Keeping Up With The Khardasians, The Joneses: Designing Consumer Behavior and Marketing Exams around a Full-Length Feature Film

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Introduction

Sorry, Kim, Khourtney, Klhoe, and Kris; this paper is not all about keeping up with you. It’s about your forebears, the Joneses. They were the fictitious first family on the block to own a TV set. Marketers could identify them as early adopters by the ugly antennae on their rooftops and target them as opinion leaders who less-innovative late adopters aspired to keep up with.

One day, while explaining aspirational groups and the diffusion of innovations during a consumer behavior class at an international summer program in Europe, I casually referred to the Joneses. The allusion was met with a lot of blank stares – not only from the European and Asian students, but from American students as well. It was at that moment that one of the students raised his hand and asked if the reference had anything to do with the Joneses, a 2010 film with Demi Moore and David Duchovney.

In keeping with the adoption of innovation theme, when it comes to Hollywood movies, I explained that I am very much the laggard who sees the “latest” blockbusters on small screens located on the backs of airline seats. I tracked down a DVD copy of the film (by then it was already 2013). Watching it, I had discovered a veritable treasure trove of examples of marketing concepts from guerilla marketing, to adoption of innovations, from self-concept to buyer decision roles, and from conspicuous consumption to marketing ethics. I had stumbled not only onto a great video clips to illustrate points in class, but to a valuable tool for assessing how well students can identify the inter-relationships among a vast array of marketing concepts in a fun, challenging, and realistic context. In short, the movie is now the basis for a part of an in-class exam for both Principles of Marketing and Consumer Behavior.