

BSA Consumption Study Group Annual Report (2022)

Name: Consumption Study Group

Established: July 2019

Number of members: 80+ study group members based on subscription to study group Jiscmail.

Income: Current balance is £70. All events so far have been free of charge.

Aims:

- To provide a productive and supportive network through which researchers working on matters relating to consumption, consumers and consumer culture can meet to present research findings and engage in dialogue and debate.
- To organise regular regional and national events where researchers from across career stages can present research findings and further debates in sociology of consumption and related areas;
- To support Postgraduate Researchers, Early Career Researchers and other emerging scholars in the field of sociology of consumption. It is anticipated this will include offering subsidised places at Study Group events and both formal and informal mentorship opportunities;
- To encourage interdisciplinary dialogue between sociologists of consumption and those working on related issues in other fields such as geography, social anthropology, social psychology, business and marketing studies;
- To showcase the need for sociological insights to contribute to current debates about both the everyday lived experiences of consumers and the wider socio-political context in which the economics, ethics and sustainability of consumer culture is increasingly questioned.

Activities in 2022

1. *Twitter Account (@BSAConsumption)#*

The study group's Twitter account currently has 590 followers and is used to promote events and circulate related announcements such as member publications, job opportunities etc.

2. *Consumption, crisis and selfhood (18th of November 2022)*

This event was initially planned as a Seminar series consisting of two meetings, one in October and one in November 2022. However, the first event had to be rescheduled due to technical issues experienced by the BSA office on that day. Unfortunately, it was not possible to find another suitable date that accommodated all the speakers, especially those attending from different time zones, within a short timeframe.

Therefore, during the rescheduling process, we decided to merge the two sessions into a one-day event. The participation in the event was significant, and the papers presented sparked a fruitful discussion among the participants. The schedule of the event is provided below:

Consumption, Crisis and Selfhood

1-4pm Friday 18th November 2022 (Online)

Much early research examining the impact of Covid-19 has focused on the exacerbation of pre-existing inequalities during and after the pandemic. However, surprisingly little has considered the impact of the pandemic on our ability to consume nor on how our relationships to objects or 'clutter' might have changed. The two panels in this webinar aim to explore new and shifting relationships to mass consumption and material objects. Together they aim to connect with recent ideas around 'wellness' and minimalism as responses to the pandemic and the ensuing sense of uncertainty and anxiety that has accompanied it.

13:00 – 13:05

Welcome and Introductions

13:05 – 14:25

Panel 1: Consumption During and in the Aftermath of Covid

i) Youth consumption in Italy after the Covid-19 pandemic

Dr Geraldina Roberti (Università Degli Studi Dell'Aquila, Italy)

ii) Changing Food Habits of Urban Middle-Class Youth In India: 'Ordering In'

Dr Rituparna Patgiri (University of Delhi, India)

iii) Class cleavages and self-making during the 2020 crisis lockdowns: Alcohol consumption, stockpiling, happiness and wellness for Australian women in midlife

Kristen Foley (Flinders University, Australia), Dr Belinda Lunnay (Torrens University, Australia) and Dr Paul Ward (Torrens University, Australia).

iv) Better get Toilet Paper, Lockdown is Coming! The Political and Social Significance of COVID-19 Panic Buying at retail space in South Africa, as represented on Twitter

Sean Thurtell (University of Witwatersrand, South Africa)

14:25 – 14:35

Comfort Break

14:35 – 15:55

Panel 2: Clutter and Minimalism: How Objects Come and Go

i) Hoarding Practices: Domestic Consumption Patterns, Discourses, and Embodied Performance

Tiffany Hall (University of Manitoba, Canada)

ii) Giving Benches, Pavements 'Free stores' and Middle-Class Irritation

Dr Dana Kaplan (The Open University of Israel)

iii) Producing Inconspicuous Luxury of Simplicity: Minimalist Interiors and Entrepreneurial subjectivity in China

Grace Tang (University of Essex)

iv) Being at Home in a Pandemic: shifts and continuities in our relationships to domestic objects

Prof Sophie Woodward (University of Manchester)

15:55 – 16:00 Closing Comments

16:00 Close

Future Plans:

Two of the convenors, Thomas Thurnell-Read and Emma Casey, who played crucial roles in establishing the group and taking a leading role in its management, have stepped down from their positions. We circulated a call for expressions of interest and recruited two new convenors to the group: Alexandra Kviat and Katie Appleford. The new team met in June to plan for future events.

We are currently planning to organize an online event in the upcoming fall on the topic of "Consumption and Third Spaces." This event will broadly focus on the evolving meanings and functions of pubs, restaurants, and the high street.

Additionally, we are planning to organize a face-to-face event after Easter, which will specifically concentrate on Teaching Consumption in various disciplines/subjects.

At the conclusion of the event, our goal is to initiate the compilation of a repository of teaching materials and pedagogical resources dedicated to interdisciplinary consumption studies.

Concluding remarks:

The year 2022 has presented challenges in terms of organizing research activities due to ongoing Industrial Action and Action Short of a Strike, which has impacted the research schedules of many colleagues. Despite this, we were able to successfully conduct a highly attended seminar before the escalation of the action. Furthermore, we have managed to expand our following on Twitter and through the Jiscmail platform.

Convenor contact details:

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Dr. Alexandra Kviat

Email: alkvyat@gmail.com (A new professional email will be added in August with the commencement of a new post at the University of Bristol.)

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