
Consumer Behavior

Professor: Gert Cornelissen

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Office hours: by appointment

Course Description

In the future, historians might refer to our era as one in which people lived in a “consumer culture”. Being a consumer is one of the most prominent roles we have in life (*everything* we do seems to be consuming of some sort), and the world around us organizes itself around that role. The new traditions that develop in our culture, for example, now mostly involve buying things, or they take it to the next level, and celebrate consuming itself (think of Black Friday).

In this course we will try to develop insight into how we make choices as consumers, by studying aspects of human psychology on the one hand, and the world in which we operate on the other hand. We will train your intuition so you can think more accurately about how consumers perceive and respond to market events.

Many of the psychological insights that we discuss are particularly useful for marketing strategy, brand positioning, and marketing communication decisions. However, they are very relevant as well for those taking a policy-oriented perspective, in studying the reasoning errors that consumers make, or the value priorities that a consumer culture emphasizes, and relating those to well-being.

Objectives

This course provides insights in the mechanisms underlying consumer behavior. The course goals are:

- Discuss and understand how key theories and research from the behavioral sciences (e.g., psychology, sociology, economics) help to understand consumer behavior.
- Develop intuitions regarding people’s consumption choices, at the service of making better decision at the managerial and social policy levels.
- Understand your own choices as a consumer, and try to improve them.

Methodology

In this course we will combine **lectures with tutorial methodology**.

In the early weeks of the term, in a number of lectures we will establish the frame which we will use to analyze consumer behaviour. We will analyze aspects of human psychology, important to understand the consumer, and the world in which the consumer operates.

For most of the sessions after that we use a **tutorial methodology**:

- We will create groups of 3-4 people. Each week, one group of students will host the sessions. Each one of you will be a member of 2 groups.

- Reading material is provided for the topic discussed each week. The job of the group hosting the session is to come up with stimulating material that facilitates a group conversation, such as controversial points of view that can be debated in group, research findings, quizzes, illustrations, and other activities that allow us to engage in a group conversation.

- Those who do not host the tutorial are expected to be prepared and study the assigned material as well. Before class, they write a reaction paper in which they develop a personal reflection on the week's reading material. In class everyone is actively involved in a group conversation in which we process the reading material and develop insights and implications.

This method optimizes participation and involvement. We might modify details based on the number of students taking this course

Evaluation criteria

The evaluation is based on 3 pillars:

1. Participation in class discussions
2. The presentation of discussion material as a host in the tutorials
3. Weekly reaction papers

(there is no exam)

Each of these elements is equally important and will account for 1/3 of your final grade.

Students are required to attend 80% of classes. Failing to do so without justified reason will imply a Zero grade in the participation/attendance evaluation item and may lead to suspension from the program.

Plagiarism is to use another's work and to present it as one's own without acknowledging the sources in the correct way. All essays, reports or projects handed in by a student must be original work completed by the student. By enrolling at any UPF BSM Master of Science and signing the "Honor Code," students acknowledge that they understand the schools' policy on plagiarism and certify that all course assignments will be their own work, except where indicated by correct referencing. Failing to do so may result in automatic expulsion from the program."

Calendar and Contents

-This list is tentative and subject to changes-

Week 1	Lecture	* Introduction * Organization of tutorial sessions
Week 2	Lecture	Evolutionary bases of consumption
Week 3	Tutorial	Consumer Perception
Week 4	Tutorial	Consumer Motivation
Week 5	Tutorial	Consumer Preferences
Week 6	Tutorial	Decision Making
Week 7	Lecture	Expressing identity and personality
Week 8	Tutorial	Consumers in their social setting
Week 9	Tutorial	Hot topics in consumer research
Week 10	Lecture	Living in a consumer culture

Reading Materials/ Bibliography/Resources

A list of readings –mostly academic articles- will be available on aula global at the beginning of the term. As a background reading, we will use the handbook:

- Kardes, F.R., Cline, T.W., Cronley, M.L. (2015), Consumer Behavior: Science and Practice. South-Western: Cengage Learning.

Bio of Professor

Gert Cornelissen is an Associate Professor at the Department of Economics and Business at Universitat Pompeu Fabra. He is also an affiliate professor at the Barcelona Graduate School of Economics. He obtained his PhD. in Psychology at the KULeuven, Belgium.