solving the ever more complex problems of the marketplace that have arisen. This complexity has rapidly increased, especially in the past 25 years during which

the Association for Consumer Research and the *Journal of Consumer Research* were created. This concern finds much to feed it in issues of environmentalism, consumerism, critiques of materialism, worldwide development and global competition, and the endless generation of market segments whose subjective and overt behavior invite our study and encourage the use of more varied methods.

Moving from a preoccupation with surveys and their attendant sampling and measurement problems into less charted and more ambiguous terrain, from the easy lists of actions and obvious reasons for purchase into the murkier realms of cognition, motivation, and volition, to say nothing of affect and perception, was a daunting and threatening task. Entrenched surveyers feared loss of their livelihood, new personnel had to be found and/or trained, new vocabularies had to be learned, and managers had to develop the judgment to distinguish between competence and gibberish in the face of the inexhaustible supply of con artists and sharks that quickly surfaces when fresh bread is cast upon the waters. The workers, both good and bad, came from various fields.

Most readily available and interested were psychologists. An outstanding pioneer was Ernest Dichter, who used the tools of psychoanalytic thinking toward elucidating consumer motivation. He was brilliant, provocative, and practical and found an admiring audience among corporate customers as well as a train of intellectual morticians who continue to this day to keep trying to bury Freud. There were also many other psychologists who needed the work and who could bring relevant training. Importantly, the emerging marketing concept (that marketing success depends on meeting the needs of customers) highlighted the necessity of understanding the consumer, and study of consumers intensified awareness of the idea of segmentation. George Katona pioneered with his studies in economic psychology, and Robert Ferber was an early positive gatekeeper for new ideas coming into the marketing field. Psychologists could apply personality study and had the tool of depth interviewing at hand to serve the need for fuller and richer information about consumers, and with projective methods they could lure the more daring managers.

Also up front in bringing ideas and methods to the marketing field were outstanding sociologists such as Paul Lazarsfeld, Elihu Katz, Robert Merton, and others interested in mass communications and influence. Anthropologists per se were less visible during this period in turning to the marketing field, except in the sense that they had always been there in studying the markets and consumption ways among many of the peoples on the earth. W. Lloyd Warner brought this interest forward in the United States through fostering

the field of social anthropology in local American settings in the *Yankee City* series, and through his part in founding SRI as a vehicle for studying marketing research issues for varied organizations. His colleague, Burleigh B. Gardner, was also prominent for his domestic social anthropological work in *Deep South* and *Human Relations in Industry* and his subsequent leadership at SRI. My affiliation with SRI sensitized me to the importance of social structure, stratification, and change, and the symbolic character of human life. In 1974, at the August conference of the American Marketing Association, I spoke on "Myth and Meaning in Marketing," seeking to arouse more widespread awareness and involvement in exploring these typical anthropological issues in marketing. In 1978, I wrote "Hunger and Work in a Civilized Tribe, or the Anthropology of Market Transactions" (*American Behavioral Scientist*), an overview of the development of concepts in anthropological study and some parallelism in changing marketing thought, hoping again to stimulate interdisciplinary activity from this direction.

As time went by, there came to the fore most gratifyingly the work of John Sherry, Eric Arnould, and Grant McCracken and, as we see now in this volume, numerous others who pursue the study of consumer behavior while having in mind the anthropological discipline, who think about society and societies, about symbolism, lineage, and magic. I will not dwell on each of the succeeding articles; I hope the reader will find them as absorbing and instructive as I did.

The chapters in this book are examples of researchers addressing some of the issues raised by anthropology and by their own interests and diverse approaches. Following Part One, Sherry's introductory chapter, are five groupings. Part Two is about some important ways the product may be apprehended. Dan Rose provides a bold interpretation that has the character of a meditation on the complex of meanings of a shampoo and its modes of communication. Tani and Rathje show how we can learn about consumers and their use of products via the intriguing archaeological method of sorting debris. From shampoo and batteries, the text goes on in Part Three to discuss rice and pharmaceuticals, but here the products are almost incidental to the other organizational and managerial interests of the authors. Eric Arnould reminds us of the role that analysis of a traditional "anthropological" setting—African communities—can offer as such places become less traditional and move toward fuller integration in the world market where managing channel relations is a central marketing problem. Reeves-Ellington similarly provides a study of how an anthropological perspective can assist in improving sales performance in overseas markets.

Part Four focuses on the social contexts that influence consumer behavior, with Janeen Costa taking up the several elements in social organization and categorization and Barbara Olsen drawing out especially the effect of lineage on brand loyalty. In Part Five, John McCreery offers an exhilarating excursion through the craft of advertising by his linkage of Malinowski (conceivably one of the founders of marketing research via his studies of the *kula* trading system), magic, and metaphor. Rita Denny explores some of the implicit meanings that go on in the dialogue between electric utilities and customers. In Part Six, two broad investigations are reported: Duhaime, Joy, and Ross seek to capture the nature of the consumers' aesthetic experiences involved in attending museums and consuming art, and Sherry, McGrath, and Levy delineate the complex subjectivity of people when giving themselves gifts.

This summary of the book's contents suggests the importance of three large themes: how the things that people consume, whether objects, services, or ideas, have meaning in their lives; the role of relating, organizing, structuring, managing; and the rich, pervasive challenge of understanding communications. I believe this volume is an excellent beginning of such collections of literature. But it is just a start. That fact is made evident by John Sherry's Part One orientation chapter in its remarkable coverage of the possibilities as well as its apt detail. No one volume can be expected to fulfill the vision and range of potential he suggests, but he provides a great map of a wonderful and exciting terrain. In editing this collection and in contributing to it such a rich set of ideas, he answers the question I asked at the outset. Yes, marketing needs anthropology because it has so much to offer.

—Sidney J. Levy
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Preface

The fields of marketing and consumer research are undergoing a period of almost unprecedented growth and differentiation. Much of the ferment stems from interest in the cultural and experiential dimensions of the disciplines, which is being generated by the work of researchers trained in anthropology. Simultaneously, anthropology is weathering a period of accelerated fragmentation, reflexivity, and often misplaced relevance. There is a growing demand for scholarship more tuned both to the empirical and practical realities of consumer culture. These trends conspire to produce a timely and appropriate synergy, which is resulting in the emergence of an anthropology of contemporary marketing and consumer behavior.

This is a multiple or parallel emergence of sorts. It has been a multidisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary effort and has resulted in the creation of enclaves within dominant disciplines, whose scholars often proceed in virtual ignorance of each other's contributions. It has also caused practitioners to reinvent the wheel, often using brittle spokes and warped hubs. Diffusion has been discontinuous and distorted. There is now a very timely opportunity to integrate, catalyze, and refine this emerging tradition as the interest across camps reaches a critical mass. This volume is an effort to seize that opportunity.

I have secured the cooperation of a number of colleagues to produce this sourcebook on the anthropology of contemporary marketing and consumer behavior. The book is a reader of original articles of theoretical and empirical substance, written by anthropologists who specialize in marketing and consumer research. It is intended as a sourcebook for readers interested in what anthropologists have to say about consumption and its managerial consequences.

The contributors—anthropologists and marketers—are drawn from management schools, traditional anthropology departments, and private industry. They are among the thought leaders of an anthropology of marketing and consumer research. Collectively, they have won awards for their scholarly writing, they have trained a vanguard of Ph.D., MBA, and undergraduate business students, they have advised executives of *Fortune* 500 companies as well as smaller entrepreneurial ventures, and they have plied their trade in contexts foreign and domestic. By including chapters from anthropologists working within the disciplines of marketing and consumer research as well as by those working within the discipline of anthropology proper, I have tried to achieve an “inside”/“outside” perspective of consumption phenomena. The chapters written by professional practitioners who make their living applying anthropology to the study of consumption and marketing provide additional insight and relevance to the pursuit of basic research. Finally, the remarks of eminent senior Fellows of the Association for Consumer Research, who have drawn upon anthropology to make their own seminal contributions to a number of disciplines, punctuate the volume beginning, middle, and end. A brief biosketch of contributors is provided at the end of the volume.

The topics and their treatments in this volume run a gamut of concerns from our focal disciplines. The essays are both conceptual and empirical. Elements of the marketing mix are well represented, as authors consider such matters as goods and services, brand image and equity, utility and experience, advertising and promotion, channel maintenance, relationship management, managerial intervention and stakeholder response, organization behavior, economic development, class- and gender-linked consumer behaviors, and the production of consumption. Anthropological perspectives and methods employed by the authors range from materialist to semiotic and include ethnography, archaeology, and archival analysis. Participant observation, interview, survey, projective tasking and introspection are among the techniques used to elicit information from consumers. Qualitative and quantitative methods are employed. Inquiries range across time and across cultures. Intra- and intercultural dynamics involving the United States, Canada, Japan, Africa, the Middle East, Australo-Asia, and Asia-Pacific are explored in depth by the authors, with other regions invoked through example. Contributors range across time, space, and topics in pursuit of understanding. Some have worked in the tradition of the solitary ethnographer; others have worked in teams with colleagues from other disciplines. The result is a multifaceted perspective of marketing and consumer behavior.

The book consists of 12 substantive chapters and 3 commentary pieces, organized into 7 parts. Part One is an orienting section that moves the reader

into some of the issues and perspectives of an anthropology of marketing and consumer behavior. Part Two treats the objects circulating in the marketplace by examining the derivation of meaning through usage. Part Three explores the dynamics of distribution in terms of interpersonal and interorganizational relations, and considers the strategic importance of anthropology to change agency. Part Four situates consumer behavior in the material and social nexus that sustains it over time and suggests the impact that embeddedness should have on managerial action plans. Part Five is a meditation on the efficacy of one form of marketing communication in particular—advertising—as both a metaphysical system and a directed intervention. Part Six uses the vehicles of museum-going and monadic giving to broach the phenomenology of consumer behavior. Part Seven provides some closure for, and imparts some directionality to, the essays. Our respected elders bracket these contributions with their own insights.

This volume is neither a textbook nor a handbook in the encyclopedic sense of those enterprises. It is a sourcebook that reflects the polylogue that anthropologists have found marketing and consumer behavior to be. Each of the chapters, and the citation bases on which they are built, facilitate the reader's access to a larger contextual literature that, in turn, will permit future investigation of issues focused on personal interests. Encouragement of the programmatic pursuit of personalized anthropological research agendas is the ultimate objective of this sourcebook. We celebrate a diversity of topics and approaches in the service of this goal.

—John F. Sherry, Jr.
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