



Ethical Consumerism Path to Purchase: Research Needs of Practitioners

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Agenda

- Definitions
- Literature Review
- Presentation of Empirical Research
- Questions & Proposals
- Next Steps
- Feedback



ETHICAL CONSUMER

- Socially conscious consumer: takes into account the public consequences of his or her private consumption/ attempts to use his or her purchasing power to bring about social change (Webster, 1975).
- Consumers who are mindful of the consequences their consumption practices have on the environment, on animals, and on other human beings (Harrison et al., 2007; Lewis and Potter, 2011).

ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

- “the purchase of a product that concerns a certain ethical issue and that a consumer chooses freely” (Doane, 2001).
- Consumer action involves such behavior as lobbying or direct action, negative ethical purchase behavior involves not buying unethical goods (boycotting), and positive ethical purchase behavior involves the consumption of goods with an ethical attribute. (Doran & Natale, 2011).



Literature Review

- Ethical Purchasing Gap
- Theoretical underpinnings
- Demographics

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Ethical Purchasing Gap

- 29% of consumers questioned in 2014 in the UK answered that they tend to agree with the statement “I try to buy products from companies that try to act in an ethical way, even if it means spending more” (Ipsos, 2014).
- In the UK retail food sector only 8.5% of purchases are considered to be ethical in 2015 (Defra, 2015).

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Theoretical Underpinnings

- Theory of Reasoned Action: Fishbein & Ajzen (1975): behavioural intention as the determinant of behavior. Attitude towards the behaviour and subjective norm (SN) as the two determinants of intention
- Theory of Planned Behaviour extending the TRA to include a measure of perceived behavioural control (PBC) that accounts for behaviours out-with individuals' volitional control
- Consumer ethics (Fukukawa 2002): addition of perceived unfairness
- Ethical consumerism (Shaw et al, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003): addition of ethical obligation and self-identity
- Neutralisation (Chatzidakis 2007): “mechanism that facilitates behaviour that is either norm violating or in contravention of expressed attitudes”
- Chatzidakis et al. 2016: Internal ethics, attitude, perceived difficulty, ambivalence, past behaviour

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Demographics & Behaviour

- No gender differences in ethical consumption (Tsalikis and Ortiz-Buonafina, 1990) ¹
- No relationship between income and ethical consumption ¹
- Positive relationship among education and ethical consumption (Vittel et al., 2005) ¹
- For fair-trade products, higher frequency of Caucasian women purchasing (Doran, 2009) ³
- Ethical sensitivity is reported to be lower among consumers' age (Hines and Ames) ²
- Greater among women (Parker, 2002) ²
- Ethical sensitivity rises with affluence (Barnett et al., 2005) ²
- Greater at lower educational levels (Dickson, 2005) ²
- Age, gender, race, education or marital status were proven to be poor predictors for Fair Trade consumption.

CONFUSING AND CONTRADICTIONARY RESULTS

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¹ De Pelsmacker et al., 2005

² Bray et al, 2011

³ Doran 2009, p. 558



Empirical Research

- Further to our literature review, we found no research on practitioners' understanding and research needs
- Risk of „relevance gap“
- 8 one-to-one, semi-structured interviews conducted in Cologne, Bonn, Brussels and Utrecht
- Duration: 45 minutes
- Mid- and senior-level Fairtrade marketers
- Analysis in Atlas.ti 8

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Relevance Gap

Researcher	Research Objective	Validity
Practitioners	Idiographic	Local
Academic Researchers	Nomothetic	Global

Source: Based on Cornelissen (2002), p. 135.

- Relevance is defined as the level of interest that the findings of a piece of research have for the actors involved (Usunier, 2006)
- Kumar (2017) proposes a rigour and relevance approach, instead of a rigour versus relevance approach in business research: “**scholars have identified the need for theory to drive practice and for practice to spur theory development**”

Definitions

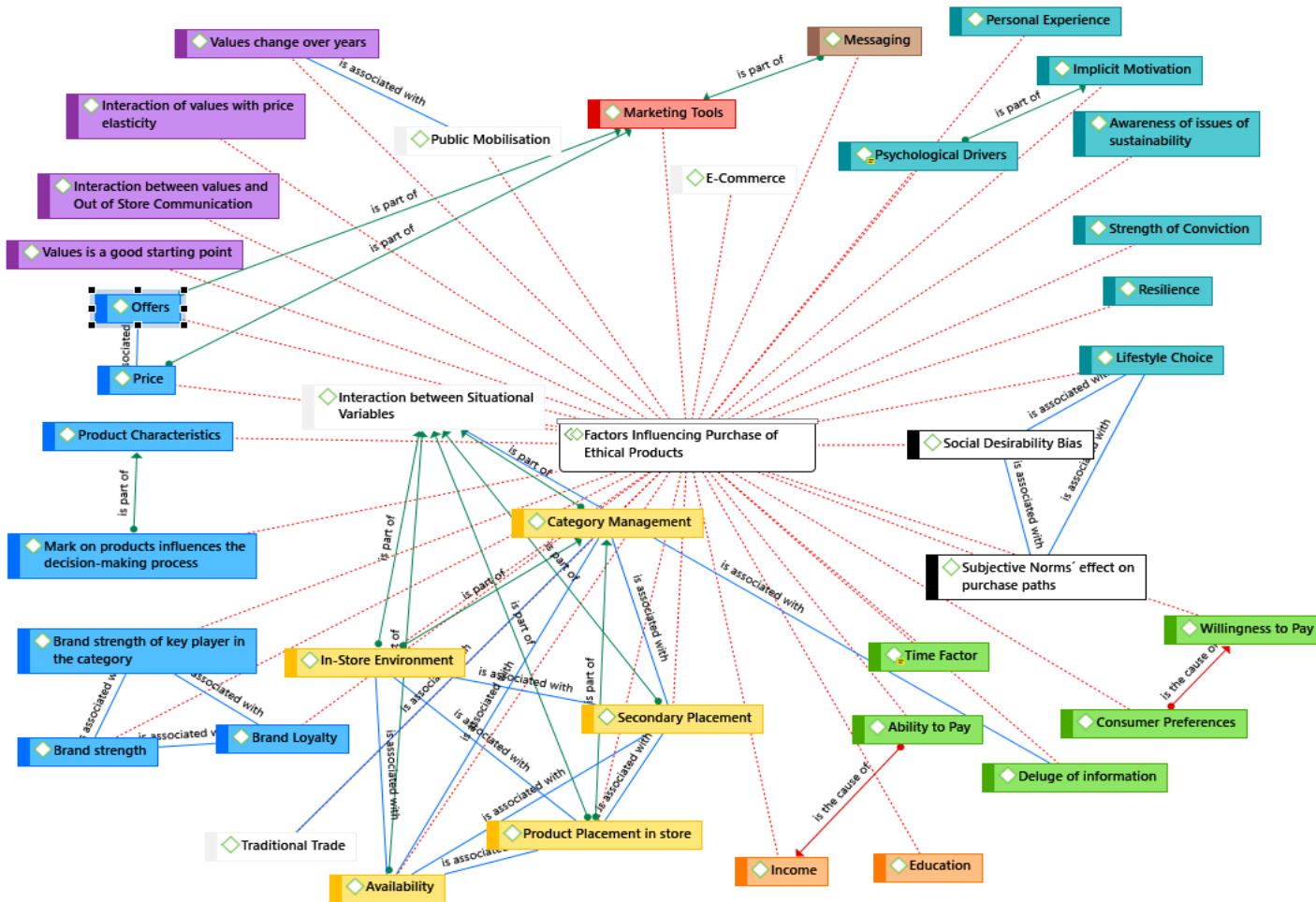
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Moderators of ethical purchasing gap



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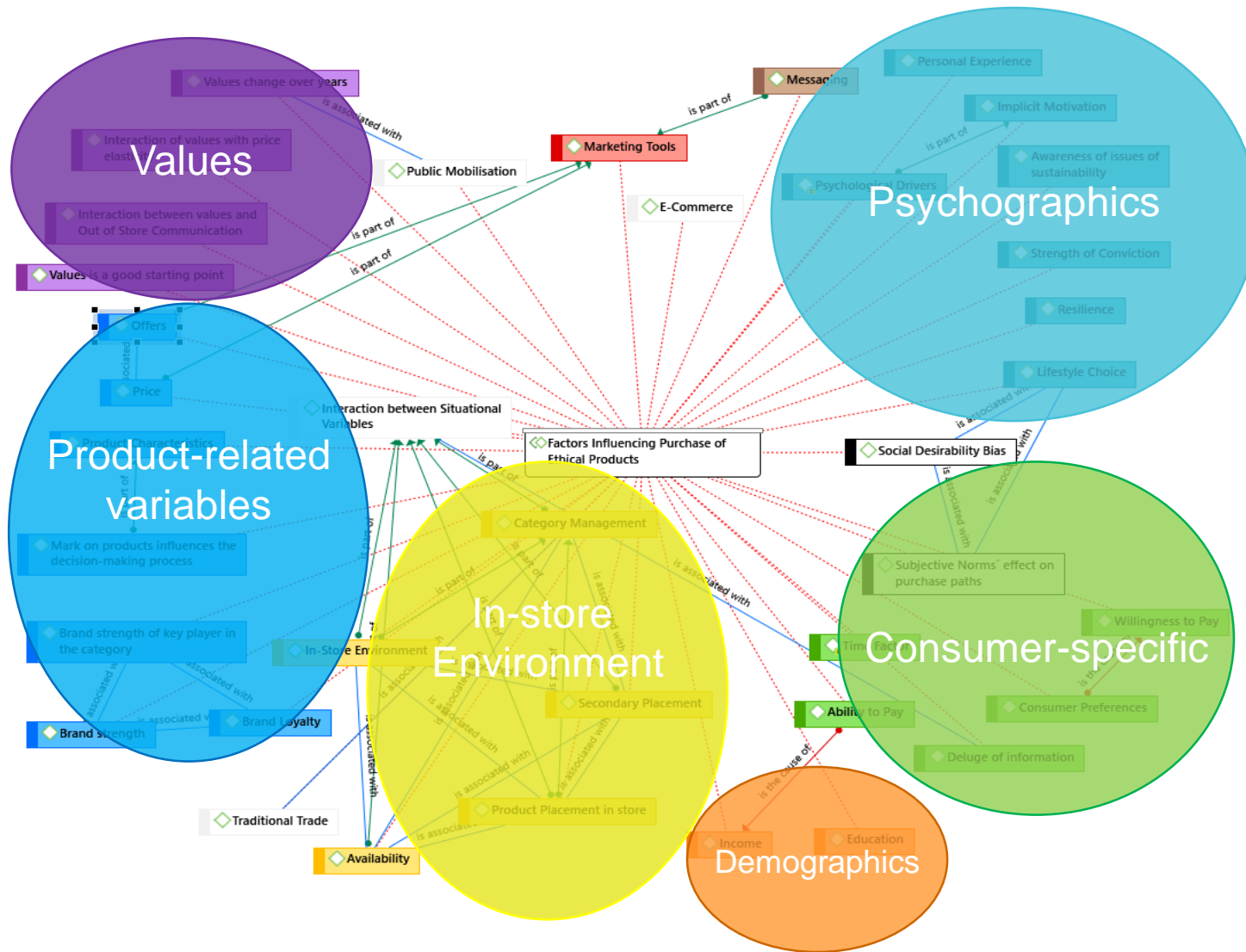
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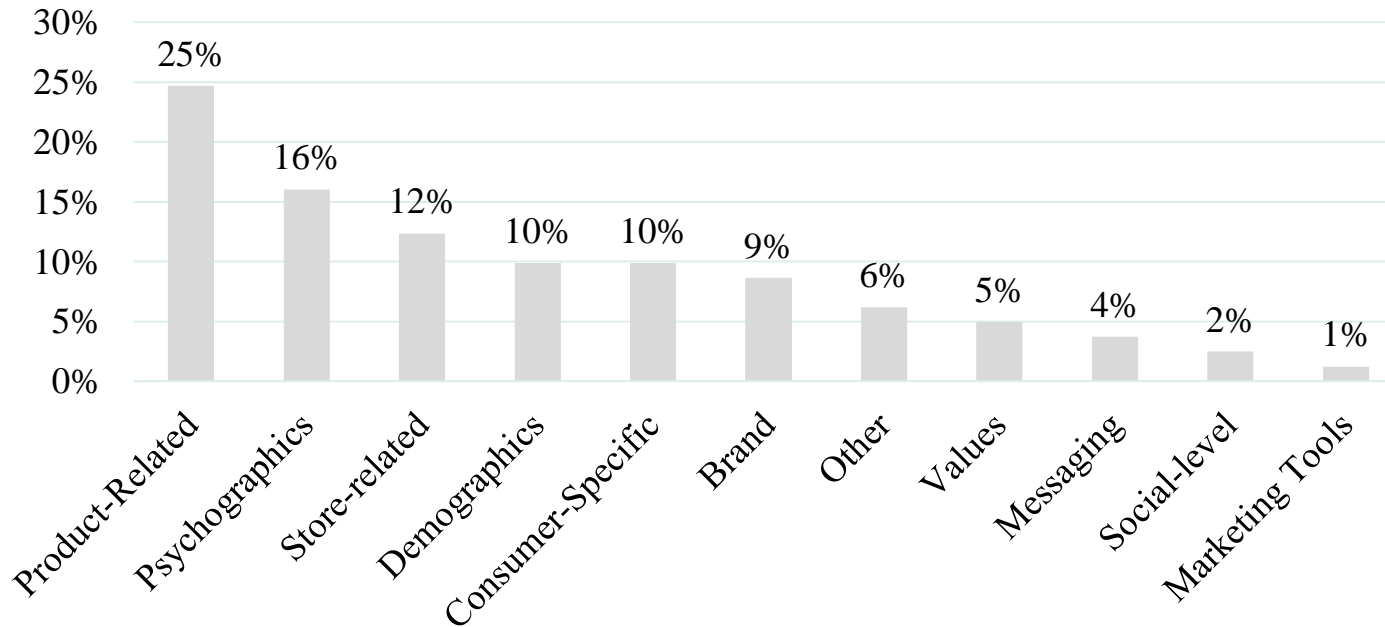
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Moderators: Frequency

Frequency



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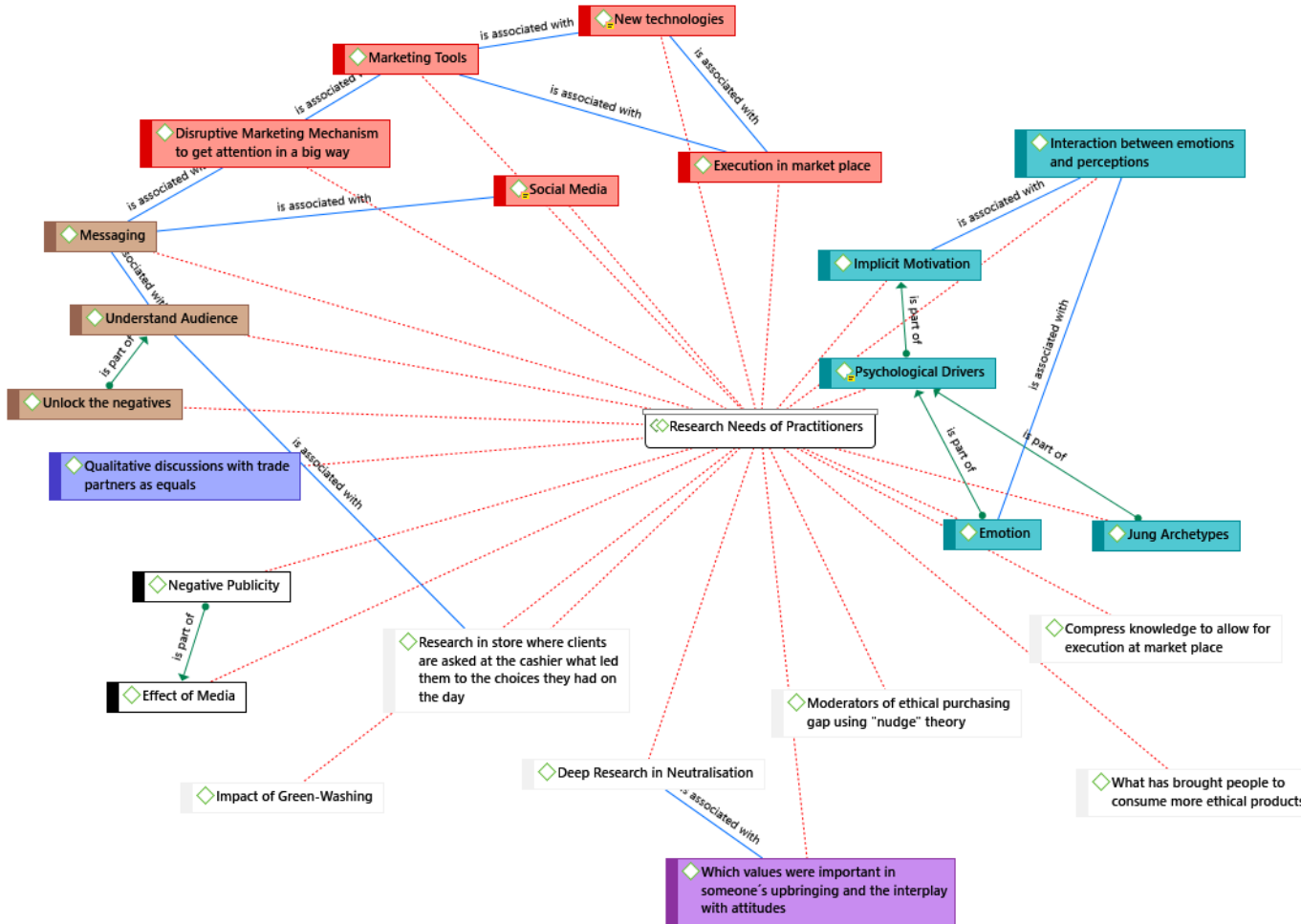
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Research Needs



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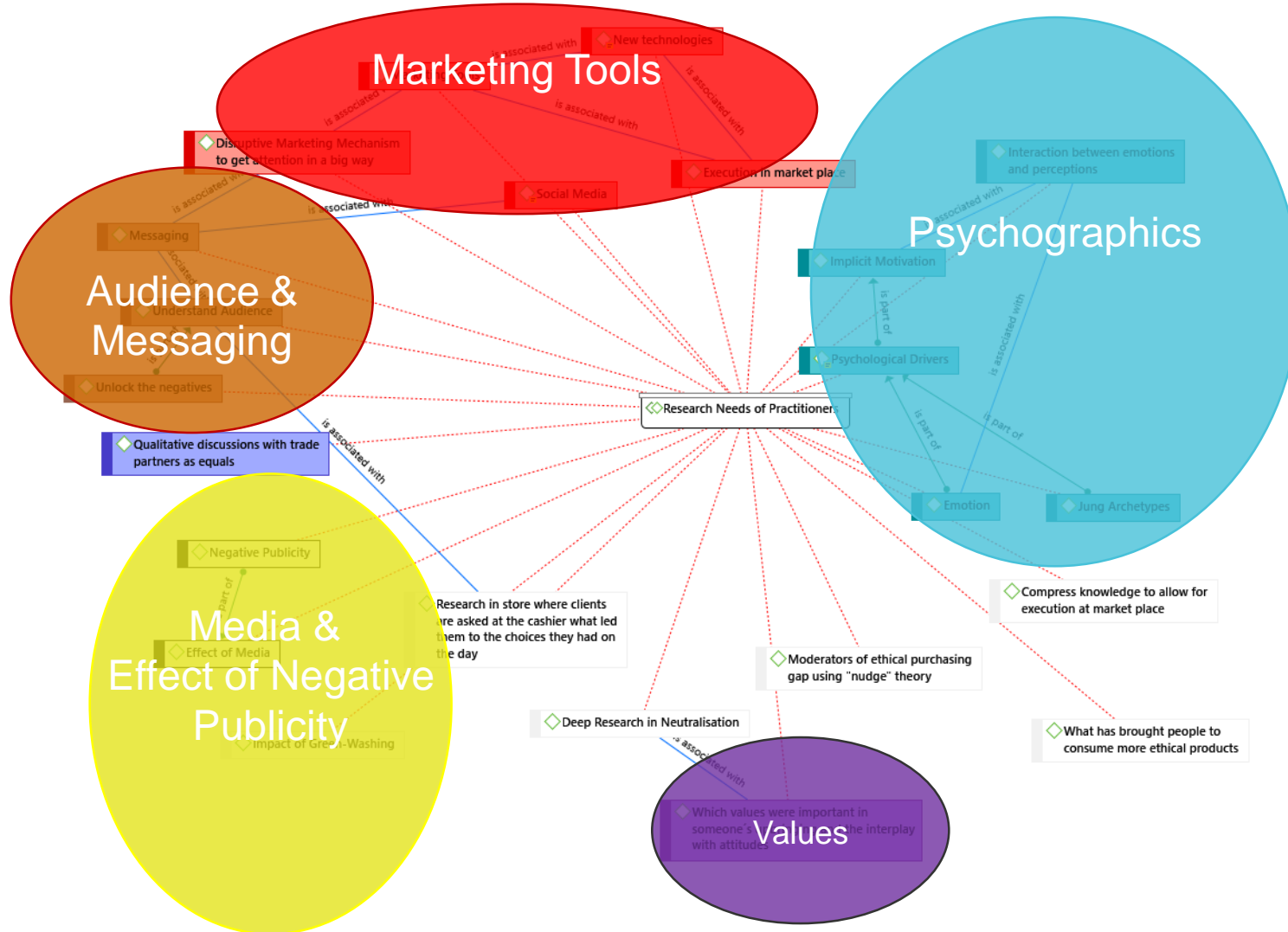
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Questions & proposals

- There is a gap between the understanding of practitioners and academics
- What are the necessary steps in research in order to address the gap?

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Next Steps

- Identify existing consumer research: scales, dimensions, methodology
- Overlay with findings from qualitative research
- Develop survey:
 - Consumer Survey: definition of constructs, variables, scales and methodology (data, categories, and analytical techniques).

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
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FEEDBACK?