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Understanding the customer: theories, trends, and values for an effective communication strategy

PROF. MICHELE PALEOLOGO / PROF. MISHALL ORTA

Area of study	Marketing and Communication
Area Code	CM/MK330
Credits	6 ECTS
Dates	6– 17 July (2 weeks)
Campus	Milan

Course description

The course aims at introducing the student to the main theories and the latest trends related to the field of consumer behavior: target market, needs, values. After a short introduction on psychological and sociological perspectives, the students will have to face and apply the consumer behavior theories in the fields of marketing and corporate communication. Contents are designed to encourage students to reflect on consumer response to marketing actions: exposure, attention, perception and decision making. Throughout practical projects the students will conduct customer researches for a specified product category. The aim of the research will be to deliver detailed customer profiles of the resulting segments and to draw conclusions about appropriate marketing communications strategies. Focuses on the principal methodological and technical options of qualitative research, the principal theories and tools of qualitative research, consumer-based marketing research techniques such as surveys and focus groups, on different stakeholders and on e-marketing will be part of the course.

Course contents

Lesson 1: Course presentation and introduction. Consumer behavior: theoretical issues. Case histories.

Lesson 2: Needs and motives. Consumer response to marketing actions: exposure, attention, perception

Lesson 3: Learning and attitudes - Decision making

Lesson 4: Research on consumer behavior: key theories of social and cultural psychology.

Lesson 5: Psychological relationship between persons, brands, products. Not only the customer: other stakeholders. Case histories.

Lesson 6: Values – Global values – Country culture elements.

Lesson 7: Consumer behavior and advertising. Case histories.

Lesson 8: A conversation agency: how to help brands listen to consumers, understand c.b. and engage consumers in conversations in social media.

Lesson 9: Digital tools to understand the customers: from the field to AI

Lesson 10: Reversing the equation: Market, Product and Marketing Plan. Case studies

Lesson 11: From marketing to *societing*: developing new marketing strategies from the study of social trends

Lesson 12: Strategical Market Analysis and positioning. The Blue Ocean Framework

Lesson 13: Customer understanding: how people 'hire' products for a job.

Lesson 14: Mapping the customer Journey: buying decisions vs addressing needs, thinking style vs role in the process



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Lesson 15: Final Exam & Pitch

Method of teaching

The course is based on interactive lessons with role playing in case study analysis, essays writing and presentation, and group discussions.

A list of references will be indicated during the course.

Course requirements

- Students are expected to regularly attend sessions and to actively take part in debate;
- Before each class, students are expected to have read the compulsory readings (and are strongly advised to read the recommended readings);
- Students will have to take a mid-term individual exam.
- Students will be required to orally present a group work for the final exam according to the instructor's instructions;

Grading

Assignment Module 1 (group)	30%
Assignment Module 2 (group)	30%
Final individual exam	40 %

Course reading and materials

The lecturer's slides, readings and essays for exams and assignments will be available on Blackboard.

- Krugman (2008) *Consumer behaviour and advertising involvement*. Routledge
- Solomon, Bamossi, Askegaard, *Understanding the customer*, Prentice Hall
- Belk, Scott, Askegaard (2012). *Research in consumer behaviour*. Emerald Group
- Lindstrom, M. (n.d.). *Small Data: The Tiny Clues That Uncover Huge Trends*. St. Martin's Press.
- Ariely, D. (2009). *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces that Shape Our Decisions*. HarperCollins UK.
- Kim, W. C., & Mauborgne, R. (2015). *Blue Ocean Strategy, Expanded Edition: How to Create Uncontested Market Space and Make the Competition Irrelevant*. Harvard Business Review Press.

Individual assignments

In order to test abilities in public speaking, use of creative tools, content comprehension and research, students will have to work on individual assignments, which will require a classroom presentation or a written paper.

Group assignments

In order to foster cooperative learning and an in-depth study of a particular topic of interest, students will be responsible for participating in group presentations. Each group will consist of 2/4 students.

Final exam

The final exam will consist of a project work for a specified product/company category.

Rules of conduct

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory and no absence/s will be excused. Please consider that Field Trips are considered equal to regular classes and indeed you are expected to attend the visits. Unexcused absences will not be accepted. An excused absence will only be granted if you are seriously ill and can support your claim with a local doctor's certificate dated the day you missed class (therefore you must go to the doctor that same day) that has to be delivered to the Professor or to Cattolica International Office. Any other absence will not be excused and will result in not being admitted to the final exam, which corresponds to a 0 (zero) in the final exam.

Exam Date: The exam date cannot be re-scheduled. Should the dates of the final exams be moved for force major reasons, UCSC International Office and the Professor will promptly inform you in class and/or via e-mail on the new date agreed. Unexcused absences to the exams will result in a failing grade in the course.

In cases of unforeseeable circumstances such as illness or injury on the day of the exams, you must submit a medical certificate and communicate your absence to the Professor and UCSC International Office via email prior to the exam. If the student does not justify his/her absence through sufficient documentation and with adequate notice before the final test, you will receive an automatic Failed. Absences for other unforeseeable circumstances will not be accepted and will result in a failing grade.

Instructor bio – Module 1

Prof. Michele Paleologo is a PhD Candidate in Psychology at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan and a Researcher at EngageMinds Hub, a multidisciplinary research center dedicated to studying and promoting active engagement in health behaviors and food consumption.

His work focuses on sustainability in consumption and production, with growing expertise in action research and stakeholder engagement through qualitative and quantitative approaches to improve collaboration between science and citizens.

At the Faculties of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences and Psychology, he teaches courses on Soft Skills, Qualitative Research, and Stakeholder Engagement.

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Instructor bio – Module 2

With a career transitioning from market research and cultural analysis into Product design, **Prof. Mishell Orta**'s experience largely concerns Market Research, Strategic Design, Branding and Product Marketing consulting to leading in-house design teams. Over the last 10 years, she has worked across industries with companies ranging from startups to enterprise level, and built a career portfolio working across North America, Latam and EMEA in varying creative and strategic roles. She co-created the podcast The Insight Club (available on Spotify) where Marketing, Branding and CX professionals craft strategies to emergent market challenges. Currently works as a Strategic Design Manager for Dscovr, a tech-company working with top international brands on how to intercept consumer needs and turn them into successful solutions that can positively impact people's lives through innovative UX and Market research solutions. She also collaborates with the Design+ strategies research group of the Politecnico di Milano on how to support innovation and transformation processes in organisations.

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