

Anthropological Approach to Consumer Science: A Practical Teaching Case Study

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Abstract:

Anthropology is becoming an increasingly popular source from which to borrow tools to investigate marketing and consumer behavior. Not only do many anthropologists themselves conduct some marketing and consumer research, but more and more marketers are developing anthropological methods in their marketing practice and research. The anthropological approach focuses on the influences of culture and society on the individual consumer's behavior; it emphasizes participant observation and academic analysis of consumer behavior through both management and consumer perspectives. It is argued that the anthropological approach to the study of consumer behavior could be very effective in helping students understand the principles of consumer behavior.

Introduction

Consumer behavior was a relatively new field of study in the mid to late 1960s and has become one of the main topics in contemporary marketing education for colleges and universities across the country. There are different approaches in teaching consumer behavior at both undergraduate and graduate levels, such as a psychological approach, a sociological approach, an economic approach, and a market research approach among others. Although fundamentally the study of consumer behavior is the study of how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources, such as time and money, on consumption-related items, different approaches may not share the same focuses. For example, the psychological approach stresses the consumers' psychological processes in terms of consumption decision making and post-consumption evaluation (Statt 1997); the market research approach stresses the linkages between the study of consumer behavior and the practice of marketing research (Finch 1998).

Although there is no black and white cutoff for one approach being better than others in terms of teaching consumer behavior, the teaching effects may differ as being influenced by the approach that an individual instructor adopts. In most cases it is up to the individual instructors to freely decide which approach is more suitable to be adopted according to their experiences, knowledge, and preferences to gain the best teaching effect. In my teaching practice I adopted and developed an anthropological approach to the studies of consumer behavior, and I would like to share my experience and lessons learned with my colleagues in the marketing education area.

The anthropological approach is not a simple combination of anthropology and consumer behavior studies. Based on my own understanding and experience, the anthropological approach focuses on the influences of culture and society on the individual consumer's behavior; it emphasizes the participated observation and academic analysis of consumer behavior through both management and consumer perspectives (cf. Sherry 1995; Tian 2000). I found that the anthropological approach toward the study of consumer behavior, if used in a proper way, could be very effective to help the students to understand the principles of consumer behavior.

In this paper I will first define the anthropological approach to the study of consumer behavior and present the rationale as to why I adopted and developed the anthropological approach in my teaching practice. Second, I will present the way I designed the course and how I integrated the anthropological approach into the course. Finally, I will discuss some pros and cons, based on the analysis of the students' work, of an anthropological approach to marketing education, and make some suggestions for a better practice to the business faculty members who are willing to adopt the anthropological approach in marketing education.

Define the Anthropological Approach to the Study of Consumer Behavior

It is suggested that a good marketing strategy be based upon a defined set of consumer behaviors. Yet students can forget this truism when discussing sometimes esoteric and often complex findings of

consumer studies and their corresponding models. It was found that the truths and power of consumer analysis become real to students when they directly observe a variety of consumers in different shopping situations (Pharr 1997). The observations, as will be discussed, are the major methodologies in anthropology and thus the principal method in anthropological marketing research. However, students often will not automatically make the connections between the study of consumer behavior and the practice of anthropological marketing research. This is particularly true for the undergraduate students; they more easily tend to follow the psychological approach to the study of consumer behavior given the fact that most consumer behavior textbooks are written in this approach. In my case, I used Schiffman and Kanuk's book *Consumer Behavior* (7th edition) as the text for the Fall Semester of 1999 consumer behavior class. Although Schiffman and Kanuk basically apply a psychological approach to the consumer studies, they also presented the text in other approaches, especially in the discussion of consumers in their social and cultural settings.

In my teaching practice I developed the anthropological approach by taking advantage of the textbook while integrating my own expertise and knowledge in the field of anthropology into the course design. Schiffman and Kanuk assign five chapters in their book to discussing the relations between cultural issues and consumer behaviors, which makes it possible to create certain spaces for me to teach in an anthropological approach. The anthropological approach encompasses both a way of viewing the consumer behaviours and techniques for understanding those behaviours (cf. Sherry 1995). The core concept in anthropology is culture. According to classical anthropological theory, culture is an underlying dimension of all societies. All human behavior, including market behavior, takes place within a cultural context (Harris and Moran 1987).

For anthropologists, the cultural components are neither random nor haphazard, but form an internally logical and consistent adaptive system that helps individuals function successfully within their physical and social environment. In other words, cultural beliefs and behaviour have pragmatic value: they are intimately bound up with people's experiences in the real world. Correspondingly, cultural constructs make sense to the people who share them, even if their logic escapes outside. Cultural studies tend to highlight differences among cultures or subcultures, and make a great effort to probe the reasons why they are different. According to one source, "It is reasonable to estimate

that between 25 percent and 50 percent of behaviour is culturally determined" (Gannon and Associates 1994:348). Therefore, it is important to look at cultural variation to understand variation in behaviour.

The primary technique anthropologists use to study culture is participant-observation, which involves living among a group of people, observing and recording their behaviour, and participating in their daily lives as much as possible. The resulting account of a cultural system and its members is termed ethnography. While doing participant observation, anthropologists try to adopt an emic approach, that is, uncovering "native" images for events and behaviour. These "native" images are recorded separately from the researcher's images – observations and interpretations. Thus, through a kind of "stereovision" (image of the left eye and image from the right eye) two distinct texts are created. These texts must be analyzed separately and then combined to reveal any differences. To resolve existing discrepancies, "native" informants should be asked to comment on the researcher's descriptions and explanations. These comments serve as a check on the researcher's ethnocentrism while adding greater depth to the "native" view. In the same way, discrepancies within the "native" text need to be uncovered and explained. Indeed, the richest accounts of a cultural system incorporate both contradiction and controversy as consensus.

Anthropologists use a variety of data-gathering techniques in the field. Traditionally, these have been largely qualitative, and include structured and unstructured interviews; hypothetical situations; the analysis of critical events, social networks, myth and folklore; life histories; and historical reconstruction. Today, many anthropologists employ qualitative techniques along with more quantitative approaches (survey, for example), especially if they are doing research in complex organizations. Even when quantitative and qualitative techniques are combined, some anthropologists argue that in-depth participant-observation (lasting at least several months) is the mainstay of valid anthropological research. During this extended time period, researchers can move through the ideal patterns, to the belief patterns shared by informants, to modal behavioral patterns that researchers observe and participate in. Anything less does not qualify as a bona fide ethnography.

While fully supporting the merits of extended participant observation, the personal experience convinces me that marketers can successfully employ many aspects of an anthropological perspective in

marketing in a shorter time frame. The results will not be an ethnography (nor are they designed to be) but they can be complete enough to help the marketers to understand the driving forces that shape consumers' belief and behaviors in a particular market. In terms of implementation in consumer studies, it is claimed that there is no better way to get close to the consumer, or any other marketplace stakeholder for that matter, than by using ethnography as a bridge (Nussbaum 1993).

Anthropology, and especially its ethnographic methods, are becoming increasingly popular sources from which to borrow tools to investigate marketing and consumer behaviour in the late 20th century (Olsen 1995:246). More and more anthropologists have involved themselves recently into consumer researches. For example, anthropologist Tony Salvador, by doing an ethnographic study in a small town in northern Italy, helped a high tech company develop the future market of computing (Newsday Inc. 1999). Many anthropologists do research on consumers' behavior that helps high-tech companies design new products for the market based on their findings. They conduct observational research, dispatching anthropologists to employ their ethnographic skills by interviewing, watching, and videotaping consumers in their natural habitats. It is reported that companies like Apple, Motorola, Xerox, and Intel, as well as telecommunications and cable companies, have brought anthropologists into the corporate fold. The goal is to apply what the anthropologists learn to new product concepts. It's the extreme form of understanding the customer (Hafner 1999).

On the other hand, more and more marketers are using anthropological methods in their marketing practice and research. For example, Holt (1998) by employing anthropological approaches found out that cultural capital structure, American people's consumption patterns and behaviours. Griffith (1998) using semi-structured interview techniques, conducted research among both buyers and sellers in Jordan's central marketplace and illustrated a few of the many ways culture may influence one aspect of a retail structure in tradition-based societies. Rossiter and Chan (1998) found out ethnicity plays a significant role in business and consumer behaviour.

In fact, many companies are hiring anthropologists for their marketing research. For example, Andrea Saveri, a director at the Institute for the Future in Menlo Park, indicates that traditional market research tools are limited by their question-and-answer format, "In the case of surveys, you're telling the respondent how to

answer and you're not giving them any room for anything else." She sees ethnography as an incredibly precise and powerful tool when used properly. Accordingly, she keeps a staff of anthropologists on hand to do research on the consequences of technology (Weise 1999). A leading finance service institution, Citicorp, even created a vice presidency for anthropologist Steve Barnett, who discovered early warning signs to identify people who don't pay credit-card bills. Not satisfied with consumer surveys, Hallmark is sending anthropologists into the homes of immigrants to attend holidays and birthday parties to design cards they'll want. No survey can tell engineers what women really want in a razor, so marketing consultant Hauser Design sends anthropologists into bathrooms to watch them shave their legs (*Seattle Times* staff report, Feb. 22, 1999).

In short, the anthropological approach is effective in the study of consumer behaviors because anthropologists and anthropological methods offer a unique perspective. Using advertising as an example, while focus groups might be used to look at the demographics of a region to best select a specific advertising campaign, an anthropologist would study how people react to the ad. An anthropologist might notice sometimes people go to the bathroom or kitchens during commercials while others mute them altogether. Because people may be performing multiple tasks, the only way to know what they are doing is through observation, one of the fundamental skills that anthropologists use in their field studies. Along with the conceptual and methodological contributions anthropology offers there are specific analytical and research techniques from which students who study consumer behaviors can benefit. In fact, many successful anthropological studies on consumers' behaviors have demonstrated how these techniques help the marketers deal with a wide range of marketing issues (cf. Hafner 1999; Sherry 1995).

Anthropological Oriented Lectures and Projects

It is suggested that good marketing strategy often be based upon a defined set of consumer behaviors. Yet students can forget this truism when discussing the sometimes esoteric and often complex findings of consumer studies and their corresponding models. It was found that the truths and power of consumer analysis become real to students when they directly observe a variety of consumers in different shopping situations (Pharr 1998). I will argue that one of the best ways to teach students to observe is to adopt the anthropological approach. However, teaching

consumer behavior through an anthropological approach is by no means a simple marriage between anthropology principles and marketing education; it needs to be highly integrated by both marketing and anthropological theories and methodologies.

In an effort to gain the integration of marketing and anthropological concepts and skills, I designed several lectures focusing on the relations between cultures and consumer behaviors by integrating anthropological principles into the classes. These lectures were designed to lead the students to understand some fundamental concepts and methods in anthropology, and their implications in studying consumer behaviors. To help the students become interested in the anthropological approach to the study of consumer behaviors, I used my own work (Tian 1999, 1998) to illustrate what anthropologists can do and how to use anthropological skills in marketing practice.

I also assigned some extra readings that dealt with anthropological theories and methods and their implementations in marketing practice for the students to read after class. These reading materials were deliberately selected from various leading academic journals and magazines for the purpose of fostering students' interest in and understanding of anthropology and marketing (such as Brunso and Grunet 1998; Goldman 1992; Hafner 1999). The materials selected also include the book *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping* written by the cultural anthropologist Paco Underhill. The students were required to discuss the reading materials in groups and were encouraged to present to the class their findings from the reading assignments. Moreover, the students were required to write an article review based on the reading assignments. They were encouraged to make comments on how the authors used anthropological approaches in the study of consumer behaviors and if they will use the same approach in their studies.

To help the students understand the principles of consumer behavior through an anthropological approach and gain some hands-on experiences, I deliberately designed several assignments that strengthen the linkages between anthropology and marketing. The series of assignments that I used in consumer behavior classes have a strong emphasis on observations. Students were required to take an active role in learning how to utilize the study of consumer behavior by observations and to make sound decisions. To enhance the students' understanding on anthropological approaches, I designed three projects: one is a mini-report, one is a comprehensive research

project, and another one is a term paper project.

For the mini-report assignment, the students were required to write up a mini-report analysis of consumer behaviors based on their own observations/experiences. They were encouraged to use one or two concepts and methods that they learned from the course to record and analyze the consumers' behaviors in real business situations. They were also required to discuss with me individually at least one time during the period when they conducted the research about their progress and any problems pertaining to the fieldwork and observations. By doing so they would have the opportunity to let me input some comments and suggestions on their fieldwork and observations. The mini report was due after the mid-term exam so that I would have enough time to analyze and summarize how well the students were at observation and analysis.

I read and graded the students' report on a one by one basis with the individual students present; i.e., after my first run reading of their works I called students individually to come to my office and went over the assignments with them. I assured and appraised what the individual students did correctly and made comments on what they did not do properly. Then I let the individual students tell me how they could improve the work if they were asked to re-do the assignments. Through the mini-report practice and my critical reviews on their mini-reports, the students learned more about how to observe and how to record the data. Moreover, the students were trained how to analyze the real data and how to write the research report based on their own collected primary data. The mini-report training had built a solid foundation for them to conduct their final comprehensive research project.

For the comprehensive research project, the students were directed to study the consumers at a local Chinese restaurant by participant observation and other methods, such as interviews. I made a deal with the restaurant owner to give my students a 15 percent discount for the food while doing their participant observations. This deal helped the students to have more opportunities to observe, as the cost of food would not be higher than what they would pay at the college's cafeteria. The students were allowed to observe the customers while they had their lunch or dinner in the restaurant at any time during its daily service for a whole month. The students were requested to properly record and keep their original fieldwork notes, which would be graded together with their final reports.

By the time the comprehensive research project started the great majority of the students had already mastered the basic skills of doing fieldwork, conducting observations, and taking notes, which they had learned and practiced from their previous mini-report projects. However, to ensure the students start their projects in the right track at the very beginning I selected a few students and trained them on the fieldwork site; these students in turn would train their peers to do the fieldwork and observations based on how I had trained them. To help the students and provide advice on site I also accompanied individual students to have lunches or dinners together in the restaurant from time to time during the period when they were doing the fieldwork. Students were encouraged to do some interviews while I was present; they could get my advice immediately if they needed. They were also encouraged to exchange information as much as they could but they must accredit each other if they did such kind of exchange in their final reports.

This project reserved a number of benefits for the students. For instance, it acquaints them with observational research techniques and the subjectivity inherent in pure observation. Moreover, it made them realize that trends or patterns are revealed by consumer analysis while reinforcing many of the age, gender, and ethnic based or other consumer findings presented in textbooks. Next, it was a true-to-life illustration of the differences between non-probability and probability sampling. Finally, it invariably causes the students to become more self aware – aware of their own consumer behavior and what it reveals of them. The results of their comprehensive projects turned out to be excellent and the quality of the research reports was much improved over their mini-reports. They handed in their reports with a more professional way in terms of cover page design, banding, and fieldwork notes, the initial analysis of the data, and the content. This time not only did I enjoy reading their works but the students themselves were more comfortable and confident about their works. All the students claimed that they learned more concrete skills and knowledge through their hands-on experiences than they did through the textbook and in-class lectures.

As to the term-paper project the students were directed to select one cultural or sub-cultural consumer market segment. They were required to thoroughly research all of the characteristics of these consumers. Questions they were required to answer in their papers included: what are their cultural norms; how do factors such as lifestyle, religious beliefs, politics, gender roles, family values, social class, etc. impact their lives; and

how would they influence their purchasing behavior? More specifically, they were asked to observe and answer the following questions in their papers: what types of products do they buy; why; where; how; when; what types of pricing do they look for; what types of stores do they shop in; and what types of advertising and promotion impact them the most? The students were directed to use everything they had learned in class as well as to research and report anything they believed to be relevant to the consumers' purchasing behavior of the particular culture or subcultures they were studying.

Effects and Results: An Analysis of the Student Works

It is my best understanding that one of the most reliable and validated methods to examine teaching effectiveness is to look at the students work. There are various criteria in terms of evaluating students' works, such as whether their works are creative or not, whether they can effectively apply the theories and course concepts or not in doing their assignments, whether their works are presented in a professional way or not, and whether they can provide sound analysis on the issues they are discussing or not. Again, there are no black and white cutoffs as to which criterion is more effective or better than others in doing such kinds of evaluations; it is totally up to the individual instructors to make the decision according to their preferences. In my practice, although I weighted more on the degree whether they presented their works in a professional way or not, I tend to evaluate their works on a comprehensive basis.

The mini-report exercise was designed to bridge the topics of marketing research and buyer behavior; the students were free to select any retail place to observe the manner in which customers make their purchase decisions; and to watch how people approach, look at, compare, and make their decisions. In their mini-report all the students were able to describe the purchasing behavior of the consumer who spent the *longest time* in the purchasing process, what exactly did the consumer do, and where did the consumer locate. Some students were able to further describe the buyer's interaction with the product, the store environment, and other customers. Some students even could describe the purchasing behavior of the consumer who spent the *least amount of time* in the purchasing process and reported the purchasing behavior of what they believed was the "*typical purchaser*" they had observed.

For example, one student observed and reported the buying preference of the consumers at the local OfficeMax, a specialty retail store selling office supplies. He segmented the consumers into three categories, namely thrifty, willingness to buy, and luxurious shoppers. He defined thrifty consumers as those who do not want to spend a lot of money when they enter the store. He reported that the thrifty shoppers know exactly what they are looking for, often they only come in for the specials, which do not cost much money; they quickly hurry out when they have what they need and are not interested in products that are not on sale or cost over ten dollars. He observed that these shoppers normally come to the store with their family or friends who can give them the help and advice for the shopping. The student defined the willingness to buy shoppers as those who have a general idea of the products they need. He observed that these shoppers look for the products on sale and also search for other products that may be useful to them. They are in no hurry to leave the store and browse the store looking for odd items in their spare time. They may bring family to the store or come alone if they live nearby the store. The student defined the luxurious shoppers as those who do not care about the price of the products. He observed that when these consumers enter the store, they are in search of expensive products before they look at the specials and love to be shown what the store has to offer them. They come to the store with expensive dresses and business suits.

One type of consumer shopping behavior at the OfficeMax reported by this student is very interesting and demonstrates the usefulness of studying consumer behaviors in business management. The student observed that during the back-to-school season the store might deliberately reduce the cashiers to check people out. He reported that it was amazing to see how long consumers would wait to check out with the products they want to buy, and some consumers would go back to do more shopping while they had to wait in line. He assumed that this is a technique that the store used to make more money as the consumers love to shop during the specific time under the influences of many other consumers (Wideman 1999). This finding not only reflects the student's ability in observation but also indicates that the student was able to implement the theory into the business reality.

The comprehensive research project was designed to let all students observe and study the consumer behavior in a particular site, a Chinese restaurant. It was during this project that the students learned to take

fieldwork notes, make comparative studies about consumer behavior among different groups, between different times, and even the influences of weather on consumer behaviors. The students could compare the behaviors of men alone for foods with those of women eating alone; they could observe the different behaviors of young people and their friends for dinner with those of family members eating together. They compared the behaviors of senior citizen couples with those of young couples; observed the behaviors of African Americans and Hispanic Americans in the restaurant. Several students observed that the restaurant had a lack of Chinese culture affiliations and suggested that may need to be improved for the restaurant to lure more customers.

Students were able to use their own feelings and experiences compared to that of other customers and made good analyses. For example, in his final report one student wrote:

After dining here many times I got the feeling that this restaurant is not a real Chinese restaurant in culture although the food they provide is Chinese food. I think they can add some Chinese pictures, Chinese marble statues to the restaurant, and play Chinese music in stead of American music in their sound system. This will make the customers feel like they are eating in a real Chinese atmosphere. Many of the customers I interviewed share my feelings, they said this restaurant lacks cultural items that some other Chinese restaurants have, like the Buddha or the Chinese Lanterns.

This student further analyzed that the customers come to a Chinese restaurant are not only for the food but also because they want to enjoy and learn the Chinese cultures. He observed that when the restaurant sound system plays the Chinese music the frequency of customers fetching food tends to be slower. Based on that observation he suggested that the background music and the cultural atmosphere of a restaurant could effectively affect the consumer behavior in the restaurant (Ly 1999).

Some students even observed the interactions between the consumers and the restaurant's employees, such as the waitresses and the usher, and noticed how waitresses tried to please the customers for more tips. For example, one student observed that, "The waitresses and waiters were dressed very nice. They spoke little English but could say small phrases. Their

body languages were meaningful and their smiling was impressive. They served the customers very professionally and friendly, they even could guess what the customers want by their observation.” The student reported that due to the good service he received he had to leave more tips than he did in other restaurants. He analyzed that people come to a restaurant for dinner and the quality of food is important, but the quality of service is also very important; if the service quality is poor, even if the quality of food is superior, the consumers may not come back. He compared the waiters and waitresses of this restaurant with those of another Chinese restaurant that he had visited where they hired some American waitresses. He said when consumers come to a Chinese restaurant they may not expect American waitresses whose interactions with the customers may generate some negative affects on consumer behaviors and may make customers feel uncomfortable; at least he had such experience. He suggested that if the waiters and waitresses wear their Chinese ethnic clothes it might help the restaurant get more customers (McCall 1999).

For the term research paper, all the students were able to identify one cultural or sub-cultural consumer market segment in which to conduct their researches. The consumer markets that students selected included: Hispanic Americans, African-Americans, Asian Americans, Caucasian-Americans, Teenagers, College Students, Home Makers, Christians, Elderly, Baby-boomers, the Wealthy, and so on. For instance, one student defined home-schooling families as a sub-cultural consumer market. Based on over three months’ observation and research he found that in the state of South Carolina, due to the limitation of the public education resources and the expensiveness of the private education system, many families choose to educate their children at home. He found out home-schoolers share some common values such as care about their children’s education, care about Christian spirits and family traditions. As a market segment, home-schooling families often take field trips to the stores; they are typically more conservative in all their purchases. For example, they avoid purchasing violent videos or games, most have a rating of only G or PG movies; they tend to be more frugal in their shopping and typically conduct an excessive amount of research before making a purchasing decision. He observed that for this market segment, the family plays a very vital part in the buying process. Even the minor purchases are discussed among the family members; the children are encouraged to voice an opinion. The parents must be able to answer the questions and give sound reasons for a particular buying decision. He analyzed the

relations between the consumer behavior, particularly buying behavior, and the cultural values, which indicated that the special shopping patterns of this group not only reflect their cultural values but also enhance their cultural values. He assumed that home-schooling families as a sub-cultural group would enjoy a great growth in the future, and thus become an important market segment that need to be cared about (McClendon 1999). The other students also did an excellent job in their term research papers; it is impossible to analyze them all in such a short article, nor is it necessary for the purpose of this article.

Lessons and Problems: Suggestions for Future Improvement

The anthropological approach I adopted in my consumer behavior course in the fall of 1999 was basically successful based on my subjective evaluation. The students were happy and enjoyed the learning process; they commented that by this approach they had learned knowledge in both fields of anthropology and consumer behavior. The students particularly enjoyed the hands-on projects and the fieldwork; they believed that the training they got through this course fostered and developed their abilities in implementing theories in the real business world. One student wrote:

I learned that in order to be a successful observer you must do just that. If you want to see what consumers are doing and saying then you must sit back and observe. As an observer you need to look at body language of customer, facial expressions, and listen to what they are saying. This is a good process that takes a while to get used to, but after you get the hang of it you pick up on many things that you normally would miss. Your eyes and ears are the best tools that I used when conducting this research. I enjoyed this assignment, here at the college we are often swamped by definitions and lectures, we rarely get to apply what we have learned to a real situation. I feel that this exercise enabled me to take the tools that I have gotten from the classroom and apply to them in the real world (Pinkston 1999).

My supervisor at the college examined my syllabus, teaching notes, assignment designs, and the students’ works, visited my class and then made a very positive comment on my course. She indicated that the approach I adopted is a constructive improvement in teaching consumer behavior at the college and

encouraged me to continue the approach.

However, like any other approaches, the anthropological approach to the consumer behavior studies is not without shortcomings. As suggested earlier traditional consumer behavior studies mainly use psychological approaches; anthropological approaches are relatively in the field, and thus make it difficult to draw upon the efficient resources. It is necessary for the instructors who want to adopt this approach to search and prepare related academic and practical resources beforehand. Also, because the students who take consumer behavior courses may not necessarily have taken anthropology courses, it is necessary for the instructors to systematically address some of the basic principles of anthropology in the class and then connect them with the consumer behavior studies. Considering more time needed for integrating anthropological theories and methods, it is necessary to make this course a four-credit-hour course rather than a three-credit-hour course. This will help the instructor to have enough class hours to lecture and also will help to allow the student to digest the lecture.

One big problem I identified is that the students tended to do more on descriptions of what they observed, as they believed they had plentiful material to present from their observations. As the result, although they were able to conduct some analyses, the analyses tended to be superficial and lacked connections with the consumer behavior theories and concepts. Therefore it is necessary to design the assignment within the frameworks of consumer behavior theories and demand the students apply the course concepts as much as possible in their research reports. It is important to let the students know that their grades will be negatively affected if they neglect to use the course concepts and consumer behavior theories in their reports.

Another issue is the arrangement of the course project. Based on my observation and analysis, it is better to first have all the students do their mini-report collectively on the same market or the same marketplace so that the instructor can give them the demonstration and the help on site. After the critical analysis of the their mini-reports, then the students can be directed to conduct their comprehensive research project by freely selecting retail stores to observe and study the consumer behaviors. It is even better to combine the term research paper with the comprehensive research project so that students can focus on a particular market segment based on their interest.

In short, to teach consumer behavior through an anthropological approach is relatively new in marketing education. Although I personally found this approach, if used in a proper way, very effective to help the students to understand the principles of consumer behavior, it does not mean that other instructors will also think so. As a professional instructor in the field of marketing education, we need to consistently improve our teaching methods and practices. I hope my colleagues in the marketing education field can critically review my experience and practice, and provide suggestions and comments to me so that I can further improve my teaching practice in the future.

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