MN5406 – CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND CONSUMER RESEARCH

MODULE TYPE/ SEMESTER: Core (20 credits), Semester 1

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AIM:
Understanding, influencing, and predicting human behaviour requires an appreciation of multiple factors operating at individual, social, and situational level. Consumer behaviour is no exception. This module aims to provide a basic framework for thinking systematically and critically about consumer behaviour. It also introduces the essential empirical toolkit for consumer research. The module will further demonstrate that principles of consumer behaviour should inform methodological design in consumer research.

The module introduces the contemporary conception of the consumer by examining key cognitive and social processes and their implications for consumption. The role of human cognition in understanding consumption is fundamental: the way humans learn, store, and recall information about products and brands directly influences consumer decision making and behaviour. Similarly, consumption is a major way for constructing and expressing social identities, and is often influenced by the way individuals relate to others and fit in the broader society. Finally, the situation in which consumption occurs also exerts a powerful influence on consumers. Sources of such situational influence can be proximal, such as loud music, sales, or time pressure, or more distal, such as perceived (in-)stability of the economy. Interwoven with these topics, are observations of consumer research methods; the module will pay particular attention to survey methods, behavioural measures, and experimental methods.

METHOD OF TEACHING & LEARNING:
The taught component is organized around a two-hour interactive lecture, which involves class discussions. Because the course relies on student participation, attendance is important; students are expected to come to lectures prepared.

A one-hour tutorial will usually follow the lectures, on the same day. Tutorials involve group work.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:
By the end of the module, students should be able to:
• Understand the basic cognitive principles of consumer behaviour
• Understand the social-psychological processes that can influence consumer behaviour
• Identify and critically evaluate situational factors influencing consumer decision environments
• Design and implement appropriate methods for consumer research

INDICATIVE TOPIC OUTLINE:
Lecture Topics per week:

Week 1: Overview of the main topics and research methods in consumer behaviour
Week 2: Memory and learning
Week 3: Categorization and brand extension
Week 4: Attitudes
Week 5: Decision making
Week 6: No lecture
Week 7: Qualitative research methods
Week 8: Social and group processes
Week 9: Brand perception
Week 10: Situational influences
Week 11: Conclusion & revision

ASSESSMENT:
• Final exam (50% of Module mark)
• Mid-semester critical essay (max 1500 words; 30% of Module mark)
• Group portfolio (a series of exercises completed in class; 20% of Module mark)

Further details will be provided in the first session.

READING LIST:
• There is no core textbook for the course, but the following provide comprehensive overviews of key concepts:
  

• For further material, students are encouraged to browse relevant journals in marketing and psychology:

  Journal of Consumer Research
  Journal of Marketing Research
  Journal of Consumer Psychology
  Judgment and Decision Making
  Journal of Behavioural Decision Making
  Journal of Economic Psychology
  Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes
Management Science

- There is also related material in the following more general psychology journals:
  
  *Psychological Science*
  *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*
  *Journal of Experimental Psychology*
  *Current Directions in Psychological Science*

  *Current Directions in Psychological Science* provides good, succinct reviews of the current state of the science. It is peer reviewed, yet written an accessible form—and articles are short (2500 words).

A more detailed weekly reading list will be provided in the first session of the course.