

USC Marshall

School of Business

MKT 525: Consumer Behavior

TEMPLATE – ACTUAL SYLLABUS WILL BE RELEASED ON BRIGHTSPACE

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|-----------------------------|---|
| Instructor: | Professor Kristin Diehl |
| Office: | Hoffman Hall (HOH) 324 |
| Office Hours: | Tuesdays 3.30 pm to 4.30 pm and by appointment (in my office or on Zoom) https://usc.zoom.us/my/kristindiehl |
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| Email: | kdiehl@usc.edu |
| Twitter | @real_k_diehl |
| Course web page: | https://brightspace.usc.edu/ |
| Access to readings | https://reserves.usc.edu/ares/ares.dll |
| Marketing Department | Hoffman Hall, Room 331 Monday to Friday 9 am – 5 pm (213) 740-5033 |

Course Description

Today we have vast amounts of data about customers and their past actions; this class will help you predict and guide consumers' next steps more precisely, because you will develop a better appreciation of the customer behind this data. We will use validated frameworks developed in consumer psychology, marketing, and other behavioral sciences to understand and project how consumers may act, change, and respond to different marketing activities.

Course Objective

In this class you will gain a deeper knowledge of consumers, their implicit and explicit reactions, and their actions based on validated theories and insights. You will also develop a greater understanding on how to guide consumers along the decision journey. You will be exposed to and will use a variety of tools that allow you to better analyze the mind of the consumer. The combination of this know-how and these skills will help you identify viable, new ideas and opportunities for businesses and non-profits in a complex and ever-changing marketplace.

At the end of the class, students will be able to

1. Identify the psychological processes influencing common behaviors consumers engage in.
2. Apply consumer behavior theories to novel consumption situations.
3. Assess consumer perceptions using qualitative and quantitative tools.
4. Design marketing tactics that take the underlying consumer behavior into account.
5. Evaluate opportunities and threats for businesses and non-profits based on a systematic understanding of consumer behavior.

Course Materials

Required Materials

Required materials are listed in the syllabus (starting p. 11) and are accessible online and/or through the USC Library reserves: <https://reserves.usc.edu/ares/ares.dll>. This link is also posted on Brightspace under "Links"

These are often illustrations of what we talk about in class. You are not required to read these before class (unless announced in class), but you should try to read them after to connect to our class discussion. Please stay on top of the readings throughout the semester.

Note, all USC students have free access to the Wall Street Journal through a [school-sponsored membership](#). I highly recommend taking advantage of that subscription.

Optional Materials

Optional readings, videos, and audio clips provide greater detail on material discussed in class or expand on the topic. These materials allow students to clarify concepts that were discussed in class at their own time and pace and/or to dive deeper into a topic.

Required Online Resources

You will need to use **Brightspace** to access materials, submit assignments, etc. To Log in go to <https://brightspace.usc.edu/d2l/login> and use your USC Net ID to log in. You can also find Brightspace on myUSC.

You can find a student guide here: [Brightspace Student Guides](#)

If you have any questions or need assistance with the Brightspace Course Pages, please contact the Marshall HelpDesk at 213-740-3000 (option 2) or HelpDesk@marshall.usc.edu. Alternatively, (213) 740-5555 will get you the USC ITS Help Desk.

Lecture notes

I make lecture notes available by 10 pm the night before our class via Brightspace. These slides comprise a subset of the slides I will use in class and merely serve as an outline for our class discussion. They are there to allow you to take more effective notes but do not substitute for note taking and will not include everything we saw and discussed in class.

Communication

I will use Brightspace's email system to contact you individually or as a group about the class (e.g., changes in the syllabus, assignments, etc.). It is your responsibility to make sure that emails sent via Brightspace can reach you at an email address you check on a regular basis.

Questions?

1. Check the syllabus
2. Check announcements and Q&A Discussion Board on Brightspace
3. Check with a classmate.
4. Email any remaining and all personal questions. Please **use MKT 525 in the subject line** so that you email gets flagged.

I will answer typically within 24 hours, but may take longer if your email arrives after hours or on a weekend. I may also ask you to stop by office hours to discuss questions that may need more time. Please use your USC email as it is less likely to get bounced by spam folders.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

We will be following all university policies. Further,

1. Active class participation is important in achieving the learning objectives for this course. Unless students provide an accommodation letter from USC OSAS or from Marshall detailing visa or travel restrictions, in-person attendance and active participation is expected in the classroom. There will be no synchronous Zoom option under any circumstances.
2. Any student with USC OSAS accommodations should submit their accommodation document to me as soon as possible. I will then provide regular access to a recording of the class and an opportunity to demonstrate in-class work.
3. Students who are experiencing illness (even with mild symptoms) should not attend class in-person. This is the best way for us to protect each other. You will not be penalized for not attending class in person under these circumstances. If possible, please inform me in advance of the class session, that you have to miss class and I will provide you with a link to our class recording that day and an opportunity to do

an alternate short assignment in lieu of class participation. Unless otherwise noted, the alternative assignment is due prior to the beginning of our next class (Pacific Time).

4. If I experience any symptoms, I will do the same and, if possible, we will move class online.

Course Conduct

It is our joint goal to create an exciting and professional learning environment. Please help all of us to achieve that goal by being on time, not texting, etc.

Professionalism will be expected at all times. Because the university classroom is a place designed for the free exchange of ideas, we must show respect for one another in all circumstances. We will show respect for one another by exhibiting patience and courtesy in our exchanges. Courtesy and kindness is the norm for those who participate in my class.

Prior research shows that using laptops in the classroom is distracting to you and your classmates and reduces conceptual learning because it facilitates verbatim note taking. For these reasons it is detrimental to academic performance and satisfaction with students' learning experience and I strongly discourage using a laptop in class. If you need to use a laptop (e.g., for medical reasons) please sit in the back of the class.

Should they arise, during synchronous Zoom sessions, the following netiquette is expected, as if you were in a physical classroom.

Please do:

- Log into class early or promptly via your USC account
- Arrange to attend class where there is a reliable internet connection and without distractions
- Dress respectfully. Video conference business meetings are and will be the norm, so practice your professional telepresence.
- If you use a virtual background, please keep it respectfully professional.
- Display both your first and last name during video conferencing and synchronous class meetings.
- Minimize distractions by muting and or turning off video if necessary and when appropriate.
- Eating and drinking during class is acceptable as long as you are still able to actively participate

- Engage in appropriate tone and language with instructors and classmates.

Please try not to:

- Engage in a simultaneous activity not related to the class.
- Interact with persons who are not part of the class during the class session.
- Leave frequently or not be on camera for extended periods of time.

Open Expression and Respect for all

An important goal of the educational experience at USC Marshall is to be exposed to and discuss diverse, thought-provoking, and sometimes controversial ideas that challenge one's beliefs. In this course we will support the values articulated in the USC Marshall "[Open Expression Statement](https://www.marshall.usc.edu/open-expression-statement)" (<https://www.marshall.usc.edu/open-expression-statement>).

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask me if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Use of AI Generators

Since creating, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all assignments should be prepared by the student working individually or in groups. Students may not have another person or entity complete any substantive portion of the assignment. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, using AI-generated tools is prohibited for individual assignments and exams, will be identified as plagiarism, and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

For the Consumer Behavior Project you are welcome to use AI tools (ChatGPT, Gemini, etc.) to help you brainstorm or revise work you have already written. However,

- Proceed with caution when using AI tools and do not assume the information provided is accurate or trustworthy. If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is incorrect unless you either know the correct answer or can verify its accuracy with another source. You will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool. It works best for topics you understand.
- Note, ChatGPT in particular makes up sources, hence track down anything you will build on. Your Reference section will require working links to each source.
- AI is a tool, but one that you need to acknowledge using. Please include a paragraph at the end of your project submission that states whether you used any AI tools and explain how (and why) you used AI and indicate/specify the prompts you used to obtain the results what prompts you used to get the results. Failure to do so is a violation of academic integrity policies.
- Be thoughtful about when AI is useful. Consider its appropriateness for each application.
- To adhere to our university values, you must cite any AI-generated material (e.g., text, images, etc.) included or referenced in your work and provide the prompts used to generate the content. Using an AI tool to generate content without proper attribution will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

No recording and copyright notice.

Pursuant to the *USC Student Handbook* (<https://policy.usc.edu/studenthandbook/>, pages 13 and 27), students may not record a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class. In addition, students may not distribute or use notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property based on USC classes or lectures

without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than personal or class-related group study by students registered for the class. This restriction on unauthorized use applies to all information that is distributed or displayed for use in relationship to the class. Distributing course material without the instructor's permission will be presumed to be an intentional act to facilitate or enable academic dishonesty and is strictly prohibited. Violation of this policy may subject an individual or entity to university discipline and/or legal proceedings.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. **The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive.** More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the [Financial Aid Office webpage](#) for [undergraduate](#)- and [graduate-level](#) SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

Emergency Preparedness

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, the USC Emergency Information web site (<https://www.usc.edu/emergency/>) will provide safety and other information, including electronic means by which instructors will conduct class using a combination of USC's Brightspace learning management system, Zoom, and other technologies.

Grading

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| In-class work | 10% |
| Individual assignments | 20% |
| Exam 1 | 24% |
| Exam 2 | 24% |
| Consumer Behavior Project (Team) | 22% |

If you join the class after the first class, you are responsible for all content and deliverables that have already been assigned or covered.

Your grades will be posted on our course page on Brightspace. Please check there from time to time to make sure all your grades are recorded properly.

Please note that while final grades are awarded based on individual performance, they are also aligned Marshall's rigorous academic standards to maintain fairness and consistency across courses. To that end, I will also take into account factors such as z-scores when assigning specific cutoffs for final letter grades in this course at the end of the semester.

In-class work

Your ability to benefit from the course and to contribute to class is largely dependent upon your presence (physically and mentally) during class meetings. Attendance is expected but not per se part of in-class contribution. If you cannot attend class, you will be responsible for everything covered or announced in class.

While some students are far more comfortable than others with class participation, *all* students should make an effort to contribute meaningfully.

I use a scale of (2) for strong, relevant, and meaningful participation, (1) for average, relevant, and meaningful participation, and (0) for below average or negative participation (e.g., checking your phone).

When we have guest speakers, I will use a similar scale to encourage you to engage with the speakers during and after their presentations.

I may ask you to complete a short task prior to class to facilitate our class discussion. Whether you did or did not complete this task on time may also enter your in-class work.

Individual Assignments

There are four individual assignments for you to complete. Individual assignments are created to apply some of the concepts and tools you learned about in class and in your readings to new topics and areas.

The details of the “Zmat/Laddering” and the “Perceptual map” assignments will be discussed in class. These assignments allow you to use and explore tools that can help you understand the consumer better. The other two assignments are explained in greater detail below.

You can choose when you want to complete the CB Minute assignment (see more below). The other assignment dates are set.

- CB Minute assignment (*choose a due date by 9/3– see “Links” on Brightspace*)
- Zmat/Laddering assignment
- Perceptual map assignment
- Top Ten assignment

CB Minute assignment

Each person will pick a date during the semester (list of available dates will be posted on Google docs) to submit a real-world example that hit the news within the last six months and that relates to consumer behavior or consumer experiences. The topic of the example should cover one of the previous two *content* classes (i.e., not guest speakers).

Please make sure you connect your example to how a concept, idea, or theory discussed in class or in our readings applies to things you see in the marketplace. Please make sure you focus your discussion on the *consumer behavior aspects* (not marketing in general) and that you clearly explain how the concept you picked is reflected in your example. Examples presented/learned in other classes are not eligible.

If you read this: please email me a picture that represents your most enjoyable or most special or most meaningful consumption experience with a one sentence explanation. Thanks for reading.

Note, these assignments are due the night before class! Assignments should not be more than one page of writing (12 point font), plus any pictures, graphs, links, etc. as an appendix. In addition to uploading them on Brightspace, please also email me your assignments with the subject MKT 525.

Top Ten Lessons Every Marketer should know

The final, integrative individual assignment for this course will be for you to prepare a list of the top 10 lessons you as a marketer have taken away from this course. What are

the top 10 things you believe all marketers need to understand about consumer behavior? You will have to pick specific concepts and ideas. Just going by class headlines will not suffice!! The "lesson" needs to be a unique point from the class discussion or readings. However, it is not required that all class topics are covered in your Top 10 list.

Be sure to specify why you think each point you list deserves to be in the Top 10. What are the implications for marketers of each point? Explain why and how knowing this theory/fact concept, etc. will benefit marketers. Your write-up should not exceed two pages single-spaced pages. More details will be announced in class.

Exams

Exams will cover the topics covered in class and in the required readings. Exams will be administered in class. Exam 2 is not cumulative, but rather covers topics covered since exam 1.

Exams consist of (a few) multiple choice questions and short answer questions in responses to short vignettes/cases. All information necessary to answer these vignettes will be provided in the exam. More details will be announced in class.

Consumer Behavior Project

The goal of the Consumer Behavior project will be to apply your learning to a new context.

I will form groups by the second week of classes. Teams will have between 4 and 5 members. With fewer members the workload gets too high, with more members the coordination load gets too high. If there are serious reasons why you cannot be part of a particular team/work with a particular person, please let me know as soon as possible.

If your team would rather explore a topic of your own choosing, please contact me asap with a brief proposal.

In line with the structure of the class, the project also has two parts.

- 1) Part 1: Understand the consumer
- 2) Part 2: Guide the consumer

1) **Part 1 – Reflecting your learning from Modules 1 - 3**

In order to understand the consumer your task is to gather both secondary research (i.e., read articles, use the data bases available at the business school library) as well as *primary* research and draw some novel insights from your research (e.g., motivations, perceptions, attitudes, et). The primary research could involve tools that

you encountered during your individual assignments and/or could involve other techniques (e.g., observational research, etc.). You should choose what is the most appropriate given your topic. As we discuss in class, not one size fits all when it comes to research approaches.

A short video (5 – 8 minutes) of your insights and what they are built on is due October 5. This is to keep you on track and be able to receive feedback from me and the class before moving forward.

2) **Part 2 – Building on Part 1 and Reflecting your learning from Modules 4 & 5**

Based on what you learned, you will design a novel approach to change consumers' beliefs, attitudes, or actions. The objective is to design an intervention/change/entirely new approach and that you would be able to test the effectiveness of that approach either online or offline using an experiment. That means you will have to have some form of control group or a pre-treatment period to compare your results to.

What you will be graded on is whether the approach was grounded in and arrived from your insights in part 1 and is novel (i.e., you cannot just replicate what a company is already doing in that industry though you can transfer approaches from one industry to another industry where it has not been used).

Your final deliverable will be a taped presentation and annotated slide deck shared with me by DATE at 6 pm.

On DATE, you will view and comment on your classmates' presentations. You will be able to do this at your own time (within 24 hours). More details will be shared in class.

Peer evaluations will be considered within the grading process, they are not per se part of the final grade. Peer evaluations will ask team members to allocate 100 points among all team members (including themselves) for a) performing their agreed upon role and b) facilitating the progress of the team.

Peer evaluation form

This brief survey will allow you to evaluate the contributions of the individual members to the group's effort on the final project.

Remember, there are many ways in which team members can contribute virtually and through in person meetings.

Therefore, please try and take a holistic view of the entire group effort over the course of this project as you consider how the individual parts sum to a whole.

These evaluations are completely confidential and will not be shown to your team members, so respond as honestly as possible.

Note, I will not factor this part into the group assignment grade until all other components are graded!

1. Please indicate all member of your team (including yourself)
2. Please allocate a total of 100 points among your team members including yourself. If you are not included on the list below, please use the back button in the survey (bottom right of the page, not the browser), to return to the previous page. Please allocate points such that members who contributed more to the project will receive more points. In the case of equal contribution, points should be allocated equally among all team members.
3. Please explain your division here, particularly if they deviate from an equal allocation. Please be as specific as possible.

Support Systems

[*Counseling and Mental Health*](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[*988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline*](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline consists of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)*](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[*Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)*](#) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-2500

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

Projected Class Schedule

You are responsible for any changes announced in class or posted on Brightspace

| Date | Day | Topic | Assignment |
|------|-----|---|-------------------------------------|
| | | Introduction to the class | |
| | | | |
| | | Understanding consumer behavior in the here and now and in the future | Complete slide introducing yourself |
| | | What do consumers want? Motivation and needs | Pick date for CB Minute assignment |
| | | <i>Tools:</i> How to know what consumers want? | |
| | | | |
| | | Attention and search | |
| | | Perception is reality - Feeling | |
| | | <i>Guest speaker:</i> | |
| | | Perception is reality - Thinking | Zmat/Laddering assignment due |
| | | <i>Tools:</i> How to know what consumers perceive? | |
| | | Learning and memory <i>asynchronous (no in class meeting)</i> | |
| | | <i>Guest speaker:</i> ○ | Perceptual map assignment due |
| | | In-class workday CB Project | |
| | | Exam 1 | |
| | | | |
| | | Categorization | |

| | Day | Topic | |
|---|-----|--|--|
| | | Attitudes and Persuasion | |
| | | <i>Tools:</i> Intro to experimentation | |
| 4) How do consumers choose? | | | |
| | | Consumer decision making | |
| | | Nudges and Influence | |
| | | Good Habit, Bad Habits, No Habits yet? | |
| 5) How do consumers engage with their choices? | | | |
| | | Consumption | |
| | | <i>Guest speaker:</i> | |
| | | Satisfaction and Loyalty | |
| | | Sharing experiences with others | |
| | | <i>Guest speaker:</i> | |
| | | Exam 2 | |
| | | Group consultations – <i>no in-class meeting</i> | |
| | | Consuming future and past experiences | |
| Class Wrap up | | | |
| | | Class Wrap up | <i>"Top Ten List" due</i> |
| | | Final Presentations | <i>Presentations due 12/11 6 pm</i> |