Relevance

Today we live in a consumer society, a society in which the buying and selling of goods and services is the most important social and economic activity. For any commercial business, the end consumer of its goods and/or services is a vital stakeholder. Understanding consumer behavior is an important cornerstone of effective marketing and, as a consequence, an essential strategic tool for overall business success.

Learning how consumers think, feel, perceive and behave is also relevant from a societal perspective. Governments’ control over corporations and businesses is steadily diminishing. On the one hand, this can be attributed to increasing corporate influence in politics, e.g. through lobbying activities and party funding. On the other hand, this is a result of ever-increasing globalizing business activities and thus complex international supply chains which complicates holding companies accountable. It has therefore become the consumers’ role and responsibility to function as a social and environmental control of business. Thus, bringing about societal and environmental change related to consumption (e.g. reducing carbon emission or plastic waste; banning unethical corporate practices such as slave labor) strongly hinges upon mobilizing and convincing consumers to make ethically motivated purchase decisions and therefore ‘vote’ with their consumption choices, e.g. by means of boycotts and buycotts or changing habitual practices.

Understanding and influencing consumer behavior at the individual, social and cultural level is therefore a vital challenge of our time and of interest to businesses, governmental organizations, NGOs and overall society alike.
Objective
This course aims to introduce the topic of consumer research for students at the Master level. Participants will:
1) acquire an overview of the most commonly applied methods of qualitative and quantitative consumer research
2) understand each method’s strengths and weaknesses
3) learn to apply one of these methods by engaging in a small research project.
For students unfamiliar with empirical data collection, this course can serve as a suitable introduction and practice exercise for writing a Master thesis.

Course Format
This course uses a blended learning approach. Learning objectives shall be achieved through a mixture of online lecture materials, explanatory videos, interactive Q&A video conferences, individual consultations with the lecturers, as well as an independent data collection project. For the research project, one of the following three data collection techniques will be allocated to students by the course organizers: (1) Interviews; (2) netnography; and (3) surveys. The research topic will be announced during our course meeting on **Wednesday, 27th of April 2022**. Students are free to develop and empirically answer their own specific research question within the provided topic.

Overview of content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asynchronous lecture material to review before 27.4.</th>
<th>In-presence meetings* (attendance compulsory)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday 21.4.</strong> (plan approx. 4-5 hours to review material)</td>
<td><strong>Wednesday 27.4.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Introduction to consumer research</td>
<td>- Welcome and introduction to the course</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Importance of consumer research</td>
<td>- Clarifying questions and reiterating most important points regarding the reviewed lecture material</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Background to philosophy of science</td>
<td>- Introduction to the research project</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Key assumptions and differences between qualitative and quantitative research</td>
<td>- Presenting the research topic</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Qualitative research</strong></td>
<td>- Allocation of data collection methods to course participants</td>
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<td>- Setting up qualitative research</td>
<td>- Outline expectations and other logistics</td>
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<td>- Analytical procedures (coding, interpretation, data triangulation)</td>
<td><strong>Monday 9.5.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Specific qualitative data collection methods</strong></td>
<td>Students present their research question and key considerations for their planned data collection (<strong>5 min max</strong>)!</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Interviews</td>
<td>Fellow students and lecturers will provide feedback</td>
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<td>- Ethnography and digital ethnography (netnography)</td>
<td><strong>Friday 22.4.</strong> (plan approx. 2.5 hours to review material)</td>
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<td>- Other methods (focus groups, observations, projective techniques)</td>
<td><strong>Quantitative research</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Writing up qualitative research</strong></td>
<td>- Setting up quantitative research (design considerations, measurement, scaling)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Friday 22.4.</strong> (plan approx. 2.5 hours to review material)</td>
<td>- Survey research (questionnaire design, sampling)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Setting up quantitative research (design considerations, measurement, scaling)</td>
<td>- Key concepts in experimental research (lab and field experiments)</td>
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Slides and all other relevant materials for the course will be uploaded on Moodle ([https://moodle.europa-uni.de](https://moodle.europa-uni.de)).

Mode of Communication
Communication for any course-related matters will exclusively take place in Moodle. We will not answer individual email requests. Instead, we will open a communication thread for general questions in Moodle, where we can reply directly to your posts and all course members can benefit from the information we provide in our answers.
The lecture part of the seminar will be oriented along the following sources (some of these sources will be uploaded in Moodle):

**Quantitative research**

- **Textbooks:**
- **Netnography/online ethnography:**
- **Projective methods/collage technique:**
- **Focus groups:**
- **Research article examples:**

**Qualitative research**

Examination
In order to receive 6 ECTS course credits, hand in your seminar paper in accordance with the deadline (20.6.2022 at midnight via Moodle). No alternative examination procedures will be offered. No exceptions will be made and late submissions will be evaluated with a grade of 5.0. The final grade will be based on the final paper, the one-page summary (see below) and data collection materials provided.

Expectations for the seminar paper:
Please carefully read the thesis manual provided on the website of the chair of marketing II (https://www.wiwi.europa-uni.de/en/lehrstuhl/mm/marketing-II/_Documents/Mktg-Dep_Thesis-Manual_FINAL_11012022.pdf). General guidelines for writing a seminar paper will apply and can be found in the thesis manual. However, please note that for this seminar you will be writing an empirical (not just a theoretical) seminar paper. Thus, additional requirements above and beyond a theoretical paper are as follows:

- The final paper must not exceed 10 pages including references/bibliography. In addition, please develop a one-page summary visualization (a figure/graph that illustrates your conceptualization/summary of the key research findings)
- Since this is a research methods course, we expect a thorough description of the data collection method you applied and a reasoning for the study design choices made.
- Interviews: provide the interview protocol and coding scheme in the appendix of the paper (does not count towards the 10-page limit) and upload data (visuals, audio files, transcripts) to Moodle in a separate file.
- Netnography: reason your choice of the particular online community/interactive webpage and your approach to data collection clearly. Please provide your coding scheme in the appendix of the paper (does not count towards the 10-page limit).
- Survey: provide the final questionnaire and scales used in the appendix (does not count towards the 10-page limit) and upload the data to Moodle in a separate file.
- In summary, the submission files to be uploaded are: one file with your data and one file with your final thesis paper consisting of maximum 10 pages of text including references/bibliography; plus the one-page summary visualization; plus appendix of the data collection information requested above.

Prerequisites
- The course will be taught and evaluated in English, i.e. all lecture materials, consultations and seminar papers will be in English. The collection of the data for your research project may also take place in German, in which case the data that is presented for illustration in the seminar paper needs to be translated into English. No other languages for data collection are admissible.
- A basic understanding of statistical methods and quantitative data analysis is assumed (e.g. a previously taken Quantitative Methods course or equivalent knowledge).
- Successful completion of the/a Consumer Behavior course is a benefit, but not a requirement.
- The number of students that can participate in this seminar is limited. If the number of applicants exceeds the spaces available, students will be selected based on their motivation letter and their grades in previous marketing classes.
- Attending the meetings on 27.4. and 9.5. is compulsory. No exceptions will be made and absence will lead to failing the course.

Application Procedure
In order to apply, please fill in the application form adding a record of your grades ("Notenausdruck" for bachelor and master; only records in German or English accepted; convert grades to German grading system if necessary) and answering the following points (maximum one-page length in total): 1) Why are you interested in this course? 2) Describe an instance where you were surprised about your own consumption behavior or acted against your convictions (this can be anything, e.g. when you bought something you didn’t intend to buy or didn’t buy something you intended to purchase etc.) and reflect on your decision and why you think it turned out that way.

Contacts
- M.Sc. Dominika Niewiadomska, Niewiadomska@europa-uni.de, Consultations by appointment (HG, Room 049 or 034)
- Prof. Dr. Katja H. Brunk, Brunk@europa-uni.de, Consultations by appointment (HG, Room 033)