

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar

Will Consumers Rent What They Buy? How Decision-Making for Renting Differs from That for Buying

By

Prof. Claudia Townsend
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Date : 28 Apr 2025 (Monday)

Time : 9:30 am – 11:00 am

Venue : Zoom

Abstract

Overconsumption and waste are major global concerns. Replacing product purchase with rental would significantly reduce material consumption and the consequential environmental impacts. Fortunately, consumers increasingly choose to rent rather than buy. However, our knowledge of consumer decision-making when renting is limited, implicitly assuming it mimics that of purchase. This research identifies how consumers decide whether and what product to rent, and how these decisions differ from those of whether and what to buy. The authors show that when deciding whether to rent (vs. buy), consumers elaborate more on product usage and less on product attributes. These differences in elaboration then influence what product to choose; the greater relative elaboration on usage over attributes increases preference for few-featured products when renting compared to when buying. Nine experimental studies and one analysis of sales and rental data examine these differences in elaboration and product choice across acquisition modes. Ultimately this research provides managerial implications on how marketing messaging and product assortment for rental ought to differ from those for sale, giving a deeper understanding of consumer rental decision-making.

Prof. Claudia Townsend is an associate professor of marketing at the Miami Herbert Business School at the University of Miami. She performs research on consumer behavior and decision-making. Specifically, she examines how aesthetics and the visual presentation of information influences judgment and choice, sustainable consumption, and how people decide to donate. Her research has been published in the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, and *Journal of Marketing Research* among others. She currently serves as an Associate Editor for the *Journal of Marketing* and the *Journal of Marketing Research*. Prof. Townsend received her doctorate at UCLA's Anderson School of Management and her B.A. from Brown University graduating *magna cum laude* with honors.

All interested are welcome.



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