

## EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

### Consumer Behavior in Action: Real-Life Managerial Applications

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Dr. Philip Kotler, world-renowned marketing professor and general advisor of *International Journal of China Marketing*, indicates in the preface of IJCM Vol. 1 (1) that the Western world has become increasingly worried about China's competition for jobs in the manufacturing industry and energy resources. He further asserts that Westerners have failed to notice an even more serious fact: China's rapid assimilation of American-style consumer culture, which is revolutionizing the lives of hundreds of millions of Chinese, will have the potential to reshape the world. I fully agree with Dr. Kotler on consumerist issues in modern China and I believe that studies concerning consumer behavior will become of more interest to and relevance for Chinese marketers.

I have recently published a new textbook on consumer behavior: *Consumer Behavior in Action: Real-Life Managerial Applications*, Armonk, NY: M.E., Sharpe, Inc., 2011. Consumer behavior (CB) is a major field of marketing covered as a chapter in any standard Marketing Principles course, and it is a required or elective marketing course in most American universities offering a major in marketing. All consumer marketers must thoroughly understand and gain insight into their consumers—ultimate end users (rather than business buyers) who choose how to allocate their money, time, and energy to select, purchase, consume (use), and dispose of products. Studying CB is useful for a number of reasons: It allows businesspeople to make better marketing management decisions; helps government lawmakers to make more informed public policy decisions about their consumer constituents' welfare; and benefits all of us as consumers to learn how to become better buyers. It can also deepen one's understanding of both society and human behavior in general.

CB borrows from most of the social (behavioral) science disciplines, notably cultural anthropology, sociology, psychology, communication theory, economics, and managerial science. CB blends these disciplines with marketing management theory, practice, and research to understand people's consumption behavior in society.

As a *theoretical* field, CB presents and discusses abstract concepts to help *describe, explain, predict*, and, some critics contend, *control* marketplace behavior. Most CB textbooks do a fine job of presenting conceptual material and illustrating it with examples. However, this book is unique in that it is built around a series of 55 modules (in 15 chapters), each containing multiple

hands-on experiential applications exercises that students can do individually or in groups, as in-class discussions as well as written assignments. Hence, this textbook does more than any other CB textbook to generate student interest and involvement through these extensive in-class and written application exercises designed to give students highly involving, thought-stimulating practice in using their newfound CB knowledge. The modules consist of ten different types of engaging exercises: analysis of advertisements, analysis of scenarios, introspection into students' own CB, interactive Internet exercises, experimental and survey fieldwork, quantitative exercises, creative exercises, debatable issues, ethical analyses, and marketplace analyses. Using the book's applied experiential exercises can help learners become active participants in their learning, thereby gaining better mastery of the theoretical material. Hence, this book is entitled "Consumer Behavior in *Action*."

Using a down-to-earth, highly engaging, conversational writing style, this textbook's 55 modules are each built around learning objectives, background conceptual material, review questions, and in-class and written applications questions. Each of the 15 chapters concludes with a list of key concepts, a summary that captures key facts presented in the chapter, and a list of references for further independent study by students and researchers as well as use in written applications exercises.

This book places extra emphasis on marketing research, advertising, and new product development since these are key areas in which marketers can invest for a brand's future. It also proposes unique conceptualizations, including six general themes related to subcultures, changes in family composition that are identified and associated with both a traditional and modern family life cycle formulation, and a framework for relating the degree of innovativeness in Booz Allen Inc's new product classification system and that in Robertson's scheme for classifying innovations based on behavioral change.

Although the book is primarily intended for an American audience, with most advertising and marketing examples being from the U.S. and, the principles and theories discussed are also applicable for Chinese marketing scholars and Chinese CB research since human nature and decision-making are universal. Part I on the fundamentals of CB and market segmentation, Part II on consumer decision making, and Part IV on psychological influences, for the most part, are applicable in any culture. Part III on sociocultural influences takes primarily an American perspective. However, Chinese students, professors, and professionals alike will all gain a richer knowledge of their nation's largest trading partner from this material and the many U.S. examples used throughout the book.

A great companion reader for Chinese students would be *As China Goes, So Goes the World: How Chinese Consumers are Transforming Everything* (2011) by Karl Gerth, who teaches modern Chinese history at Oxford University. The book describes the recent development of an American-style consumer culture in China, whose consumers are emulating their American counterparts. The notion of a market oriented economy is still brand new in China, while marketing as a field of scholastic study is just in its beginning steps. As a professor of marketing at an American institution of higher education, I am very proud of the fact that marketing education and practice have achieved such great progress, and I am glad that consumer behavior studies have gained great attention by marketing scholars. I feel it is an honor to write this commentary on behalf of the editorial board. Like Dr. Philip Kotler and Dr. Ping Zhao, I sincerely hope the *International Journal of China Marketing* will continue to deliver the highest quality research in the service of those who wish to understand the world of Chinese marketing better. I also cordially encourage and invite my colleagues to make their contributions to the

journal by submitting their research papers, case studies, and research notes to the editors for publishing.

## REFERENCE

Kotler, Philip (2010). The Importance of China Marketing. *International Journal of China Marketing*, Vol. 1 (1):14-16.

Zhao, Ping (2011). China Marketing and Marketing China: A Hot Contemporary Theme with Global Impact. *International Journal of China Marketing*, Vol. 1 (2):11-12.

## EDITORS' NOTE

Geoffrey P. Lantos is Professor of Business Administration and the Marketing Major Program Director at Stonehill College, where since 1986 he has taught courses at Stonehill on consumer behavior, advertising, marketing research, new products management, and marketing principles, and accounting ethics. Prior to this he taught at Bentley College and Eastern Michigan University.

He has published a consumer behavior textbook as well as articles on business ethics, corporate social responsibility, and effective teaching in various academic journals, as well as case studies on marketing strategy and marketing ethics in several textbooks.

Dr. Lantos is Book Reviews Editor at *The Journal of Consumer Marketing* and *The Journal of Product and Brand Management*, sits on several editorial boards at refereed journals, and has written several instructional manuals for professional and educational organizations.