MGT 6302: CONSUMER BEHAVIOR Course Syllabus (Rev 04_11)

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1. Course Background and Objectives

"Shopping is a universal experience."

- Paco Underhill, Why We Buy

At its most basic level, the study of consumer behavior is an attempt to understand why consumers think, feel, and act the way they do. Even the most detailed business plan or marketing strategy risks failure if it does not carefully consider how customers perceive and process information, make decisions, and form attitudes about the goods and services they encounter. A thorough understanding of these topics allows firms to create products that better meet the wants and needs of their customers, and to market those products more effectively.

The field of consumer behavior is multidisciplinary in nature, incorporating psychology, economics, anthropology, and related fields. In this class, we will draw from each of these disciplines as we investigate contemporary theories, research methods, and trends in the science of consumer behavior. Of equal importance, we will stress the implications of each topic for the design and implementation of marketing strategies. Specifically, completion of this course will provide you with:

- An understanding of the numerous intrapersonal, social, and environmental variables that play a role in consumer behavior
- Exposure to various tools by which research into consumer behavior is conducted and analyzed
- The ability to apply insights regarding consumer behavior to inform specific decisions regarding marketing strategy and execution
- An awareness of the role that technological transformation plays in the changing consumer environment, and implications for marketers

This course is suitable for students with a variety of interests and career objectives. Although the course assumes at least basic knowledge of marketing principles, students tend to come from diverse disciplines, and key course topics (decision making, social interaction, attitudes, etc.) are applicable to any occupation requiring customer understanding or influence. Moreover, all of us are consumers, and students usually find that the course helps them "learn about themselves" and their experiences in the marketplace.

2. Course Format, Grading, and Requirements

During our exploration of the field of consumer behavior, we will utilize lectures, class discussion, cases, videos, guest speakers, and projects.

The following table summarizes how grades will be determined. The discussion below elaborates upon each of these requirements.

Grading Element	Weight
Class Participation (Individual)	20%
Two Case Analyses (Group)	20%
First Exam (Individual)	20%
Group Project (Group)	20%
Second Exam (Individual)	20%

2.1 Class Participation and Attendance

Contribution. The full benefit of this course cannot be gained from passively attending class and taking notes. Participation and discussion are imperative to engender a collaborative learning environment, and without that participation, the learning experience is significantly diminished. As in the business world, you should be willing and able to present your analysis or viewpoint to the class when the opportunity presents itself. Active contribution enables you to develop the skill to present and defend your ideas, and also to consider contrasting points of view; these skills will prove invaluable in your careers. To help ensure widespread participation, students may occasionally be called upon to commence discussion.

The quality of your participation is <u>far</u> more important than the quantity. High-quality participation means that you are well-prepared, listen carefully to other's contributions, contribute in a manner that adds value to the discussion, but do not monopolize class time or otherwise sidetrack the class. When evaluating your contribution to class discussion, the following factors are among those considered:

- Is the comment clear, concise and accurate?
- Does the comment add insight to our understanding of the problem or decision?
- Is the comment timely, and does it advance the comments recently made by others?
- Does the comment move the discussion along by yielding a new perspective?
- Does the comment reflect a concern for a constructive, comfortable classroom atmosphere?

Attendance. Needless to say, students are expected to attend all class sessions. Therefore, formal attendance may be taken during some classes. I am aware that circumstances may arise which require your absence, and thus a <u>limited</u> number of absences will not be penalized. More importantly, a positive participation grade requires not only attendance but active participation (see above).

<u>Preparation Assignments</u>. For each of our cases, a set of preparation questions will be posted in advance on T-square (under the 'Assignments' tool). Students will select <u>two</u> questions and submit a brief response for each (1-2 paragraphs). The case preparation questions are intended to help you begin thinking about important issues we will address. In addition, a few other class sessions include short advance assignments (also under 'Assignments'), which will be incorporated into class discussion.

<u>Other Factors</u>. Students are expected to put meaningful effort into classroom exercises and outside assignments, whether or not they are formally graded. In addition, it is <u>imperative</u> that you attend group meetings and contribute substantially to group assignments.

2.2 Group Case Analyses

As early as possible in the term, students will divide into groups of approximately five students. Each group will prepare <u>two</u> case analyses during the course, for the following cases:

- 1. Lowe's Companies
- 2. BzzAgent

The specific questions for the group case analysis will be distributed as the case approaches. Groups are not expected to analyze all the issues surrounding a case, but rather to focus on the specific questions they are assigned.

On the day that their case is discussed, each group will submit a write-up of their analyses via soft copy, due by the start of class. <u>Case write-ups are limited to 3 pages of text</u>, and (if desired) an additional page of tables or exhibits (which may also be integrated into the text). Formatting should be 11 point or higher, single- or double-spaced, one-inch margins all around. Length limits will be strictly enforced.

2.3 Exams

There will be two exams during the course, a mid-term and a final. Both exams will be administered in a <u>timed</u>, take-home format. The midterm will be due in mid-March, and the final will be due the during finals week in early May.

Material covered on the exams will include both class lecture/discussion and assigned readings. However, students will not be expected to have in-depth knowledge of topics that are not directly addressed in class. Exam questions will focus on both understanding of the key concepts we cover and the ability to integrate/apply these concepts to real-world marketing problems.

2.4 Group Project

An important component of the course is an in-depth group project to be completed during the second half of the term. The project represents an integrative exercise in which students apply class concepts to specific, real-world marketing problems, and formulate recommendations based on that analysis. Groups will be given a choice of projects, and the exercise allows for a great deal of flexibility.

Project deliverables consist of two components: First, each group will submit a written report of their analyses and recommendations, due at the beginning of our final class session. Second, each group will deliver a presentation of their findings to the class. Details regarding the group project assignment will be provided later in the term.

A Note on Case Analyses:

The cases used in this course are synopses of actual business problems, and are intended to place you in the context of a manager facing an actual marketing challenge. The scenarios have been carefully selected to emphasize a key decision point and to replicate situations that you may face in your own career. By reasoning through the case problems, you will develop a general strategy for attacking business problems, and you will be better prepared to resolve similar problems that you may face in your future profession.

Although you will be provided with a set of case questions to consider, your preparation should not be restricted to those questions. During case preparation, you should attempt to: i) identify the key decisions or problems at hand, ii) isolate the case information that is most relevant to those problems, iii) employ

the appropriate theory to exploit this information in an effort to solve these problems, and iv) determine how best to communicate your solution. After preparing a case, you should be ready to make a clear recommendation about what course of action you would follow, and you should be prepared to back up that recommendation with qualitative and/or quantitative analyses.

It is important that the class work from a common frame of reference. All discussion will be based on the assumption that we are dealing with the situation *at the time of the case*. In fact, using outside material about the company or industry can destroy our common frame and reduce the value of our discussion. Therefore, it is not necessary (or desirable) for you to bring in such "outside" information. Broups should avoid incorporating "outside" information in their case analyses.

3. Course Material

3.1 Required

- Online Course Pack (Harvard). The online course pack contains the cases to be discussed in the course and a few supplementary articles. The pack is available for purchase from the HBS website, at the following link: http://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/73129095. Please see me if you have any trouble finding or accessing the material.
- <u>Outside Readings</u> (T-square). We will be utilizing material from a wide range of contemporary sources in marketing, business, and the social sciences. This material may be downloaded from the course site on T-square (under the 'Resources' tool).
- <u>Textbook (optional)</u>. Solomon (2016), *Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having, and Being*. 12th edition. ISBN: 0134129938. This is a leading textbook in the field of consumer behavior, providing a thorough, accessible exposure to basic theory, with an emphasis on illustration and application. (Although not required, the text is strongly encouraged as a means of reinforcing class material and exposing you to a broader array of consumer behavior topics. As an incentive, the midterm and final exams will contain 1-2 optional/bonus questions taken from the text.)

3.2 Handouts

• Students will be occasionally be given supplementary handouts (e.g., relevant contemporary articles or mini-cases). These may be utilized in class or assigned as outside reading.

4. Other Information

4.1 Meeting with Me

In addition to formal office hours (Thurs 5:00-6:00), I will gladly make an appointment to meet individually with any student who desires to do so. Alternatively, I have found over the years that email is often the most efficient way to deal with specific course inquiries and related matters. Emails will be answered in a timely manner (almost always within 24 hours).

5.2 Lecture Slides

Slides for all class lectures will be posted on T-Square prior to class. Hard copies will be made available at class time.

5.3 Name Tents

I will attempt to learn your name as soon as possible. To help in this effort, please complete a name tent and place it in front of you during EVERY CLASS. If you misplace your name tent, let me know and you will be provided another one.

5.4. Laptops

Although laptops, tablets, etc. are not prohibited in class, their use is often distracting and a disturbance to others. Therefore, please refrain from using these devices unless you deem it necessary.

5.5 Students with Disabilities

To request classroom accommodations, students with disabilities should contact the ADAPTS office: (404-894-2564). Information is available at http://www.adapts.gatech.edu/guides.html.

5. Honor Code and Related Matters

As members of the Georgia Tech community, students are expected to uphold the Academic Honor Code at all times. It is a violation of the Honor Code to give or receive information on assignments, case analyses, or exams from anyone outside of your class, including internet sources. In order to preserve our culture (and advantage in the marketplace arising from how well prepared our students are perceived to be), we urge you not to abuse this policy or tolerate others who do. Information on the Honor Code is available at www.honor.gatech.edu.

7. Course Outline and Assignments (Note regarding readings: Articles are in *italics*, and book chapters are <u>underlined in italics</u>. Solomon readings are <u>optional.</u>)

Date	Readings	Assignments / Miscellaneous		
Introduction: The first sessions are an introduction to the field of consumer behavior, the topics it covers, and principle methods of inquiry.				
Jan 09	(Course Introduction)			
Jan 11	Solomon Chapter 1			
Jan 16	Beyond Functional Benefits	Consumer Behavior Exercise (submit and bring to class)		
	e Individual Consumer: This module explores the effects of basic palues, personality, and self-concept on consumers' wants, needs,			
Jan 18	Segmentation and Positioning, Chapter 11	Group Memberships Finalized		
	The Hidden Persuaders, Chapters 4, 7			
	Solomon Chapter 5 (pp. 150-57), 7 (245-51)			
Jan 23	How Customers Think, Chapter 4	Take VALS Survey		
Jan 23	Solomon Chapter 6 (pp. 178-90), 7 (221-36)	Take VALS Survey		
Jan 25	Case: Saxonville Sausage Company	Case Prep Assignment		
1 20	The Paradox of Choice, Chapter 8			
Jan 30	Happy Money, Chapter 1			
Feb 01	Analyzing Consumer Preferences (coursepack)			
reu 01	Solomon Chapter 8 (pp. 262-80)			
Feb 06	The MicroEconomics of Customer Relationships	Take Sample IAT		
	Do Customer Loyalty Programs Really Work?			
	ecision Making: In this module, we investigate alternative perspectively judgment and choice process, and evaluation of outcomes/satisfactively.			
	The Truth About Customer Experience (coursepack)			
Feb 08	Competing on Customer Journeys (coursepack, optional)			
	Blink, Chapter 5			
Feb 13	Case: Lowes Companies (t-square)	Group Case Analysis		
Feb 15	The Science of Retailing, Chapters 1, 2			
	Analyzing Consumer Perceptions (coursepack)			
	Solomon Chapter 3			
Feb 20	Thinking, Fast and Slow, Ch 1 (19-25), 4			
	Why We Buy, Chapters 3, 4, 6			

Companies Learn Your Secrets Ing Fast and Slow, Ch. 35 In Chapter 4 Marquee The Business of Nightlife In Property of Consumer Promotions In Overload: How to Deal w/ Choice Complexity In Chapter 9 (pp. 312-34) In Chapter 9 (pp. 312-34) In Chapter 1 Behavioural Insights In These sessions explore the various social and cultural in the consumers. In These sessions with other consumers. In Behavioural Insights In These sessions explore the various social and cultural in the consumers. In Behavioural Insights In These sessions explore the various social and cultural in the consumers. In Behavioural Insights In These sessions explore the various social and cultural in the consumers. In These sessions explore the various social and cultural in the consumers. In These sessions explore the various social and cultural in the consumers. In These sessions explore the various social and cultural in the consumers. In These sessions explore the various social and cultural in the consumers. In These sessions explore the various social and cultural in the consumers. In These sessions explore the various social and cultural in the consumers. In These sessions explore the various social and cultural in the consumers. In These sessions explore the various social and cultural in the consumers. In These sessions explore the various social and cultural in the consumers.	Case Prep Assignment JDM Example Survey Case Prep Assignment afluences which impact consumer
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on Chapter 9 (pp. 334-46), 13 (470-81)	
pping Point, Chapter 2	
nal) <u>Empowered</u> , Chapter 3	Group Project Proposal due 03/16
on Chapter 14 (pp. 515-23)	
Spring Break Holiday	Exam #1 due 03/19
Motor Trike Building a Brand Community	Case Prep Assignment
dswell, Chapter 3, 7	
ou Measure the ROI of Your SM Marketing?	
on Chapter 11 (pp. 399-408)	
Blogging at BzzAgent	Group Case Analysis
Speaker: Kyle Morich, Capre Group	
e: When Customers Create the Ad	
People Want (and How to Predict It)	
Mekanism, Inc.	Case Prep Assignment
ented Reality (for 04/19)	
marketing: Inside the Mind of the Consumer (for 04/19)	
nal) Buyology, Chapters 3, 8	
Project Presentations	Group Projects due
#2 due 05/03)	
	spring Break Holiday Motor Trike Building a Brand Community Modern Heading a Brand Communicate Modern Heading a Brand Community Modern Heading a Brand Community