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Constructing Consumer Knowledge in Market Research

An Ethnography of Epistemics

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Market research pervades society. It is an endeavour that connects marketing practice with methods similar to social science. Further, market research results in materials that appear as knowledge produced to inform recipients towards making productive business decisions as well as a commodity to sell to clients. This thesis suggests that such commissioned knowledge production must be approached both as the making and the marketing of market research material. Approaching the knowledge making as cultural, the thesis is an ethnographic inquiry into market research work and the researchers who undertake it. Based on fieldwork with Swedish firm 'Norna' and industry handbooks, the thesis studies the epistemic practices and epistemology of market research, how market researchers consider their work influenced by the relations that they maintain and how ideas and practices in market research inform understanding of commissioned knowledge production.

The thesis informs a further understanding of market research and its techniques by means of engaging with how its researchers view this activity. Further it challenges the social study of knowledge production by showing how in this case it includes concerns that are not simplistically commercial or epistemic.

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