

Jobs-to-be-done Theory and Application

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Christensen, Anthony, Berstell, and Nitterhouse (2007) introduce the **Jobs-to-be-done (JTBD) theory** in which the authors argue that consumers **have one or more problem(s)** (a “**job**” to be done). By definition, a job is “a fundamental problem a customer needs to resolve in a given situation” (Christensen et al., 2007: 38).

Jobs-To-Be-Done (JTBD) Theory

In order to solve their problem(s), consumers **hire (e.g., purchase) a product and/or service** that best possible supports them in getting their job done. Through its **usage**, the consumer fulfills his/her job. Hence, the **product and/or service is a vehicle to solve the problem**.

Furthermore, jobs depend on the consumer’s **situation** (Anthony, Johnson, Sinfield, & Altman, 2008; Anthony & Sinfield, 2007; Christensen et al., 2007). As such, consumers might have different jobs when they are accompanied by others (e.g., in a shopping situation as opposed to when they are alone). Jobs can be **categorized into three types** (Christensen, Cook, & Hall, 2005, p. 2; Silverstein, Samuel, & DeCarlo, 2009, p. 4):

1. **Functional**: relate to the task a consumer aims to accomplish (e.g. cleaning the house).
2. **Personal**: comprise how consumers feel and think about themselves (e.g., feeling proud).
3. **Social**: depict how consumers want to be perceived by social others (e.g. being a great entertainer).

Jobs-to-be-done Method

For marketers, it is **important to identify what problems their consumers have** in order to purposefully develop and provide products and services. Therefore, marketers are advised to act as “investigative reporters” (Christensen et al., 2007: 42) by going through the following **three steps**:

1. **Identify** what “jobs” consumers have: The JTBD **method** serves well to explore consumer’s problems. In doing so, not only “what” but especially “why” questions become the focal point of analysis. Often consumers cannot articulate the job they have because they might not yet be aware of it. Asking “why” questions helps to shed light

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on this. In addition, marketers should **observe** their consumers to find out what job they aim to fulfill when using a product or service. Qualitative methods such as brainstorming, in-depth interviews, focus groups, or observations are most suitable (Anthony et al., 2008, p. 98-102; Christensen et al., 2007, p. 42).

2. **Understand what „jobs“ consumers have:** For what job does the consumer use the product or service? This includes that marketers should primarily understand in which **situation** their **current consumers** use their products or services which emphasizes the need for observing consumers (Christensen et al., 2007, p 41). In addition, marketers should also understand why consumers buy **competing instead of their own products or services** to get their jobs done. In other words, what is missing in their products/services so that consumers do not use their products/services? Furthermore, based on the gained understanding marketers should **categorize the identified jobs**.
3. **Provide the product or service** needed for the consumer to get their job done

Building on the findings, marketers can develop **solutions** that help their consumers to adequately address their job(s). If a product or service **already exists** marketers should extend it in that it better supports the consumer in getting their jobs done. If marketers discover **new consumer jobs** for which there is no solution (products or services) yet, they should develop them accordingly.

Applications

1. **Fostering product and service innovation:** Anchored in innovation management, the JTBD theory has originally been applied to derive **innovation potential** and product **modification** (e.g., Christensen et al., 2007; Kavanagh, Walther, & Nicolai, 2010). However, this is not limited to products but also applies to **services**.
2. **Exploring consumer needs:** Consumers have certain needs that can be fulfilled through jobs. If consumers get their jobs **done successfully**, their **needs are fulfilled** (Kullak, Baier, & Woratschek, 2023, p. 6). Hence, **jobs** and **consumer needs** are **not the same** (Bettencourt, 2009; Christensen et al., 2007).
3. **Shedding more light on consumer journeys:** Often, consumers have **several jobs** or an overall job which is why they go on a **consumer job journey** (Bettencourt, Harmeling, Bhagwat-Rana, & Houston, 2021). A consumer job journey describes the **path of interactions** between the consumer and one and/or multiple actors. The consumer engages in interactions with these actors to fulfill his/her job(s). Consumer

job journeys are characterized by **higher-order jobs** (e.g., losing weight) that the consumer can achieve through the completion of **lower-order jobs** related to **consumption** (e.g., hiring a trainer to go on a diet). Products, services or social others can be a vehicle to support consumers in getting their job(s) done along their consumer job journey. Consumer job journeys can be **transformative** in nature marked by long-term, life-changing higher-order goals (e.g. pregnancy, recovering from a disease, doing a PhD) (Kullak, Woratschek, & Baier, 2023, p. 2).

To put it in a nutshell:

1. The **JTBD theory** is based on **problem-solving** which is a job to be done.
2. The **JTBD theory** focuses on understanding the **consumer's job**.
3. A job can be **functional, personal, and social**.
4. Consumers **hire or buy products or services** to get a job done.
5. If a job is **done successfully**, consumers' **needs are fulfilled**.
6. The JTBD theory can be applied for **product and service innovation** as well as to **explore consumer needs** and **consumer journeys**.

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