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Anna Schneider-Kamp is a researcher in the Health domain of the Consumption, Culture and Commerce group at the University of Southern Denmark. Her primary line of research explores the everyday practices of primary health-care from a patient and consumer perspective, both when interacting with health professionals and when performing self-care.

In particular, she investigates how patients are adopting the role of responsible consumers of health-care, how digital health inspires patients to build counter-expertise and to resist medical authority, how healthcare is consumed in geriatric care, and how consumers navigate cultural norms and health standards.

Anna holds MSc degrees in Economics and Business Administration as well as Political Science and draws upon theories, results, and methods from consumer research, medical sociology, and medical anthropology.



PhD Dissertation of

## Anna Schneider-Kamp

Department of Marketing & Management,  
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### Everyday Practices of Primary Healthcare

#### A Consumer Perspective on Tactics and Empowerment

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PhD

# Everyday Practices of Primary Healthcare

## A Consumer Perspective on Tactics and Empowerment

Driven by a need for optimising resource allocation in public health, nation states in Northern Europe are increasingly viewing healthcare as a market, with health professionals in the role of service providers and patients in the role of consumers. Health policies aimed at involving and empowering patients as well as broader societal trends such as consumerism and the proliferation of information and communication technologies into everyday life are assigning a more active role to patients. These joint developments are resulting in a significant redistribution of medical responsibility, one that poses opportunities and challenges to healthcare systems.

This study adopts the view of patients as consumers to explore the everyday practices of primary healthcare beyond the institutionalised and well-studied consultations with general practitioners, paving novel ways to understand the role of consumerism in healthcare and patient empowerment as well as initiating a discussion of the positive and negative consequences of considering patients as consumers. The qualitative data underlying this thesis was collected through anthropological methods from a total of 44 key informants in the context of the tax-financed egalitarian Danish healthcare system in the years 2012–2017.

The findings suggest that individuals' everyday practices of primary healthcare outside of institutionalised settings are governed by at least four different tactics, two of which are based on

consumerism and provide fertile grounds for empowerment. Practices of medicine and medical services consumption seem to be at least as much explained by logics based on consumer choice and self-care as by logics based on professional care and patient choice. The online access to medical information and peers increases consumer choice, cultivates community building, fosters practices of self-care, and facilitates the production of counter-expertise. The latter enables individuals to resist medical authority, thereby challenging existing norms of the patient-physician relationship.

The thesis employs de Certeau's distinction between strategies and tactics to arrive at a view of individual empowerment as emergent from a bricolage of tactical interactions with social environments rather than as the result of strategic initiatives. In order to distinguish between the tactics found, an existing model of patient empowerment is extended to encompass the autonomous healthcare capacity of individuals. These results are generalised by introducing a notion of "health capital" as a field-dependent capital capturing the capacity of an individual to nurture their health, extending previous purely economic and cultural notions by unifying economic, social, and cultural assets.

These results demonstrate the value of combining multiple research perspectives for the study of societal challenges. Everyday practices of primary care provide an interesting and societally

relevant context for consumer research, opening a path for consumer research on health away from more commonly explored contexts such as chronic disease management and healthy eating. Furthermore, the thesis demonstrates how a consumer perspective allows for understanding health-related everyday practices incorporating resistance to medical authority as empowered acts of self-care rather than as non-compliance.

Two key contributions of the thesis, tactical empowerment and health capital, provide a framework for understanding the mixed success of strategic patient empowerment initiatives as misalignments and misconceptions about the boundaries of professional and individual medical responsibility. Consumerism as well as information and communication technologies are rapidly expanding the latter, shattering the modern medical institutions in the process. This thesis provides a ground for nuancing the understanding of the role of consumerism and empowerment in the field of primary healthcare, creating new opportunities for an informed realignment of the boundaries of medical responsibility and, ultimately, a renegotiation of the social contracts surrounding the socially constructed sick role.

*Anna Schneider-Kamp*

## Department of Marketing & Management

The Department of Marketing & Management is a department under the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences.

The department houses both quantitative and qualitative research and aims to build a bridge between applied research and fundamental research. The department's activities are organised into five research units: Consumption, Culture and Commerce; Strategic Organization Design; Centre for Integrative Innovation Management; Management of People; and International Business and Entrepreneurship.

The Department of Marketing & Management offers a wide range of programmes on the undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education levels: BSc and MSc in Economics and Business Administration, MSc in Market & Management Anthropology, Graduate Diploma in Business Administration (HD), and Master of Business Administration (MBA). The department also contributes to MA in Business Language and Culture and BSc in Media Science.

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