

# Marketing Psychology

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*Kathleen Vohs, Canada Research Chair in Marketing Science and Consumer Psychology in the Sauder School of Business, on how integrating psychology and marketing leads to great research.*

I think of my career goal as trying to integrate psychological science and consumer behavior to advance the understanding of human behavior. I think of my position as Canada Research Chair at the Sauder School of Business as attempting to understand consumption, broadly defined. By consumption, I mean consummatory behaviors such as eating, drinking, spending, and sexuality but also ideas, emotions, and motivations.

I use my background in social and personality psychology to develop new hypotheses and theories about how marketing factors and psychological processes interrelate. For instance, one new theory I have is about how money affects the self. The theory predicts — and current findings support — that money makes people feel separated from others, insofar as it changes responses to social situations that give an opportunity to be close to or apart from others.

Another theory I have recently developed is about how motivation for a certain outcome can gradually change in strength over time as a function of whether it is satisfied or frustrated. Specifically, it is proposed that satisfaction will increase the strength of the motivation, whereas non-satisfaction will weaken it gradually. This “getting begets wanting” theory has implications for both psychology and for marketing, and the interplay between the disciplines greatly helped inform the model.

My work on self-regulation (which was conducted in the realm of psychology before I took a position in marketing) has been spurred by my newfound knowledge of marketing science, as consumer behavior researchers have made great strides in developing models of impulsive versus non-impulsive behavior. As one extension of my self-regulation work, I have applied my working model of self-regulation to impulsive spending behavior; in another extension, my colleagues and I investigated how people make choices and the consequences thereof. In this latter work, we have found that making choices renders people less able to engage in effective self-control. In short, conducting research in both marketing and psychology has allowed me to see that there are vast areas of overlap in terms of the topics that each discipline studies, but also that there are spaces where tremendous advances in knowledge will be achieved when one field or the other contributes to that topic of study. There are terrific dialogues going on between the two disciplines, and I hope to tighten the associations between the two fields and push them to be even more integrated than they already are.