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

PROF. STEFANIA VITULLI

### OVERVIEW

**Area:** Marketing and Communication

**Dates:** 8 – 19 July (2 weeks)

**Campus:** Milan

**Course number:** CM/MK330su

**Term:** Summer 2019

**Credits:** 6 ECTS

### 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.

GUEST SPEAKER EXPECTED

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

**Lesson 6:** Midterm Exam

**Lesson 7:** Values – Global values – Country culture elements.

**Lesson 8:** Consumer behavior and advertising. Case histories.

**Lesson 9:** A conversation agency: how to help brands to listen consumers, understand c.b. and engage consumers in conversations in social media. COMPANY VISIT EXPECTED.

**Lesson 10:** Final Exam



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## 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

- a. Students are expected to regularly attend sessions and to actively take part in debate;
- b. Before each class, students are expected to have read the compulsory readings (and are strongly advised to read the recommended readings);
- c. Students are required to orally present one of the topics outlined in the syllabus according to the instructor's instructions;
- d. Students will have to take a final written exam.

## GRADING

Class participation	30%
Individual/Group assignments	30%
Exams	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
- Morse and Richards (2007). *Readme First for a User's Guide to Qualitative Methods*. Sage

## 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, that 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.



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## MID-TERM TEST

The Midterm Test will consist of two open questions to test basic knowledge and comprehension of course material and theoretical topics.

## FINAL EXAM

The final exam will consist of a customer research for a specified product 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 UCSC 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

**Stefania Micaela Vitulli** is a creative consultant and journalist. She is contract professor of Business Communication at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, where she teaches also Green Communication and Publishing Communication. She is research fellow at LabCom, UCSC, and professor and Senior Tutor at the Master in Corporate Communication, UCSC. She is the author of articles and academic papers on green communication and sustainability.

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