

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

PROF. MICHELE PAEOLOGO / PROF. MISHELL ORTA

Area of study:	Marketing and Communication
Area Code:	CM/MK330su
Credit	6 ECTS
Dates	7– 18 July (2 weeks)

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: Values – Global values – Country culture elements.

Lesson 2: Consumer behavior and advertising. Case histories.

Lesson 3: A conversation agency: how to help brands listen to consumers, understand c.b. and engage consumers in conversations in social media.

Lesson 4: Digital tools to understand the customers: from the field to AI

Lesson 5: Reversing the equation: Market, Product and Marketing Plan. Case studies

Lesson 6: From marketing to *societing*: developing new marketing strategies from the study of social trends

Lesson 7: Strategical Market Analysis and positioning. The Blue Ocean Framework

Lesson 8: Customer understanding: how people 'hire' products for a job.

Lesson 10: Mapping the customer Journey: buying decisions vs addressing needs, thinking style vs role in the process

Lesson 11: Course presentation and introduction. Consumer behavior: theoretical issues. Case histories.

Lesson 12: Needs, wants desires and motivations.

Lesson 13: Learning and attitudes - Decision making

Lesson 14: Consumer response to marketing actions: exposure, attention, perception

Lesson 15: Psychological relationship between persons, brands, products. Not only the customer: other stakeholders. Case histories.

Lesson 16: Final Exam & Pitch

Method of teaching

The course is based on interactive lessons with exercise, 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.

- Ariely, D. (2009). *Predictably irrational: The hidden forces that shape our decisions*. HarperCollins.
- Belk, R. W., Ger, G., & Askegaard, S. (2003). The fire of desire: A multisited inquiry into consumer passion. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 30(3), 326–351. <https://doi.org/10.1086/378613>
- Belk, R. W., Scott, L., & Askegaard, S. (2012). *Research in consumer behaviour* (Vol. 14). Emerald Group Publishing.
- Johnson, E. J., Hassin, R., Baker, T., Bajger, A., & Treuer, G. (2012). Beyond nudges: Tools of a choice architecture. *Marketing Letters*, 23(2), 487–504. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11002-012-9186-1>
- Kalbach, J. (2020). *The jobs to be done playbook: Align your markets, organization, and strategy around customer needs*. O'Reilly Media
- 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.
- Kimmel, A. J. (2018). *Psychological foundations of marketing*. In Routledge eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315436098>
- Krugman, H. E. (2008). *Consumer behaviour and advertising involvement*. Routledge.
- Lindstrom, M. (2016). *Small Data: the tiny clues that uncover huge trends*. <https://us.macmillan.com/books/9781250080684>
- Portigal, S. (2023). *Interviewing users: How to uncover compelling insights* (2nd ed.). Rosenfeld Media.
- Solomon, M. R., Bamossy, G., & Askegaard, S. (n.d.). *Understanding the customer*. Prentice Hall.
- Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2008). *Nudge: The gentle power of choice architecture*. Yale University Press.
- Wendel, S. (2013). *Designing for behavior change: Applying psychology and behavioral economics*. O'Reilly Media.
- Whalen, J. (2019). *Design for how people think: Using brain science to build better products*. O'Reilly Media.
- Wood, W., & Neal, D. T. (2009). The habitual consumer. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 19(4), 579–592. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2009.08.003>

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

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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Instructor bio – Module 2

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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Course Schedule

Lesson	Date and Time(CET)	Topic	Reading/Course Material
Module 1	Monday 7th 14.30 – 17.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program and evaluation Market, Product and Marketing Plan Case studies and Trends 	Collection On Advertising
	Tuesday 8th 09.30 – 12.30 14.30 – 17.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital tools to understand the customers: from the field to AI Getting to know digital tools and methodologies to get actionable insights from customers From marketing to societing: developing new marketing strategies from the study of social trends Group Work: Market Personas 	Article What I learned about Competition Mapping Article Marketing's 3 Types of Value Article Society drives how we build products, create brands, and design experiences
	Wednesday 09th 09.30-13.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field trip 	Podcast: The ultimate guide to JTBD Bob Moesta
	Thursday 10th 09.30-13.00 14.30-17.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer understanding: how people 'hire' products for a job (<i>buying decisions vs addressing needs, thinking style vs role in the process</i>) Group Work: Jobs to be done Framework Strategical Market Analysis and positioning Group Work: Blue Ocean Strategy Framework 	Podcast: The ultimate guide to JTBD Bob Moesta What Is Blue Ocean Strategy — and Where Does It Go Wrong?
	Friday 11th 09.30-12:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pitch Day: Final group work presentation 	
Module 2	Monday 14th 9.30 – 12.30 14.30 – 17.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to module 2 and assignment brief Introduction to the Consumer Psychology: Homo oeconomicus VS homo psychologicus The process of consumption: a framework Historical evolution of the Consumer Psychology: <i>one discipline, many approaches</i> <i>Exercise</i> 	



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	Tuesday 15th 9.30 – 12.30 14.30 – 17.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information seeking, processing, building (<i>theories and case histories</i>) • Needs VS wants VS desire: let's clear our ideas (<i>theories and case histories</i>) • Motivations: positive VS negative, internal VS external (<i>theories, case histories and research hints: the motivational approach</i>); • Social identities and group identities (<i>theories, case histories and research hints: exercising with the focus group</i>) • <i>Exercise</i> 	
	Wednesday 16th 9.30 – 13.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer Drivers: personality, attitudes and values (<i>theories and case histories</i>) • <i>Exercise</i> 	
	Thursday 17th 9:30-13.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and decision making: are we always rational decision makers? (<i>rational VS irrational models, the choice paradox, simplicity VS variety, automatic VS reflective cognitive system, heuristic and frame effect, prospect theory, nudges</i>) • <i>Exercise</i> 	
	Friday 18th 9:30-12:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pitch Day: Final group work presentation Final examination	