

Step Right up: Using Consumer Decision Making Theory to Teach Research Process in the Electronic Age

By Amy E. Sloan. 60 S. C. L. Rev. 123 (2008).

Article Categories: Course Creation & Design; Legal Research Instruction for 1Ls

Keywords: Consumer Theory; Course Design; Decision-Making; Legal Research Instruction; Pedagogy; Technology

Reviewer's Summary:

Sloan suggests reframing the legal research process by thinking of it as a consumer transaction. She begins by looking at legal information as a consumer product and examining how technological changes have affected the marketplace by diminishing the role of law schools and libraries as intermediaries. Consumer decision-making theory is discussed and the legal research process is compared to the five-step process of making a purchase: recognizing a need, seeking out information, evaluating alternatives, making a purchase, and evaluating the purchase. Sloan argues that this theory illuminates the factors that influence the research process, such as quality, convenience, and price. Finally, integrating consumer theory into research pedagogy can help faculty recognize their own “marketing” role, challenge students’ perceptions, and make students aware of their role as consumers.

Summarized by: Robert Clark, University of Houston Law Center, in 2019.