

Marketing Seminar Series 1

Session 1

Date and Time: June 25, Thursday, 2026, 14:45-15:45

Venue: SMBC Hall, Law and Economics East Building, B1

Speaker: MARIAN MAKKAR Associate Professor of Marketing, RMIT University

Title: Comfort Through Discomfort: Self-Transformation in Extraordinary Service Experiences

Abstract: Life-stage transitions are often accompanied by cultural imperatives to “step outside one’s comfort zone” in pursuit of growth and self-transformation. Yet consumer research has paid limited attention to how consumers navigate discomfort during such pursuits, focusing instead on pleasure, pain, or extreme risk-taking. Drawing on a longitudinal multi-sited ethnography of young diasporic adults participating in overseas service-volunteering trips, this study theorizes discomfort as a distinct and multidimensional aspect of transformative consumption. We identify six forms of discomfort (physical, material, social, emotional, cognitive, spiritual) and show how participants actively reframe these challenges through relational, immanent, and projective orientations. Rather than simply enduring discomfort, participants transform it into a meaningful resource for identity work, moral reflection, and personal growth. In doing so, they come to reassess the meaning of comfort itself, carrying these revised understandings into subsequent lifestyles, consumption practices, and future aspirations. By conceptualizing discomfort as a culturally mediated pathway to self-transformation, this study extends research on transformative, bittersweet, and eudaimonic consumption and demonstrates how growth emerges not despite discomfort, but through its active negotiation.

Session 2

Date and Time: June 25, Thursday, 2026, 16:00-17:00

Venue: SMBC Hall, Law and Economics East Building, B1

Speaker: BERNARDO FIGUEIREDO, Professor of Marketing, RMIT University

Title: From Research to Impact: Lessons from Co-designing Digital Inclusion and Wellbeing with Older Consumers

Abstract: How can marketing research move beyond understanding consumer problems to creating meaningful social impact? This presentation reflects on the *Shaping Connections* program, a collaborative initiative involving RMIT University, the University of the Third Age (U3A), community organisations, government partners, and older Australians. Through a co-design approach, the project explored how a strength-based approach to understanding perceived risks shape technology use in later life and developed practical strategies to support digital inclusion, social connectedness, and wellbeing. Using this work as a case study, I discuss the opportunities and challenges of conducting Transformative Consumer Research and reflect on how scholars can translate research into tangible outcomes for consumers, communities, and society.