

Editorial

Special issue on “Markets in Transition”

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We had the pleasure to host the Nordic Conference on Consumer Research at the University of Vaasa, June 13-14, 2018. This was the fifth time this biennial conference took place, meaning that already for ten years consumer and consumption scientists from different Nordic countries have gathered together. This time, the conference was themed as *Markets in Transition* referring to the idea that present-day consumer markets are under constant changes stemming from various global megatrends, such as digitalization and sustainability. For us consumer researchers, this poses both pivotal need for research as well as intriguing avenues for exploration.

The current special issue builds mainly on the papers presented in NCCR2018 each of them addressing the conference theme from different angles. First, *Turunen* and *Laaksonen* explore how one of the iconic Finnish brands - Leijona watch brand - is able to create memorable brand experiences for the consumers. The authors analyse altogether 1048 written stories that Finnish consumers have produced on their experiences related to Leijona watch. Categorizing the brand experiences according to varied memory functions (self-reflective, social and directive functions), the findings illuminate how the brand meanings can be transferred from past to present day consumption in a very interesting way.

In the second article, *Närvänen*, *Mesiranta* and *Mattila* analyse extant literature to identify three roles of consumer-citizens in food waste reduction. These roles - decision-maker, communal consumer-citizen, and change agent - are further enlightened by three illustrative narratives. Through these fictional narratives authors are able to vividly showcase how each of the roles are entwined in different levels of culture, micro, meso and macro. In their concluding discussion, *Närvänen* et al. encourage directing attention towards active consumer-citizens capable of driving change on multiple levels of society. Thus, in regard to the special issue on *Markets in Transition*, this paper emphasizes the possibilities for enhancing sustainability by empowering consumer-citizens and their potentials of mobilizing others.

The third article by *Norrgrann*, *Ravald*, *Buss*, *Hjerpe* and *Storbacka* addresses also

the active role of present-day consumers. In particular, they analyse how young adults act as prosumers in the unbound, changing media landscape. They discover six metaphorical prosumer profiles (the Bumblebee, the Window peeker, the Researcher, the Sponge, the Relayer, and the Megaphone) that highlight, for instance, how actively or passively young adults assemble and share news. The article fits especially well in the current theme as it is able to demonstrate the transitional phase of contemporary news consumption, or actually prosumption, in which the supremacy of the professional news producers is constantly being negotiated and novel forms news distribution are produced.

In the fourth article, *Jacquemier-Paquin*, *Pantin-Sohier* and *Lancelot-Miltgen* from France participate in the topical discussions of product design and its influence on consumers' perception of a product. Taking a unique empirical context, namely flowers, they investigate how the shape of roses and tulips, and the brightness of their colour influence on the consumers' perceptions of them. The results of the online survey further confirm that the product design stands for an important sensory cue shaping the product image that consumers attach to symbolic products, such as flowers.

In addition to the four inspiring articles presented in NCCR2018, the current issue includes also two additional papers that very well fit into the theme of Markets in Transition. Firstly, *Lagus*, *Pantzar* and *Ruckenstein* explore Finnish consumers' emotional states and rhythms analysing online discussions from Suomi24 forum (56 millions of messages in total). Applying 'rhythm analysis' the authors discuss and visualize consumers' emotional states emerging in certain time periods. The authors further elaborate the empirical findings in relation to societal level transition processes, such as digitalization and consumer welfare, and bring forward how big data driven analysis focusing on emotional discussions may be utilized when studying the rhythms and disorders of rhythms in the contemporary consumer society.

Secondly, Professor Visa *Heinonen* has interviewed Professor Frank *Trentmann* when he visited at the University of Helsinki as a part-time Professor of History of Morality and Consumption in 2018. The headline of the interview starts with a quote: 'There is no doubt that consumers continue to be active', which well highlights once more the empowered nature of present-day consumers. The interview begins with an interesting description of Professor Trentmann's early studies, which actually are situated in early times of consumption research. Basing on these ideas, Trentmann discusses about what consumption actually is, and how it is something that changes over time, and therefore "it is interesting to try to understand, why is it that something like water or energy can be different things in some different periods of time and different cultures." Relatedly, the interview goes on pondering about urgent matters and how things, such as managing sustainable change, are done all over the globe. The interview indeed showcases how markets can be in transition towards more sustainable future.

This issue ends with an interesting lectio praecursoria written by Samuel *Piha* who defended his thesis in Turku School of Economics. In his lectio, Piha argues that evolutionary psychology provides novel kinds of instruments to understand and analyse consumers' behaviour. He also presented his dissertation framework in NCCR2018, which makes the lectio to fit well in the current special issue.

As editors of this special issue, we wish enjoyable reading moments for everyone interested in fresh views on the manners consumer markets are facing variable transformations! We thank all the authors and peer-reviewers for their valuable efforts to actualise this issue of Kulutustutkimus.Nyt!