
“FOR”

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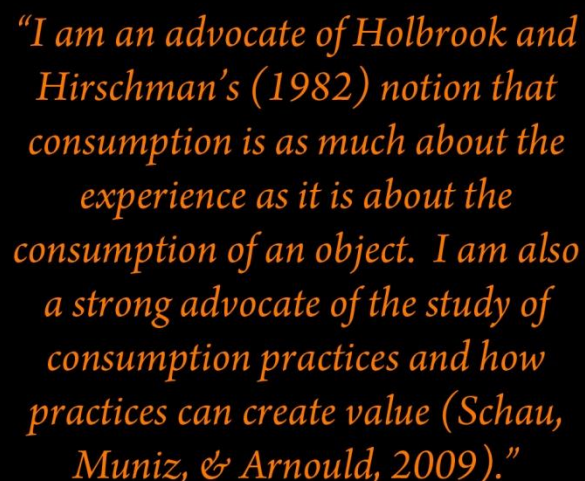
ABSTRACT:

This essay offers a brief reflection on the purpose of the Journal of Research for Consumers and in particular, the importance of the word ‘for’ as a means of driving the journal forward and solidifying a vision for the journal. I offer some brief insights of my own as well as call for research articles, essays, special issues, think pieces, and reviews that are both accessible and beneficial *for* consumers.

This issue marks the beginning of my term as the editor of the Journal of Research for Consumers. As is customary, I have the opportunity to signal my vision for the journal and how the journal can continue to build on the excellent work undertaken by its founder and outgoing editor, Prof. Simone Pettigrew.

As I reflect upon the role of JRC in academia I continue to be challenged by one little word: *For*. This is the Journal of Research *for* Consumers. It is not a journal about consumers; it is not a journal tangentially about marketing with some consumption aspect; it is not a journal for academics whose only desire is to add a publication to their CV. It is a journal *for* consumers. My vision for JRC is to have the journal driven by the word *for*. However, understanding *for* requires some extensive explication in itself.

WHO these consumers are that I am calling for more research *for*, is a lengthy discussion. I would not dare to do it justice in such a short essay; however, I can say that I am an advocate of Holbrook and Hirschman’s (1982) notion that consumption is as much about the experience as it is about the consumption of an object. I am also a strong advocate of the study of consumption practices and how practices can create value (Schau, Muniz, & Arnould, 2009). This does not preclude other viewpoints of consumption. Indeed, I feel it opens



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the JRC up for greater acceptance of consumption practices, whether it is the consumption of goods and services or the consumption of one’s environment and ambiance. Yes, the JRC has the word ‘consumer’ in the title, which may naturally place the journal in the field of Consumer Research and the broader field of Marketing, but there is a wealth of knowledge from other disciplines that could aid our understanding of consumption and consumers.

I wish to hear from those in the healthcare field who study patients consuming their services, so that these consumers' experiences can be better understood. I want to hear from those in the Law field about how the public consume policies, so that we can better understand how to disseminate policies. I want to hear from those in the Arts field on how the humanities are perceived by the general public so that the value of the Arts can be made clearer. I want to hear from academics that advance our understanding of consumers' engagement with education. I, controversially, also want to hear the perspective of our consumers. I want to hear from anyone who is able to show an advancement of knowledge that leads to any improvements *for* consumers.

A Closer Examination of 'For'

For me, *for* is made up of two key terms: *Access* and *Benefit*. At the fore of *for*, is *Access*. The JRC has always been Open Access, long before Open Access was cool. All the articles are available online and free to use without authors having to pay for the privilege of being published in the journal. However, *Access* is not just about making knowledge freely available, but making knowledge comprehensible to

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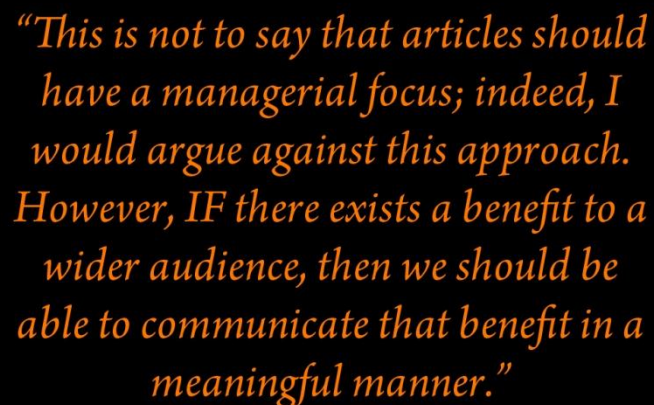
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The JRC has been well regarded as a means of reaching consumers with its “Consumer Articles”, which offer a medium that makes academic work more comprehensible and applicable to a non-academic audience. These consumer articles will continue. However, my desire is to see an even greater reach of the articles, through press and social media engagement, in order to make our research as meaningful and accessible as possible. As a start, a Facebook page has been set up (www.facebook.com/jrconsumers) to aid in disseminating research as well as being a place to reach a new audience of both authors and readers.

Secondly, *for* is about *Benefit*. The academic who reads an article in the JRC must benefit from the work; this goes without saying. However, the benefit should also be to those who aided in the creation of the research; ie, the consumers we study. There must be an improvement in the lives of those who helped generate the research. Jumping into a consumption experience, learning from consumers and never returning to share one's insight cannot be sustained. I have noticed a marked increase in the dissention between academia and non-academia in the last five years. It seems whenever Higher Education or a University comes under threat, the public opinion is, at best, in support of the student body,

but it is less and less likely to be on the side of the academics. Even the media coverage of the UC Davis Pepper Spray Incident, which, in my mind, is one of the most abhorrent physical abuses of students in recent times, evoked mixed feelings from the public. Some of whom defended the security guard's actions and demanded jail time for the students involved (c.f. one example of this in the comments from this CBS news article: http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-201_162-57363307/no-charges-for-pepper-sprayed-uc-davis-students/).

I wonder how much of this distaste for academia stems from a lack of engagement between academics and non-academics. I wonder how much of this could change by making the work academics do more meaningful and accessible to a wider audience and make the benefits more clear. This is not to say that articles should have a managerial focus; indeed, I would argue against this approach. However, IF there



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exists a benefit to a wider audience, then we should be able to communicate that benefit in a meaningful manner. We must be prepared to share our insights back with those who we learn from and have benefited from ourselves.

This is, by no means, a new concept. David Mick called for greater research for the benefit of consumers in his Presidential address to the Association for Consumer Research (Mick, 2006). His call harkened the birth of Transformative Consumer Research, which continues to strive to improve the lives of consumers, worldwide. However, more research *for* the benefit of consumers can be done and more outlets for such research must be provided. This is not a call for all research to have a TCR focus, but rather we, as writers and researchers, should be able to clearly illustrate the impact and benefit that our research has for consumers.

In this same vein, the readers of JRC are also consumers of our work. Our writing should undoubtedly be *for* them, too. Writing in an interesting fashion is critical. Writing in a way that draws the reader further into the work is a very simple way to aid in readers engaging more with the research. An article with no meaningful addition to one's life has little purpose; however, an article that *may* make a meaningful contribution, but is poorly articulated or, for want of a better word, boring, is unlikely to drive the field of research forward. Rigorous, interesting, and compelling articles all aid in being beneficial *for* consumers.

But, How?

Visions are wonderful, but without any tangible means of implementing the vision, a vision is just potential. This brief essay on *for* goes some way to encourage more research that is for the benefit of consumers, but more is also needed. As such, I am actively calling for not just research papers that fit the vision of the JRC, but also essays, special issues, think pieces, and reviews that challenge our current understanding of consumers and consumption. As long as the consumer is clearly defined; the article offers rigorous and interesting contributions, and the benefit is there *for* the consumer, the article will have a home at the JRC.

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As the journal moves forward, there exists a greater need to focus on the purpose of the journal and the articles that make-up each issue. It is important to see a coherent purpose and convergence in vision from articles that are published in the JRC. This may mean that more papers are sent back to authors at an early stage if they do not fit the vision and purpose of the journal.

It is hoped that a greater diversity of readers will be drawn to articles in the JRC, but this will only occur through greater engagement with a wider audience. Cross- and Inter-disciplinary work is keenly encouraged and I will be actively seeking out invited essays from leaders in other fields who can contribute their thoughts on how best we can work *for* consumers.

Finally, I wish to again thank the amazing work done by the previous editor, Simone Pettigrew, who has kindly agreed to stay as part of the editorial team. I also wish to acknowledge and give huge thanks to the editorial team who have been gracious with their advice and have been patient with their new editor. As time goes on, I will be building on the editorial board and reviewer pool to aid in diversifying the reach of the JRC, as we move into this new frontier. In the meantime, I look forward to seeing more of your work *for* consumers.

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