

Course Outline

Course Code : MKT4716
Course Title : Consumer Culture Theory
Semester : Semester 1, AY 2024/2025
Faculty : Assoc Prof Tambyah Siok Kuan
Department : Marketing
Email : biztsk@nus.edu.sg
URL : <https://discovery.nus.edu.sg/443-siok-kuan-tambyah>

Important Notes for this Semester

Attendance for the first two sessions is mandatory as we will be discussing the theoretical framework, course details and expectations for the entire semester. If you are not able to attend Sessions 1 and 2, please do not register for the course.

Course Objectives

Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) is a synthesizing framework that examines the sociocultural, experiential, symbolic and ideological aspects of consumption. The tenets of CCT research are aligned with consumer identity projects, marketplace cultures, the sociohistorical patterning of consumption, and mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies. In this course, we will explore the dynamic relationships among consumer actions, the marketplaces and cultural meanings using theories and methods from multiple disciplines.

At the end of the course, students will be able to appreciate the different modes of inquiry for studying consumer culture. They will learn how consumer culture theory enables them to understand consumers and markets from multi-disciplinary perspectives. They will also be encouraged to critically analyse the readings and develop their own ideas for exploring consumer culture.

Prerequisites

MKT3402/MKT3702 Consumer Behavior

Text and Readings

As CCT is a broad, multi-disciplinary theoretical framework, there is no assigned textbook for the course. Readings are mainly from consumer research journals and available in the course readings in Canvas. **Please note that there is a very heavy reading workload for this course. We will be reading about two to three journal articles a week (about 25 single-spaced pages for each article).**

Course Structure

The major topics to be covered are aligned with the four research programs of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), namely Consumer Identity Projects, Marketplace Cultures, The Sociohistorical Patterning of Consumption and Mass-Mediated Marketplace Ideologies and Consumers' Interpretive Strategies. The CCT framework is explained in detail in the following article: **Arnould, Eric J. and Craig J. Thompson (2005), "Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research," Journal of Consumer Research, 31 (March), 868-882.**

1. Consumer Identity Projects

Consumers are defined as identity seekers and makers. We will explore how consumers construct a sense of self using marketer-generated materials. This assumes the structuring influence of the marketplace which produces certain kinds of consumer positions that consumers can choose to inhabit. This implies constraints on consumers and invites questions on whether consumers can break free of these constraints.

2. Marketplace Cultures

Consumers are configured as culture producers. We will explore how consumption as a dominant human practice reconfigures cultural blueprints for action and interpretation and vice versa. How is consumer culture instantiated in particular cultural milieu and what are the implications of this process for people experiencing it? How do consumers forge feelings of social solidarity and create distinctive, fragmentary, self-selected and sometimes transient cultural worlds through the pursuit of common consumption interests (subculture of consumption, consumption world, consumption microculture)? We will also examine collective identifications grounded in neotribalism, rituals, social practices, mythologies and status systems.

3. The Sociohistorical Patterning of Consumption

Consumers are enactors of social roles and positions. We will explore what is consumer society and how it is constituted and sustained, and the processes by which consumption choices and behaviors are shaped by social class hierarchies, gender, ethnicity, families, households and other formal groups. We will also examine the relationships among consumers' experiences, belief systems and practices, and these underlying institutional and social structures (for example, as manifested in brand communities, hyper-cultural ethnic identities).

4. Mass-Mediated Marketplace Ideologies and Consumers' Interpretive Strategies

Consumers are interpretive agents. We will explore the normative messages that commercial media may transmit about consumption. How do consumers make sense of these messages and formulate critical responses? We will integrate insights from critical and media theory, literary criticism and semiotics for this analysis. Consumption contexts that provide data for such analysis include advertising, films, TV programs, and the Internet.

Assessments (to be confirmed)

Class Participation	20%
Discussion Leadership	20%
Test	30%
Group Project	30%
TOTAL	100%

The course operates on an **interactive, discussion-based, seminar-style format**. You will benefit most when you come to class having read and critically evaluated the readings, and are prepared to share your views. Individual and group assignments are tailored specifically to the learning goals for each semester, and are intended to provide a stimulating learning experience.

ACADEMIC HONESTY & PLAGIARISM

Academic integrity and honesty is essential for the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge. The University and School expect every student to uphold academic integrity & honesty at all times. Academic dishonesty is any misrepresentation with the intent to deceive, or failure to acknowledge the source, or falsification of information, or inaccuracy of statements, or cheating at examinations/tests, or inappropriate use of resources.

Plagiarism is 'the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own' (The New Oxford Dictionary of English). The University and School will not condone plagiarism. Students should adopt this rule - You have the obligation to make clear to the assessor which is your own work, and which is the work of others. Otherwise, your assessor is entitled to assume that everything being presented for assessment is being presented as entirely your own work. This is a minimum standard. In case of any doubts, you should consult your instructor.

Additional guidance is available at:

<http://www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/adminpolicy/acceptance.html#NUSCodeofStudentConduct>

Online Module on Plagiarism:

<http://emodule.nus.edu.sg/ac/>

MKT4716 Consumer Culture Theory – Topics (to be confirmed)

- Session 1 What is Consumer Culture?
And What is Consumer Culture Theory (CCT)?**
- Session 2 Who are the Consumers?
And How Do We Understand Them?**
- Session 3 Consumer Identity Projects I
(e.g., fanaticism, fun, productivity orientation)**
- Session 4 Consumer Identity Projects II
(e.g., minimalism, simplicity)**
- Session 5 Offline and Online Communities
(e.g., brand tribes)**
- Session 6 Extraordinary Experiences
(e.g., liminality, rites of passage)**
- Session 7 Social Class and Cultural Capital**
- Session 8 Status Consumption**
- Session 9 Conscious Consumption
(e.g., sustainability)**
- Session 10 Moving versus Staying
(e.g., consumer acculturation, liquidity, digital nomads)**
- Session 11 Test**
- Session 12 Group Project Presentations**
- Session 13 Group Project Discussions**