# **Customer Behavior and Semantic Web**

## Prof. Angela Antonia Beccanulli; Prof. Giovanni Mordenti

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course aims to provide students with a critical perspective on current customer behaviors and brand communication strategies in the Semantic Web, and to reflect on how today's customers, objects, brands, technology, and culture are subtly interwoven and rapidly co-evolving. Hence, the course engages with customer behavior from a contemporary cultural perspective that examines how the Semantic Web has transformed the customer’s expressive, communication, and socialization practices, the objects’ properties and ontologies, and thus brands’ communication issues, which had to adapt to the fast-evolving technocultural scenario through new strategies and contents. This scenario, indeed, continuously challenges brands to innovate and redefine their role for consumers, companies, society, and institutions.

The course develops a cross-disciplinary approach that combines basic and advanced conceptual foundations with up-to-date managerial issues and challenges that the brands must confront to face reality.

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

* understand how the Semantic Web has driven the evolution of customer behavior, and how brands have managed this turn to develop the actual communication strategies performed;
* develop conceptual knowledge on the design, content, and use of brand communication strategies in the Semantic Web context;
* develop critical decision-making by recognizing, assessing, and analyzing the territory in which brands and customers live;
* apply theoretical and conceptual knowledge of the new object properties and consequent evolution of customer behavior to the design and implementation of brand communication strategies;
* develop conceptual knowledge on how to use the necessary tools to design a communication strategy (or campaign) for a brand, being able to work within a realistic scenario.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Module 1: *Prof. Angela Antonia Beccanulli*

The following topics will be covered:

**–** *Introducing Customer Behavior and the Semantic Web*

\* Defining Customer Behavior.

\* Understanding the evolution of customers’ needs, wants, and desires after the introduction of the Semantic Web.

\* Defining the Semantic Web: Key Concepts and Principles.

**–** *The customer evolution. Navigating new expressive forms and practices of communication and socialization*

*\** Learning about the Semantic Social Networks

\* Analyzing new consumers’ expressive forms and relative dynamics that emerged in the Semantic Social Networks: the selfie, the Haul, the Photo Dump, the meme.

\* Analyzing new consumers’ communication practices that emerged in the Semantic Social Networks: a deep-dive into the rise of the Phatic Culture.

\* Analyzing new consumers’ socialization practices that emerged in the Semantic Social Networks: a study of consumers’ tribes and virtual communities.

**–** *The**dawn of a new Brand Management Era*

\* Navigating the new brand communication scenario.

\* Studying new brand communication strategies.

\* Studying new brand communication content: introduction to cultural branding.

**–** *The Semantic Web & the emergence of a new object conceptualization*

\* Studying the Anthropocentric Theory.

\* Analyzing the Humanization Perspectives.

\* Analyzing the Post-Humanization Perspectives: the Actor-Network Theory and Assemblage Theory

\* Knowledge Graphs in Use A of Alexa in e-tourism Case Study.

Module 2: *Prof. Giovanni Mordenti*

The following main topics will be covered:

*– Introduction on the actual scenario: interdependence between multinational companies, agencies and customers*

* How companies adapt to consumers macro-trends
* The role of communication agencies in the contemporary business scenario

*– Knowing the customers: how companies investigate customer behaviors*

* Which data are available about customers in the semantic web
* Principle of data analysis: how to segment a target audience

**–** *Influencing customer behavior through search engine optimization techniques*

* Search engine technology has evolved making semantic search essential for SEO
* Understanding the evolution from a keyword-based model to an intent-based/ behavior-based model
* How brands are adapting their strategy according to the new paradigm

**–** *The new era of social media is rewriting the rules of the game: how companies try to understand their customers in the Semantic Web*

* Introduction to web e social listening
* How to write a Boolean query
* How to interpret, organize and display the results of a web listening analysis

**–** *The rise of the Creator economy*

* The birth and growth of different types of creators
* How an influencer uses social media content to sell products and grow businesses.
* Influence Marketing. How companies benefit influencers to promote the brands, products, or services.
* New trends and languages (i.e. Virtual Influencers, Reliable idols, De-influencing, etc.).

**–** *Technology is redefining customer behavior and online marketing*

* The use of AI into web listening
* How companies are leveraging machine learning and AI technology to evolve their marketing strategies.

***READING LIST***

Required readings

R.V. Kozinets, U. Gretzel, R.C. Gambetti, Influencers and Creator, Business, Culture and Practice, Sage Publications, 2023.

Additional course materials (e.g. lesson slide decks, academic journal articles, book chapters, conference papers, and research reports) that constitute required readings will be provided by Prof. Beccanulli and Prof. Lombardi throughout their modules and will be uploaded on the Blackboard platform.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course will be based on critical interactive lessons, group case study discussions, discussion of digital and video materials, a group assignment sharpening analytical skills, and a group project work facing a real company issue. A few experts will be invited as guest speakers to provide their points of view on the evolution of customer behavior and the semantic web evolution.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students can choose between a multiple assessment route and a single assessment route.

Multiple assessment route (requiring attendance)

The assessment will consist of three components including an individual written test in the First Module, an individual oral test in the Second Module, and a business group project, that each student is required to take in a group (groups of students will be purposively multicultural in their composition) and present at the end of the second Module. More in detail:

* the intermediate individual written test is going to be composed of two open-ended questions relevant to the theoretical and conceptual foundations faced in the First Module of the course (40% of the final grade);
* the intermediate individual oral test is going to be composed of three questions relevant to the conceptual foundations faced in the Second Module of the course (25% of the final grade);
* the group project work is going to face a real brand communication challenge provided by a partner company, with an emphasis on consumer brand strategy, and tactics (35% of the final grade).

For a PASS in the multiple assessments, the following conditions must be met: (i) the three components are mandatory; (ii) the final weighted average mark must be greater or equal to 18.

Students who do not pass the multiple assessments are evaluated according to the single assessment. The participation to group activities requires attendance.

Single assessment route (non-requiring attendance)

The exam consists of a written test based on four open-ended questions relevant to all the course materials uploaded in Blackboard and the required readings (100% of the final grade).

Attendance is not mandatory for a PASS in the single assessment route.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

N. ECTS - 8

Enrollment requirements - Basic knowledge of marketing is highly recommended. Students who do not have such knowledge are encouraged to acquire it to the extent necessary during the course.

Language of instructions - English

Attendance –Attendance is required to participate in group activities of the multiple assessment route.

International dimension – The course is co-taught by two Italian professors but international teaching materials are used throughout the course.

Business connection - The course makes extensive use of contemporary business cases and examples. Examples are also supported by guest speakers from business companies.

Further information – Additional information regarding the course schedule and delivery, learning assessment, expectations and policies, general announcements, and additional course materials will be posted on Blackboard.

*EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES*

Students are invited to behave according to the norms of courtesy and respect both towards the professors and towards each other. Respect includes politeness, openness to active listening and constructive dialogue, and diversity in all its forms.