

Consumer Interest Research (CIR) Primer for Policy-Making Purposes

Based on a report prepared for Industry Canada

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INTRODUCTION

This report suggests content for a primer on consumer interest research (CIR) for policy-making purposes for members of the consumer policy community. It provides advice on which key consumer-related terminology policy makers should commonly understand in order to fully appreciate what CIR represents. With respect to this terminology, what concepts could be useful in order to communicate to readers the linkages between CIR and policy making, and the potential utility of CIR in policy making?

To that end, Section One presents a concise, two-page primer of the definitions and suggested relationships among six key CIR terms: consumer interest, consumer issues, consumer rights and responsibilities, consumer-business imbalances (often called marketplace failures in conventional economic theory), consumer protection, and consumer perspective (not necessarily in that order). Succinctly, the consumer interest is compromised when consumer-business imbalances lead to consumer issues (due to infringement of consumers' rights). If these issues are interpreted by consumer-focused researchers, using a consumer perspective lens (i.e., the CIR primer), the consumer policy community will have access to consumer interest research to inform consumer policy decisions and resultant Canadian consumer protection frameworks (see Figure 1). Section Two explores the breadth of related CIR disciplines.

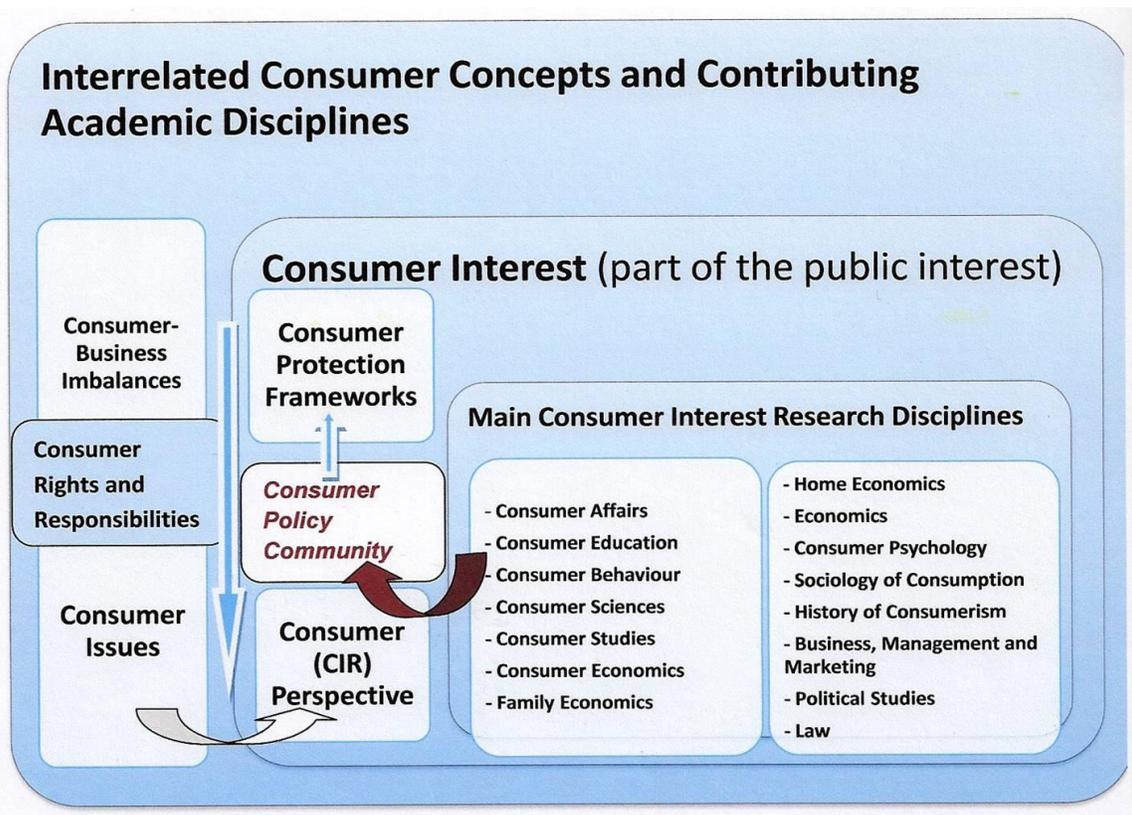


Figure 1 Interrelated Consumer Concepts and Contributing Academic Disciplines

SECTION ONE

CONSUMER INTEREST RESEARCH (CIR) CONCEPTS

An effective framework from which to analyze consumer protection issues depends upon both a clearly articulated understanding of what constitutes the consumer interest and the availability of rigorous CIR-related scholarship. This Primer provides definitions for six overarching concepts that shape any discussion of consumer interest-related research. Although stand-alone concepts; they are richly interconnected. The intent is to provide common understandings about what constitutes the consumer interest in exchanges among policy makers and between policy makers and CIR-related researchers. The work of the Canadian consumer policy community will be informed and enriched through these exchanges. As well, this will assist researchers in identifying aspects of their work as CIR scholarship.

Consumer Perspective

A consumer vantage point privileges the interests of consumers relative to business, with the intent of shedding insights into inequities, inefficiencies, malfunctions and deficiencies in the marketplace. Research generated from, or interpreted within, a consumer perspective is intended to aid policy makers, consumer educators and activists when helping consumers maintain their power in their relationship with businesses. If this power balance can be maintained, there is a reduced likelihood of consumer rights being infringed, consumer issues arising and the consumer interest being compromised.

Consumer-Business Imbalances

Conventional economic theory uses the concept of a marketplace failure to describe situations where consumers are harmed during a market transaction. This primer refers to this phenomenon as a consumer-business power imbalance. The interests of the consumer can be readily compromised due to a number of marketplace factors that cause an imbalance in the power relationship: (a) external contexts (e.g., social, economic, political and technological developments); (b) people's values and belief systems (including what it means to live in a consumer society); (c) the opportunities for harm when (mis)managing the many aspects of family household resources (e.g., credit, debt, wealth, retirement, insurance); (d) the (in)adequacy of consumer protection policies and consumer laws; and, (e) consumers' ability and propensity (or not) to participate in self-advocacy and activism (have a voice) (Bannister & Monsma, 1982).

McGregor (1996) provided a detailed discussion of four additional approaches to characterizing marketplace failures (citing original sources). Consumer problems can also arise due to both (f) inequity and unfairness during the transactional process and (g) inefficiency in the distribution of resources so the benefits outweigh the costs. Inequity arises from disreputable business behaviour and consumer exploitation, while inefficiency stems from mismanagement by either party. Consumers can also encounter problems when there are (h) issues with the actual transaction for a *specific* good or service, or (i) with the overall structure of the marketplace. The former can occur due to the vulnerability or inadequacies of particular consumer sectors, the behaviour of particular sellers (excessive or abuse of power), or both. The latter refers to the level and types of competition and to the degree and scope of state-provided consumer protection. Consumer-business imbalances can also occur (j) during one or more of the three basic stages of consumer-seller interactions for goods and services: pre-purchase, purchase (during) and post-purchase stages (Belobaba, 1985; McGregor, 2005a).

Consumer Rights and Responsibilities

To redress any power imbalance in the consumer-business relationship, consumer advocates spearheaded a social movement leading to a collection of eight consumer rights (1960s-1980s). These consumer rights are accompanied with attendant responsibilities. "Consumers have the right to...." is a common phrase in consumer interest scholarship. Any infringement of these consumer rights, or any irresponsible consumer action, can lead to situations not *in the best interest* of consumers (individuals or aggregate/groups) because they: (a) have not received any benefits; (b) are harmed, injured or left less secure or unprotected; (c) are disadvantaged, exploited or marginalized in some way (morally, personally, financially), or all three of these scenarios.

The right to satisfaction of basic needs - To have access to basic, essential goods and services: adequate food, clothing, shelter, health care, education, public utilities, water and sanitation.

The right to safety - To be protected against products, production processes and services that are hazardous to health or life.

The right to be informed - To be given the facts needed to make an informed choice, and to be protected against dishonest or misleading advertising and labelling.

The right to choose - To be able to select from a range of products and services, offered at competitive prices with an assurance of satisfactory quality.

The right to be heard - To have consumer interest represented in the making and execution of government policy, and in the development of products and services.

The right to redress - To receive a fair settlement of just claims, including compensation for misrepresentation, shoddy goods or unsatisfactory services.

The right to consumer education - To acquire knowledge and skills needed to make informed, confident choices about goods and services, while being aware of basic consumer rights and responsibilities and how to act on them.

The right to a healthy environment - To live and work in an environment that is non-threatening to the well-being of present and future generations.

Consumer Interest

If something is of *interest* to people, it benefits them or gives them an advantage. Succinctly, it is in the *best interest of consumers* (to their benefit or advantage) to have marketplace failures (the *conditions* that affect the realization of their interests) and resultant consumer issues (if a power imbalance arises) dealt with effectively and expediently, in a sustainable manner (Swagler, 1979). Aaker and Day (1974) clarified that the consumer interest entails knowing about both (a) the direct relationship between consumers and sellers and (b) the indirect, often latent, impact of this direct, reciprocal relationship on individuals and society. The latter illustrates how 'what constitutes *the consumer interest*' has broadened from a focus on the direct relationship between consumers and sellers to include major social issues, exacerbated by economic and fiscal policies as well as corporate and marketing behavior. These public interest issues with consumer overtones include, but are not limited to, pollution, social welfare, poverty, health care, telecommunications, and tariffs and trade (Leighton, 1974).

Three characteristics of the consumer interest make it hard to define (Nadel, 1971). First, because of its inherent link with the public interest, the consumer interest is considered to be *diffuse* (spread out over a large number of issues). The public interest refers to the common well-being or general welfare of the citizens of a nation. As such, consumer interests can be construed as widely shared, collective values, which have varying degrees of weight in the government's policy making process, as it wrestles with broader societal concerns. Second, because of people's involvement in many roles in their lives (e.g., worker, parent, spouse, care taker), their role as consumer is not necessarily always on their radar (*low intensity*, as per Nadel, 1971). Indeed, in a consumer society, the role of consuming can be, at the same time, ubiquitous and invisible, seldom thought about or reflected upon. Third, because the consumer interest tends to be a low-level, widely dispersed issue, until there is some crisis, the public tends to not make demands for their interest in their consumer role (*low priority*); they perceive that someone else is taking care of it, protecting them (Downs, 1961; Forbes, 1987; Nadel, 1971; Grønmo & Ölander, 1991).

Consumer Protection

If consumers' rights are infringed upon and/or if they act irresponsibly, consumers can be harmed. *Consumer protection* frameworks are designed to prevent businesses that engage in fraud or unfair practices from gaining an advantage over competitors, or from harming consumers. These frameworks often provide additional protection for the vulnerable consumer (e.g., disadvantaged, unable to take care of themselves, ill-prepared or irresponsible). Governments can use several policy instruments to design consumer protection frameworks including, but not limited to, competition policy; legislation requiring the provision of product and service information; advertising and marketing restrictions; consumer education; consumer information and programs; and, funding for consumer advocates who represent the consumer interest in the private and public policy arenas, dimensions of the public interest (McGregor, 2005b).

Consumer Issues

If the market economy does not function properly, it can result in an imbalance of power between the consumer and business, resulting in a *consumer issue* (Harris & Carmen, 1983). These issues can fall within the following eight problem areas (see consumer rights): (a) economic security/interest (financial security and privacy, and contractual and transactional fairness); (b) health and personal safety; (c) information asymmetry; (d) education (consumer and general); (e) competition (availability, choice, price and quality of a range of goods and services); (f) representation in the policy process; (g) redress; and, (h) environmental concerns (Mayer 1991b; McGregor, 1996, 2005a) (see Appendix).

Consumer issues can be aggravated for a number of reasons, thereby becoming visible problems and a part of public interest discourse. These precursors include: (a) the behaviour of the seller (manufacturer, marketer, retailer and service provider) leading to product- or service-related concerns; (b) the changing nature (demographics) and behaviour of the consumer; (c) the level and type of competition and other always-changing marketplace structural issues; (d) the import of technological innovations (e.g., internet privacy issues or unsafe drugs); (e) the pressure (or lack thereof) of media investigations; (f) the consequences of consumer interest groups' oversight and resultant allegations; and/or, (g) the inadequacy of existing consumer protection frameworks and consumer law to address power imbalances (see Mayer, 1991a).

SECTION TWO

SCOPE OF CONSUMER INTEREST RESEARCH (CIR) DISCIPLINES

As a tool for providing advice on the breadth of CIR disciplines, Section Two first identifies conventional, longstanding, explicitly consumer-focused disciplines. It is followed with a discussion of sister disciplines that either (a) have the consumer interest as their *raison d'être* or (b) conduct research that can be interpreted through a consumer perspective (CIR) lens.

Longstanding, Disciplines Explicitly Focused on the Consumer Interest

For the past 100 years, research about consumption has stemmed from two main disciplines: (a) consumer studies/sciences (including consumer policy and education) (a spin off from home economics) and (b) consumer behaviour research (a spin off from marketing). The

results of their respective research are used to shape consumer policy and consumer protection legislation and regulations, marketplace competition policy and regulations, consumer product and service information, media coverage of consumer issues, consumer education curricula and pedagogy, and insights into an evolving consumer culture (McGregor, 2013). The focus of each is now discussed.

Consumer Studies and Sciences

First, consumer studies and sciences are concerned about the interests and welfare of consumers. They focus on protecting the consumers' interest vis-à-vis business activities, often through consumer protection policy, corporate regulation policy, and consumer information and education. In addition to emphasizing inter-economic unit interactions (individuals and families interacting with businesses and governments to procure goods and services), these (sub)disciplines also focus on intra-family economics and resource management with the intention of ensuring economic *efficiency* and, more recently, ecological *effectiveness* and sustainability (McGregor, 2013).

Appreciating that there are several terms that can be used to label the interdisciplinary field concerned with consumers, an American university program audit concurred that five terms require distinctive definitions to better describe consumer-oriented higher education programs: family economics, consumer economics, consumer science, consumer studies and consumer affairs (Chenoweth, Eigsti & Stampfl, 1984). These terms are set out in Table 1, which also includes the terms consumer behaviour, consumer education, and consumer protection.

Chenoweth et al. (1984) concluded that whereas *consumer science* implies the application of the basic, pure, scientific method to study actual consumer behaviour and generate data, *consumer studies* implies an applied micro approach that uses the empirical findings from basic research to achieve the objective of working with families to enhance their economic security and well-being. *Consumer affairs* implies consumer activism and advocacy in the political arena and in the marketplace on behalf of consumers. These definitions have withstood the test of time; they are the gold standard for the discipline (see recent usage by Bailey, 2010).

Consumer Behaviour

Second, the (sub)discipline of *consumer behaviour* has its roots firmly entrenched in the discipline of marketing, and any new foci is heavily dependent upon the changing traditions of the marketing discipline (MacInnis & Folkes, 2010). "The consumer behaviour field is the study of people operating in a consumer role involving acquisition, consumption, and disposition of marketplace products, services, and experiences" (p. 900). Product decisions shape life for the consumer, and some argue they also move the economies of cities, countries and, ultimately, the world. All marketing decisions are based on assumptions and knowledge of consumer behavior. Researching consumer behavior is a complex enterprise incorporating ideas from several sciences including psychology, biology, sociology, chemistry and economics. Knowledge gained from consumer behavior research is used by businesses for many reasons, including enhancing the value of the company, gaining a competitive advantage, and for product development and marketing (Hawkins, Motherbaugh & Best, 2007). Aside from improving marketing strategies, consumer behaviour research also informs public policy (Perner, 2010). Home economists use consumer behaviour research to help consumers cope with these marketing strategies, in ways that protect their consumer interest.

Table 1 - Definitions of Longstanding, Explicitly Consumer-focused (Sub)Disciplines

Consumer Affairs	Consumer affairs is a field concerned with policy development as well as consumer activism, liaisons and advocacy.
Consumer Studies	Consumer studies refers to the study, via an interdisciplinary, <i>applied</i> , micro approach, of the interaction of the consumer with economic, social and political systems while making consumer decisions (see also Widdows & Bryant, 1993).
Consumer Science	Chenoweth et al. (1984) amalgamated consumer economics and family economics and coined the term <i>consumer science</i> , which they defined as an interdisciplinary field that applies the (<i>basic</i>) scientific method to the analysis of economic, social and political actions and interactions of consumer with the market and their use/consumption of those products and services through the exchange process.
Widdows and Bryant (1993) did not merge consumer economics and family economics with consumer science, per the definition above. They suggested that consumer economics and family economics can be perceived as integral, but distinct, parts of the same field of study. Both streams of study are concerned with the study of individuals and families in their interaction with markets for consumer goods and services, but they go about it differently:	
Consumer Economics	<i>Consumer economics</i> focuses on household economic decisions in the marketplace (consumer decision making and marketplace issues). Shepard (1978) agreed that <i>consumer economics</i> is involved with economic interactions between consuming units and their environments (outside the home)
Family Economics	<i>Family economics</i> focuses on family management of resources to enhance well-being at home and in the work force (intrafamily allocation and behavioral issues). Shepard (1978) agreed that <i>family economics</i> is involved with economic interactions <i>within</i> consuming units (within the home).
Consumer Education	Consumer education is concerned with empowering consumers as economic agents in the marketplace. It is "the process of gaining the knowledge and skills needed in managing consumer resources and taking actions to influence the factors which affect consumer decisions" (Bannister & Monsma, 1982, p.5).
Consumer Behaviour	Consumer behaviour, stemming from the marketing discipline, is "the study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes they use to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society" (Hawkins, Motherbaugh & Best, 2007, p. 6). Aside from improving marketing strategies, consumer behaviour research also informs public policy (Perner, 2010).
Consumer Protection	Based on the assumption that if consumer rights are infringed upon consumers will be harmed, governments can choose to implement consumer policy frameworks that serve to protect consumers from the actions of business (keep them safe from harm or injury). Consumer protection can also be asserted through consumer activism as well as through pro-active, educated consumers who protect themselves (McGregor, 2005b).

In conclusion, the longstanding (sub)disciplines of consumer-focused research (Table 1) deeply inform consumer affairs, indeed provide the content and context from which consumer affairs research is conducted and policy decisions are made by the consumer policy community (see Figure 2). But, there are other disciplines that also have rich potential for bringing a consumer perspective to consumer issues (see next).

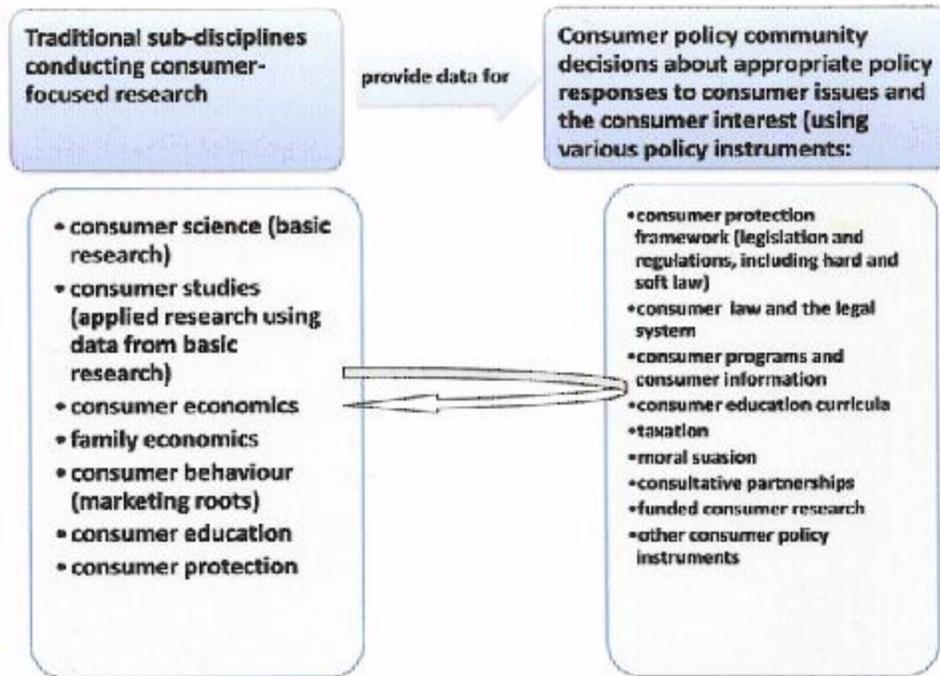


Figure 2 Consumer (Sub) Disciplines Contribute to Consumer Policy Community Discourse and Decisions

Well-Established Academic Disciplines also Conducting CIR-Related Research

Table 1 profiled seven longstanding (sub)disciplines traditionally involved with consumer interest research, intentionally focused on the consumer interest. In addition to these seven (sub)disciplines, there are well-established sister disciplines that also focus on some aspects of the consumer interest. These disciplines include: home economics (human ecology, family and consumer sciences), economics, psychology, sociology, history, business, political studies, and law. Table 2 summarizes their main contributions to consumer interest research. These eight disciplines, along with the seven traditional consumer-focused (sub)disciplines, form a foundation for the proposed CIR disciplines.

Table 2 - Well-Established Academic Disciplines and Their Consumer Interest Foci

Discipline	Discipline's Consumer Interest Focus
Home Economics	All individuals and family members in the Canadian society are consumers. Home economics is concerned with how the well-being, quality of life and standard of living of families is shaped by their consumer decision making and behaviour as well as by the actions of businesses, governments, and consumer advocates. Of relevance to the consumer interest is home economics' focus on money, debt and credit management, resource management decisions, household budgeting, a wide array of household expenditures, and family dynamics.
Economics	Economists analyze the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. They study how economies work (some focus on households) and on how economic agents interact. Economic analysis, whether it be micro (markets and households) or macro (national economic growth, monetary and fiscal policy and business cycles) is applied throughout society. Agri-economists focus on farms, land usage and animals. Environmental economics, rural economics, labour economics and welfare economics all have potential to inform consumer policy decisions.
Consumer Psychology (focus on individual)	Consumer behaviour is an internal, psychological phenomenon. Consumer psychology concerns psychological perspectives on the study of the consumer, with a focus on psychological processes underlying consumers' thoughts, feelings, decisions, and behaviours. Scholars are interested in consumer judgment and decision processes, attitude formation and change, reactions to persuasive communications, affective experiences, consumer information processing, consumer-brand relationships, affective, cognitive, and motivational determinants of consumer behavior, family and group decision processes, and cultural and individual differences in consumer behavior.
Sociology of Consumption (focus on collectives)	Consumer behaviour is socially and culturally embedded. The sociology of consumption focuses on the social trend of consumption and the emergence of a consumer culture and society. It focuses on the materialistic (mass) culture of advanced capitalist societies. They view consumption as a <i>social problem</i> that warrants attention, because the emergence of a consumer society is affecting the entire world. They contend that, just as production did, consumption shapes social relations and social meanings. Scholars are interested in a critical analysis of the consumer culture and of the processes of consumption. They delve into citizenship, cosmopolitanism and consumption, the politics of consumption, globalization and consumption, and they relate the patterns of consumption to politics, economics and the culture of dissatisfaction, alienation and discontent.
History of Consumerism	Consumer behaviour is embedded in our story. Historians explore the trajectory of the evolution of a consumer society as it reflects changes in the relationship between production and consumption, tracing its history from the mid-19th century to present day. They assume consumerism is an organized socio-political movement worthy of scholarly study because it sheds insights into the persistent presence of the politics of consumption in contemporary society. They often focus on the struggles and victories of consumer advocates pursuant to the creation of consumer protection frameworks and mindsets in society and in politics. Links are often made between the consumer movement and other aligned movements: human rights, labour, environment, gender, and development. Historians are intrigued with how consumers continue to mobilize to debate the shape, structure and extent of the society being built in their name.

Business, Management and Marketing	Business and marketing scholars strive to better understand how and why consumers buy (or not) things so this process can be manipulated and influenced with <i>buy-me-messaging</i> via packaging, advertising and marketing. Using their market research, they make decisions about product R&D, manufacturing, marketing, and retailing, decisions that impinge on the consumer interest. They are keen to profile the changing character of their customers and the marketplace in general so they can efficiently and effectively engage in profitable transactions. These scholars also investigate changing modes of production and exchanges (e.g., e-commerce) (supply side dynamics of the marketplace).
Political Studies	In modern societies, private consumption is a ubiquitous social practice and an economic driving force; this consumer-focused behavior is a social and economic phenomenon that has political significance. Political studies scholars strive to reveal the relationships underlying political events and conditions. Some scholars study consumer policy and consumer protection infrastructures, with a focus on the political decision making processes, cultures and governance models. They study trade arrangements as influenced by government policies. Political studies is concerned with studying the state, governments and politics (activities associated with governing). The latter all influence consumer policy and protection initiatives.
Law	Law is a system of rules and guidelines, which are enforced through social institutions to govern behavior, wherever possible. It shapes politics, economics and society in numerous ways and serves as a social mediator of relations between people. <i>Consumer laws</i> regulate private relationships between individual consumers and the businesses that sell goods and services. The laws focus on, among other things, product liability, unfair business practices, fraud, misrepresentation and other aspects of the consumer/business interactions (transactions), including bankruptcy.

Conclusion

Using the data in Tables 1 and 2 can assist in gaining a better sense of the breadth of academic disciplines that have the potential to contribute consumer interest research for the consumer policy community's use in consumer policy making and analysis. There are a total of 15 disciplines. The inclusive nature of this collection reflects valuable contextual information related to society, personal psychology, politics and the historical nuances of living in a consumer society, as well as the strength of education to empower consumers in the marketplace. Note that scholars who are focused on consumer affairs, science, studies, education and economics, and family economics and resource management (Table1) tend to be found in home economics departments, economics departments or business schools (Table 2).

consumer affairs/protection (consumer policy development and consumer advocacy/representation)

consumer science (basic empirical science approach to study interactions of consumers in the marketplace and their consumption of goods and services through the exchange process)

consumer studies (applied science approach to study interactions of consumers with economic, social and political systems while making consumer decisions)

family economics and resource management (intrafamily family resource allocation and consumer behaviour issues, inside the home; can include the work force)

consumer economics (interactions between household/family consuming units and their environments outside the home, especially, the marketplace)

consumer education (teaching people how to be empowered and to succeed in their consumer role; focus on rights and responsibilities, and consumer-citizen participation)

consumer behaviour (processes consumers use to engage in market transactions, and the influence of psychology, sociology and culture on consumer decisions)

home economics (impact of consumer decisions on well-being, quality of life and standard of living)

economics (how economies work (micro and macro) and how economic agents interact; marketplace, competition and trade dynamics from an economic perspective)

consumer psychology (internal processes underlying consumer's thoughts, feelings and decisions)

sociology of consumption (consumption, consumerism, a consumer society and consumer culture as a social problem and phenomenon)

history of consumerism (consumerism as a social-political movement)

business, management, marketing (know customers and run business to make profit for any goods and services provided to the marketplace; advertising, marketing, retailing)

political studies (political dynamics underlying consumer issues and any marketplace, competition and trade dynamics)

law (regulation of transactions between consumers and sellers)

Figure 3 Overview of 15 Consumer Interest-Related (Sub)Disciplines and Their CIR Foci

In addition, there are a number of other disciplines (e.g., medicine (health), information technology, biotechnology, agriculture, international development) where scholars are investigating social and technological phenomena and innovations that have implications on the consumer interest, often manifested through the development of new products and services. Interest in CIR scholarship should also consider remaining open to the contributions of these aligned researchers.

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Appendix

Consumer Rights and Responsibilities

Consumer Rights

In efforts to ensure the consumers' interest is respected and protected, that people can maintain an advantage and gain benefits from their marketplace transactions (and get good value for their dollar), a globally recognized set of consumer rights was developed (see Table 1), inspired by John F. Kennedy's 1962 "Consumer Address." Right is Old English *reht*, be just. A right refers to the moral or legal entitlement to have or obtain something or some action by others. If people have a right to something, they are owed it; it is their due (Latin *debere*, to owe) (Harper, 2010). "Consumers have the right to...." is a common phrase in consumer scholarship. Any infringement of these consumer rights leads to situations not *in the best interest* of consumers (individuals or aggregate, objective or subjective) because they (a) have not received any benefits; (b) are harmed or injured or left less secure or protected; (c) are disadvantaged, exploited or marginalized in some way (morally, personally, financially), or all three.

Table 1 Basic Consumer Rights (Consumers International, 2011)

<p>The right to satisfaction of basic needs To have access to basic, essential goods and services: adequate food, clothing, shelter, health care, education, public utilities, water and sanitation.</p> <p>The right to safety To be protected against products, production processes and services that are hazardous to health or life.</p> <p>The right to be informed To be given the facts needed to make an informed choice, and to be protected against dishonest or misleading advertising and labelling.</p> <p>The right to choose To be able to select from a range of products and services, offered at competitive prices with an assurance of satisfactory quality.</p> <p>The right to be heard To have consumer interest represented in the making and execution of government policy, and in the development of products and services.</p> <p>The right to redress To receive a fair settlement of just claims, including compensation for misrepresentation, shoddy goods or unsatisfactory services.</p> <p>The right to consumer education To acquire knowledge and skills needed to make informed, confident choices about goods and services, while being aware of basic consumer rights and responsibilities and how to act on them.</p> <p>The right to a healthy environment To live and work in an environment that is non-threatening to the well-being of present and future generations.</p>

Consumer Responsibilities

These consumer rights are accompanied with attendant responsibilities (see Table 2). Responsible is Latin *respondere*, to pledge back, with a sense of obligation (Harper, 2010). Consumer responsibilities are actions that all consumers should take before, during and after they engage in consumption activities. Consumers International developed five overarching consumer responsibilities instead of pairing each right with a responsibility, per Table 2. Responsible consumers will respect (Fazal, 2011):

- ***Critical Awareness*** - The responsibility to be more alert and to always question the use, price and quality (and other criteria) of the goods and services they use.
- ***Assertive Action*** - The responsibility to assert themselves and to act to ensure that they get equitable treatment (everyone treated the same) and a fair and just deal (equity). Passivity leads to continued exploitation.
- ***Social Concern*** - The responsibility to be aware of the impact of their consumption on *other citizens*, especially disadvantaged or powerless groups, whether in the local, national or international community.
- ***Environmental Awareness/Intergenerational Equity*** - The responsibility to understand the environmental consequences of their consumption. They should recognize their individual and social responsibility to conserve natural resources, protect non-human species and protect the earth for future generations.
- ***Solidarity*** - The responsibility to organize together as consumers to develop their strength and influence, and to promote and to protect collective interests.

Table 2 Consumer Responsibilities Directly Corresponding to Consumer Rights

Safety	- read instructions on products and use them as intended. Check the qualifications of service providers
Information	- ask for and critique information
Choice	- compare prices (and other criteria), find out about differences between products and services and make informed decisions
Be Heard	- make needs and expectations known to vendors and to the government
Redress	- insist on a fair and reasonable deal if not satisfied with the purchase; seek redress and complain so sellers' practices can change and those at fault can be penalized
Consumer Education	- seek education programs, advocate for inclusion of consumer education in public school systems, inform oneself about goods and services to be purchased, and continually ask questions and critique the marketplace
Healthy Environment	- help build a healthy environment by conserving natural resources and choosing products and services that do not harm the environment (or other species), now or in the future (sustainability)