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

PROF. MICHELE PAEOLOGO AND MISHHELL ORTA

TERM: WINTER 2024

DATE: 09-20<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER

### Description

This course explores the key psychological theories and methodologies for understanding consumer behavior, providing tools to analyze the motivations, desires, and decision-making processes that drive consumption. Through theoretical lectures, case studies, and practical activities, students will gain the skills needed to develop innovative and adaptive communication strategies, with a focus on the dynamics of consumer psychology and social trends.

### Course contents

The first module delves into consumer psychology with a focus on theoretical foundations and their practical applications. Topics include:

- The evolution of consumer psychology and its interdisciplinary approaches.
- The framework of consumption processes and the role of motivations, needs, and desires.
- Theories and tools to analyze social and group identities.
- Understanding rational vs. irrational decision-making through frameworks like heuristics and nudges.
- Applied activities such as focus group exercises and communication campaign development.

The second module shifts focus to the practical application of consumer psychology and marketing principles. Topics include:

- Understanding how the study of social trends informs the transition from traditional marketing approaches to creating societal value
- Approaching the usage of digital tools and methodologies to collect actionable consumer insights and adapt to evolving trends
- Strategic analysis marketing and positioning through frameworks like the Blue Ocean strategy
- Exploring the product development cycle through customer decision-making frameworks like the Jobs to be done framework
- Real-world applications through the analysis of case-studies and development of market personas
- Hands-on Group Work where students collaborate on a shared group assignment for the go-to-market strategy of a new product

### Method of teaching

The course adopts an interactive teaching style combining theoretical lectures, case study discussions, and hands-on group activities. Students will actively apply psychological theories to real-world problems and present their findings to peers and instructors for feedback.



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## Course requirements

Students are required to actively participate in class discussions, complete group assignments, and prepare for the final exam. Attendance and active engagement during the field trip and focus group exercises are also mandatory.

## Credits

6 ECTS

## Grading

- **Assignment Week One (30%):** Develop a communication campaign highlighting key points of consumer psychology using at least one theory for each point. Present it to the class.
- **Assignment Week Two (30%):** Design an innovative marketing strategy for a new hospitality service using frameworks explored in the first half of the course. Present your work to the class.
- **Final Exam (40%):** A written exam evaluating theoretical knowledge and the ability to apply it to practical scenarios.

## 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, consisting of a project work for a specified product/company category.

## Final Exam

The final exam will consist of a multiple choice and open-ended questions to test basic knowledge and reasoning about course material and theoretical topics on both modules

## Course readings and materials

- Kimmel, A. J. *Psychological Foundations of Marketing*.
- Belk, R. W. et al. "The Fire of Desire: A Multisited Inquiry into Consumer Passion." *Journal of Consumer Research*, 30(3), 326–351.
- Johnson, E. J. et al. "Beyond Nudges: Tools of a Choice Architecture." *Marketing Letters*, 23(2), 487–504.
- Wood, W., & Neal, D. T. "The Habitual Consumer." *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 19(4), 579–592.
- Thaler, R., & Sunstein, C. *Nudge: The Gentle Power of Choice Architecture*. Yale University Press.
- Lindstrom, M. (n.d.). *Small Data: The Tiny Clues That Uncover Huge Trends*. St. Martin's Press.
- Portigal, S. (2023). *Interviewing users: How to Uncover Compelling Insights*. Rosenfeld Media.
- Ariely, D. (2009). *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces that Shape Our Decisions*. HarperCollins UK.



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- 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.
- Design for Behavior Change – Stephen Wendel
- The Jobs to be Done Playbook – Jim Kalbach

### 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.

### E-mail address

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## Course Schedule

Lesson	Date and Time(CET)	Topic	Reading/Course Material
<b>Module 1</b>	<b>Monday 9<sup>th</sup></b> 14.30 – 17.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program and evaluation</li> <li>• Introduction to the Consumer Psychology: Homo oeconomicus VS homo psychologicus</li> <li>• Historical evolution of the Consumer Psychology: <i>one discipline, many approaches</i></li> </ul>	
	<b>Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup></b> 9.30 – 12.30 14.30 – 17.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process of consumption: a framework</li> <li>• Information seeking, processing, building (<i>theories and case histories</i>)</li> <li>• Briefing for the assignment of week 1</li> <li>• Needs VS wants VS desire: let's clear our ideas (<i>theories and case histories</i>)</li> <li>• Motivations: positive VS negative, internal VS external (<i>theories, case histories and research hints: the motivational approach</i>);</li> <li>• Social identities and group identities (<i>theories, case histories and research hints: exercising with the focus group</i>)</li> </ul>	
	<b>Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup></b> 09.30-13.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Field trip</i></li> </ul>	
	<b>Thursday 12<sup>th</sup></b> 09.30-12.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer Drivers: personality, attitudes and values (<i>theories and case histories</i>)</li> </ul>	
	<b>Friday 13<sup>th</sup></b> 09.30-12.30 14.30-17.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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, heuristics and frame effect, prospect theory, nudges</i>)</li> <li>• Assignment presentation and discussion</li> </ul>	
<b>Module 2</b>	<b>Monday 16<sup>th</sup></b> 9.30 – 12.30 14.30 – 17.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to module 2 and assignment brief</li> <li>• Market, Product and Marketing Plan</li> <li>• Case studies and Trends</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Collection   On Advertising</a>



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	<p><b>Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup></b> 9.30 – 12.30 14.30 – 17.30</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital tools to understand the customers: from the field to AI</li> <li>• Getting to know digital tools and methodologies to get actionable insights from customers</li> <li>• From marketing to societing: developing new marketing strategies from the study of social trends</li> <li>• Group Work: Market Personas</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Article   What I learned about Competition Mapping</a></p> <p>Article   <a href="#">Marketing's 3 Types of Value</a></p> <p><a href="#">Article   Society drives how we build products, create brands, and design experiences</a></p>
	<p><b>Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup></b> 9.30 – 12.30</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer understanding: how people 'hire' products for a job (<i>buying decisions vs addressing needs, thinking style vs role in the process</i>)</li> <li>• Group Work: Jobs to be done Framework</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Podcast: The ultimate guide to JTBD   Bob Moesta</a></p>
	<p><b>Thursday 19<sup>th</sup></b> 9:30-12:30</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategical Market Analysis and positioning</li> <li>• Group Work: Blue Ocean Strategy Framework</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">What Is Blue Ocean Strategy — and Where Does It Go Wrong?</a></p>
	<p><b>Friday 20<sup>th</sup></b> 9:30-13:30</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pitch Day: Final group work presentation</li> <li>• Final examination</li> </ul>	