

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE
NUS Business School
Department of Marketing

MKT3423 Consumer Culture Theory

Lecturer Dr Siok Kuan **Tambyah**
BIZ 1 8-11, Mochtar Riady Building
Department of Marketing, NUS Business School
Tel: 6516-3155, Email: biztsk@nus.edu.sg

Session Semester I, 2014-2015 (L1 Thu 11am-2pm at BIZ 1 03-05)

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. **Please note that this is not a course on how a consumer's culture affects her/his consumption behaviors.**

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.

Prerequisite Course

Students intending to take this course should have completed MKT3402 Consumer Behavior.

Text and Readings

As Consumer Culture Theory incorporates insights from multiple disciplines, there is no one assigned textbook for the course. Readings will be gleaned from journals, books, the popular press and online media (e.g., blogs and websites). **Please note that there will be a fairly heavy reading workload for this course.**

Course Structure

The major topics to be covered are aligned with the four tenets 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.

Assessment Methods (tentative)

Class Participation	20%
Discussion Leadership	20%
Individual Assignments	30%
Group Assignments	30%
TOTAL	100%

The class sessions are conducted **seminar-style with intensive discussions** (i.e., minimal lecturing) and require **your full involvement and commitment**. **You are expected to read and critically evaluate the readings, and be 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.