

# B7607-001 Strategic Consumer Insight

## Professor Pham

### Spring 2024

Professor: Michel T. Pham 0  
Office: Kravis Hall 922  
Phone: 212-854-3472  
Class times: Saturdays, varying times  
(check schedule)  
Classroom: TBA  
Office Hours: By appointment

[Short video example of recent company project with Wyndham](#)

#### **Course Objectives**

For most companies, business success requires the ability to uncover genuine insights about their customers. Which product is going to be a “hit”; which one is going to “flop”? Which aging brand can be revived; which one is doomed to die? Which product positioning will resonate best in the marketplace? Is a new market trend just a fad or is it going to last? How much will consumers be willing to pay for X? These are a few examples of the many important business questions that companies face every day and require customer insight.

This course focuses on the generation of sustainable customer insight for B2C companies, hence the title “Strategic Consumer Insight.”<sup>1</sup> As will be amply demonstrated in this course, personal intuition about consumers is *not* consumer insight nor a substitute for it. The purpose of the course is therefore to equip students with the concepts and tools to become disciplined and astute discoverers of strategic customer insights for consumer-oriented (B2C) businesses.

This full-term course will be action-learning-oriented: combining lectures/discussions with many in-class workshops during which students will practice with and apply proprietary customer insight planning tools that the professor has developed through his many years of executive teaching, corporate training, and consulting. Importantly, students will have the opportunity to work on a real-life consumer insight project submitted by a client company. This real-life project provides a unique hands-on opportunity to design and execute a complete consumer insight engagement for a real client to help them address specific business issues (e.g., changing customer demographics, new competition, loss of brand relevance, market development, etc.). Previous clients include Coca-Cola, Macy’s, Novartis, Best Buy, Rolodex, ESPN, Men’s Health, Wrigley, Ann Taylor, Verizon, Wyndham hotels, Home Depot, and LG Electronics. **The Spring 2024 will be announced in December 2023.**

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<sup>1</sup> Although the course focuses on consumer insights for B2C companies, many of the concepts and tools covered apply to the generation of customer insights for B2B companies as well.

This course builds on and extends the marketing core course in the MBA/EMBA program by fleshing out the customer insight dimension of the strategic market planning process. Topics covered in this course include: (1) how consumers make decisions; (2) how consumers shop in retail environments; (3) how to uncover consumers' true motives, needs, and wants; (4) the role of feelings and emotions in consumer behavior; (5) an introduction to qualitative market research for consumer insight; (6) analyzing consumer experiences; and (7) social and cultural determinants of consumer behavior.

### **Deliverables and Grading**

Final grades will be determined as follows:

Class Participation (including in-class exercises)	20% (Individual)
Online Surveys	20% (Individual)
Group Assignments	20% (Group)
Company Field Project	40% (Group – with possible adjustment for individual contribution)

*Class Participation.* In line with the action-learning orientation of the course, a substantial portion of the grade will be based on each student's engagement and quality of participation in the course's learning activities. Solid participation requires (a) a strong attendance record (excessive absences may result in a failing grade); (b) thorough preparation of any assigned materials; (c) positive contributions to class discussions, including through insightful questions that benefit the entire class; and (d) active and constructive involvement in the various in-class exercises. Punctuality and avoidance of distraction will also be reflected in the overall participation grade. Therefore, please remember to put your electronics (e.g., phone, laptop) away during class sessions. Unauthorized use of electronics during class sessions will result in automatic reductions of participation points.

*Online Surveys.* To facilitate in-class discussions students will be asked to complete a series of short online surveys pertaining to materials to be discussed in class. All surveys should be completed individually on Canvas by 10 pm the evening before each class. Responses to the survey questions do not need to be lengthy (typically 3-4 sentences per question will suffice). However, responses have to be thoughtful to receive full credit. Entries submitted after the designated survey deadlines will not be credited.

*Group Assignments.* Various in-class exercises and project-focused workshops will be conducted throughout the term. Some of these will be the subject of written assignments to be submitted as a group. Their due dates are marked on the course schedule.

*Company Field Project.* The field project is a hands-on opportunity to analyze and address specific issues about consumers that are of particular interest to an existing company. Early in the semester (during the third class), the client company will describe its projects. Students will work in groups of **four to five (max)** on their projects throughout the semester. The groups should be formed by **Class 4 (Feb. 10)**. Responsibility for forming the groups is left to the students. A project proposal based on the first workshop is due on **Feb 19**. A **progress report**, to be reviewed by the client, should be submitted before **March 21**. The project should go beyond standard library research and involve the collection and analysis of primary data (e.g., in-depth interviews, focus

groups, online surveys).<sup>2</sup> When making recommendations, students should engage in “big-picture” yet analytically sound thinking, taking into account both the pros and cons of alternative solutions, as well as short-term and long-term implications of the proposed recommendations. At the end of the course, each group will summarize its investigation, findings, and recommendations in a report to be presented in the final class on **April 20** with the clients in attendance. Final written reports are to be submitted to the professor and the clients on **Wednesday, April 24 at 10:00 AM** (to ensure a timely evaluation and submission of the overall course grades).

Field projects will be evaluated based on (a) the breadth and depth of the research, (b) appropriate application of consumer behavior tools and concepts, (c) logical development of conclusions and implications, (d) originality of consumer insights, (e) quality of business recommendation; and (f) quality of the written report and oral presentation. (Input from the client company will be incorporated into these evaluations.) More details on the project will be provided later in the term.

*Note: Groups are responsible for managing their own dynamics and ensuring that every team member contributes positively to the project and carries their fair share of the work. At the end of the term, all students will be asked to assess the relative contribution of each of their teammates to the overall project, and, if necessary, individual grades for the company project may be adjusted accordingly.*

### **Course Materials**

- *Lecture Notes.* As lecture notes, hard copies of most of the slides will be distributed at the beginning of each session. Use these lecture notes as a support for your own note-taking, not as a substitute for it. If you are unable to attend a session, please have a classmate collect a set for you. While the lecture notes will be posted on Canvas after each session, they will not be sent individually.
- *Readings.* All required readings will be distributed electronically via Canvas. Short surveys to be completed every evening before the following day’s class will relate to some of the readings and cases.

*Suggested Additional Readings.* Students who are interested in additional background on consumer behavior or wish to go deeper into certain topics may also find the following books useful:

1. *Consumer Behavior* (5th Edition) by Wayne D. Hoyer and Deborah J. MacInnis, South-Western, 2008. This is an excellent, if somewhat encyclopedic, text on consumer behavior. It covers many of the topics and concepts that will be covered in class. Several copies are available on reserve in the Business School’s Watson Library in Uris.
2. *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* (Revised Edition) by Robert B. Cialdini, Collins Business, 2006. This is a short but classic reference on the science of persuasion. It was named by the *Journal of Marketing Research* one the most important books written for marketers.

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<sup>2</sup> To get sense of the data collection efforts expected, for such a typical project, each group would collect “deep” data—rich qualitative data from interview, focus groups, or ethnographies—from 30 to 40 consumers, not including surveys, which typically provide more superficial (“shallower”) data.

3. *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping* (Revised Edition) by Paco Underhill, Simon & Schuster, 2008. This is another classic that includes a range of insights on shopping behavior.
4. *Consumer Insights: Findings from Behavioral Research*, Edited by Joseph W. Alba, Marketing Science Institute, 2011. A recent compilation of major findings in academic consumer research with their implication for marketing.

## Contact

Whenever possible, I prefer real-time, in person communication over e-mail (to which I may not be able to respond promptly). If you have any questions regarding the class, please come to speak to me after class or schedule an appointment.

## Canvas

Course-relevant materials and additional important information (about readings, assignments, etc.) will be posted on the school's Canvas system. Because some of the readings are provided by an external site, please use Mozilla's *Firefox* to access the course materials on Canvas, as Microsoft's *Internet Explorer* tends to create problems when accessing external sites. Please consult the course's site regularly (at least twice a week) because important announcements may be posted. It will be assumed that any announcement that has been posted at least 24 hours prior to a class (e.g., on Monday night) has been read prior to that class (on Wednesday).

## Classroom Norm Reminders

- ☐ Please help us ensure that classes start and finish on time by being punctual, as time is a very precious commodity for all of us.
- ☐ Please remember to put away your laptops, cell phones, and other mobile devices when the class is in session, as a courtesy for everybody and to avoid distraction (of yourself, your neighbors, and the instructor).
- ☐ Unexcused late arrivals or early departure, and unauthorized use of electronics during class sessions will result in automatic participation point reductions.
- ☐ Please always have your name card in front of you, so that I can remember who is who and address you properly. (If you forget to bring it, just make a temporary one.) In addition to facilitating classroom discussions, having your name in front of you will ensure that your class participation is recorded properly.

## Pre-course Confirmation Survey

To ensure that there is a good fit between students' expectations and class expectations, all students are asked to complete a pre-course questionnaire to confirm that (a) they understand the course's requirements, including the above-average workload, (b) they understand the nature of the company project, and (c) they commit to respecting the classroom expectations set forth in this syllabus (e.g., no electronics while in session, timely attendance). Students who

do not complete the survey by the due date and/or do not agree with the terms of the class will be unenrolled from the class.

**Preparation for the First Class**

- ☐ Complete the pre-course confirmation survey by Thursday, January 14, 2024
- ☐ Complete Survey 1 by Thursday, January 18 at 10:00 PM
- ☐ Complete the readings
- ☐ Remember to bring your name card

Strategic Consumer Insight			
TENTATIVE Course Schedule (subject to guest speakers' schedules etc.)			
Session	Topics & Cases/Activities	Assignments	Readings (Subject to Updates on Canvas)
1 Jan. 20 11:30-3:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction to Strategic Consumer Insight &amp; Five-Step Framework for Customer Insight</li> <li>Workshop 1: DMU Analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Syllabus &amp; Project Brief</li> <li>Complete Survey 1 by Thursday, 01/18, 10:00 PM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">"Stories That Deliver Business Insights"</a></li> <li><a href="#">How do they Know their Customers so Well?</a></li> </ul>
2 Jan. 27 11:30-3:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consumer Need Analysis (I)</li> <li>Workshop 2: Need Landscape Analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete Survey 2 by Thursday, 01/25, 10:00 PM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Meta's Flagship Metaverse Falling Short</a></li> </ul>
3 Feb. 03 8:30-11:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consumer Need Analysis (II)</li> <li>Client Company Presentation of Project. <b>Guest Speaker: TBA</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit G1-Need Landscape Analysis (4 pts) by Thursday, Feb. 1 at 10:00 PM</li> <li>Re-read Project Brief</li> <li>Complete Survey 3 by Thursday, 02/01, 10:00 PM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">A Theory of Human Motivation</a></li> </ul>
4 Feb. 10 8:30-11:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consumer Need Analysis (III)</li> <li>Workshop 3: Hierarchical Value Mapping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete Survey 4 by Thursday, Feb. 8 at 10:00 PM</li> <li>Submit Group Composition by Monday, Feb. 12 at 8:00 PM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Laddering Theory, Method, Analysis, and Interpretation</a></li> <li><a href="#">Excerpts from Dichter's Handbook of Consumer Motivation</a></li> </ul>
5 Feb. 17 8:30-11:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative Market Research for Consumer Insight (I)</li> <li><b>Guest Speaker: Thomas Troch</b>, Head of Design &amp; Accelerate at InSites Consulting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit G2-Hierarchical Value Mapping (6 pts) by Thursday, Feb. 15 at 10:00 PM</li> <li>Complete Survey 5 by Thursday, Feb. 15 at 10:00 PM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">The Research Process</a></li> <li><a href="#">Developing and Using Information about Consumer Behavior</a></li> </ul>
6 Feb. 24 11:30-3:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative Market Research for Consumer Insight (cont'd)</li> <li>Workshop 4: Project Research Planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete Survey 6 by Thursday, Feb. 22 at 10:00 PM</li> <li>Submit Project Proposal by Monday, March 03 at 8:00 PM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>

Schedule (cont'd)			
Session	Topics & Cases/Activities	Assignments	Readings (Subject to Updates on Canvas)
7 Mar. 2 3:30-6:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buying Process Analysis</li> <li><b>Guest Speaker: Hayes Roth</b>, H.A. Roth Consulting, former CMO of Landor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete Survey 7 by Thursday, Mar. 21 at 10:00 PM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">The Consumer Decision Making Process</a></li> </ul>
8 Mar. 9 3:30-6:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consumer Value Analysis</li> <li><i>Workshop 5: Multiattribute Modeling</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete Survey 8 by Thursday, Mar. 28 at 10:00 PM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBA</li> </ul>
9 Mar. 23 3:30-6:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shopping Behavior Analysis</li> <li><b>Guest Speaker: Eric Solomon</b>, PhD, Founder, The Human OS, former CMO of Spotify, former Global Head of Business Marketing at Instagram</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete Survey 9 by Thursday, April 4 at 10:00 PM</li> <li>Submit Progress Report on Field Project by Thursday, March 21 at 10:00 PM</li> <li>Submit G3- (5 pts) by Thursday, April 4 at 10:00 PM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">The Science of Shopping</a></li> </ul>
10 Apr. 6 11:30-3:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer Experience Analysis &amp; <i>Workshop 7: Total Experience Analysis</i></li> <li>Guest Speaker:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete Survey 10 by Thursday, April 14 at 10:00 PM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Values and Culture</a></li> </ul>
11 Apr. 13 8:30-11:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feelings and Emotions in Consumer Behavior</li> <li><i>Workshop 7: Integration of Company Project Insights</i></li> <li>Course Conclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete Survey 11 by Thursday, April 18 at 10:00 PM</li> <li>Submit G4-Total Experience Analysis (5 pts) by Thursday, April 18 at 10:00 PM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Emotional Cues that Work Magic on Customers</a></li> <li><a href="#">The New Science of Customer Emotions</a></li> </ul>
12 Apr. 20 11:30-3:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Project Presentations to Client</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upload Presentations by 8:00 AM</li> </ul>	
Wednesday, April 24: Submit Final Reports for Field Project by 10:00 AM			



**Michel Tuan Pham**  
KRAVIS PROFESSOR OF BUSINESS  
COLUMBIA BUSINESS SCHOOL

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Michel Tuan Pham is the Kravis Professor of Business in Marketing at Columbia Business School, whose faculty he joined more than 25 years ago. At Columbia he teaches in the MBA, EMBA, Ph.D., and Executive Education programs. He is also the Research Director of the Columbia Center on Global Brand Leadership and Co-Director of Columbia's *Brand Leadership* program for executives. Professor Pham has a Licenciante degree in Applied Economics from the Catholic University of Louvain-Mons, Belgium and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Business-Administration/Marketing from the University of Florida. He has held visiting professorships at various international institutions, including the University of Chicago, where he was the Ford Foundation Visiting Professor of Marketing, the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium, the China Europe International Business School in Shanghai, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Singapore Management University, and the Institut d'Administration des Entreprises (IAE) of the University of Paris I - Sorbonne.

Professor Pham's business expertise and consulting activities are in the areas of marketing strategy and management, branding strategy, consumer psychology, trademark psychology, and the psychology of decision making. He has worked on these issues with companies from a variety of industries. An acclaimed executive teacher, he has also taught these subjects to executives and companies around the world. Recent training and consulting clients include Bayer Healthcare, Adidas, Brighton Collectibles, The Walt Disney Company, Bath & Body Works, Federal Home Loan Bank of New York, Nike, Converse, Coca-Cola, DNAinfo, Gucci, Singapore Airlines, KIND Snacks, Dropbox, Patagonia, Eli Lilly, Lonza, and VMware. His comments on current business issues have been widely publicized, including in the New York Times, Forbes, Wall Street Journal, AdWeek, Washington Post, BBC's World Business Report, and CNN's Headline News.

His current research focuses on the role of affect (moods, feelings, and emotions) in judgment and decision-making and consumer self-regulation. His numerous scientific articles are widely cited, have received several awards and have appeared in many leading academic journals in marketing, management, and psychology, including the *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Psychological Science*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *Review of General Psychology*, *Personality and Social Psychological Review*, *Psychology and Marketing*, *Marketing Letters*, *Journal of Economic Psychology*, and *Recherche et Application en Marketing*. He is a scientific advisor for numerous academic journals, and serves or has served on the Editorial Boards of *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, and *Recherche et Application en Marketing*. He is a past President of the *Society for Consumer Psychology*, the leading professional organization for the advancement of the psychological science of the consumer. In 2015 he was inducted as a lifetime Fellow of the Society for "Outstanding Contributions to the Field of Consumer Psychology." He is currently writing a book on customer insight.

On the personal front, Professor Pham is an avid traveler, curious reader, happy eater, foreign movie admirer, former judo competitor, and wine lover (not necessarily in that order). He is a Belgian citizen of Vietnamese descent, permanent resident of the US, who was born in Congo. He lives in Manhattan, with his wife, a Taiwanese citizen (whom he married in Spain), and their two children, both US citizens.