AIMS OF THE COURSE:

We often hear that we live in a consumer culture. Sometimes, this is an accusation towards an increasingly materialistic and superficial society, where appearing and having count more than being. In more rigorous terms, consumer culture can be defined as a culture in which, increasingly, the center of people’s lives is consumption. We’ve gone from a society in which our central core was work to a society in which our central core is consumption. The majority of people desire, pursue, acquire and display goods, services and brands that are valued for non-utilitarian reasons, i.e. for identity building reasons.

The study of the role of consumption in our everyday life is at the center of an influential stream of research termed “Consumer Culture Theory” (CCT) that has revolutionized the field of consumer research, previously dominated by psychological approaches that downplayed the social and cultural aspects of consumption.

The goal of the course is to:

• Provide PhD students with an essential toolkit of conceptual instruments (identity project, extraordinary experience, consumer tribe, brand volunteer), grounded in the social sciences (anthropology, ethnology and sociology) and critical theories, through which they will be able to make sense of consumer experiences in the global marketplace and especially in the Mediterranean context.
• Expose them to best cases of academic works based on the cultural principles and mobilizing research methods such as ethnography, netnography, phenomenology and videography.
COURSE SYLLABUS:

- Consumption, marketplace and identity in postmodern societies and in a Mediterranean context
- Consumer Culture Theory and its contributions to marketing and consumer research
- The methodologies to study consumer culture: ethnography, netnography, visual methods, videography, long interviews, introspection
- The social aspects of consumption: consumer tribes and brand communities
- From consumption to presumption and brand volunteering: a critical perspective

LIST OF READINGS:


TEACHING METHODS:

- Lectures-discussion using videos of consuming experiences
- Methodological exercises (ethnographies; introspections)
Lecturer’s Biographical Note:

Bernard Cova is Full-Time Professor of Marketing at Kedge Business School Marseilles since 2005. He acts as Visiting Professor at Università Bocconi, Milan since 2000. He teaches and publishes in French, English and Italian. A pioneer in the Consumer Tribes field since the early nineties, his internationally-influential research has emphasized what he calls “the Mediterranean approach” of B2C marketing. His work on this topic has been published in the International Journal of Research in Marketing, the European Journal of Marketing, the Journal of Marketing Management, the Journal of Business Research, the Journal of Consumer Behaviour, Marketing Theory and Organization. He has collaborated through action research programs with companies such as Alfa Romeo, Citroën, Ducati, Jeep, Macif, Pirelli, etc.

Professor Cova presents an H-index of 48 according to Harzing’s Publish or Perish classification (http://www.harzing.com/pop.htm, December 1st 2015). Bernard Cova’s article “Working consumers: the next step in marketing theory?” (Marketing Theory, 2009) has won one of the prestigious Citations of Excellence Awards for 2013. It has been chosen as one of the top 50 articles with proven impact since its publication date (2009 in this case to allow for citation impact to be accurately measured) from the top 300 management journals in the world. These 300 journals publish approximately 15,000 articles annually and so receiving a Citation of Excellence is an extraordinary achievement.