

Digital Methods For Critical Consumer Studies

Lake Como School of Advanced Studies, 31 May - 4 June 2021



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Concept and scopes of the school

In the last decade Digital Methods established themselves as the main methodological paradigm for studying the Internet from a sociological perspective. Over the years, thanks to Digital Methods, scholars have cast light upon several key and emerging socio-cultural phenomena such as, like economy, echo-chambers, the platformization of the Web, social bots, fake news (just to name a few). Since the beginning, Digital Methods privileged *politics* as their main field of research -intended as both the *politics of the medium* (e.g. algorithms) and *politics within the medium* (e.g. climate change). Curiously enough, consumption and consumer culture received scarce attention within Digital Methods studies. This amounts to be a notable gap, since consumption is not simply one topic among the others that might be interesting to explore through Digital Methods, but rather a key phenomenon that underpins the logic of functioning of the contemporary digital landscape. Consider for example that, among the top applications that dominate the contemporary 2.0 Web (as well as govern its functioning), there are (private) companies like Google, Facebook, Amazon, Uber and Airbnb, whose business models consist in extracting data from consumers in order to deliver them consumer products, experiences and advertising. Moreover, most of the more interesting current consumer phenomena are *natively digital*, such as self-branding, influencer marketing or brand publics. Nevertheless, few consumer culture and marketing scholars addressed those phenomena by using Digital Methods. Indeed, a more systematic focus on Digital Methods and Consumer Studies means advancing both the disciplines.

Therefore, the overarching scope of the Summer School is two-fold. On the one hand, it aims at introducing students to the basic Digital Methods' concepts, strategies, techniques and tools. On the other hand, it teaches and stimulates students to apply such methodological array to consumer-related topics. As well, the School aims at fostering students an 'activist' attitude towards digital data by encouraging them to take seriously the ethics of digital research as well as redistribution of the social value of digital data to the public.

The topics covered during the Summer School will be, data collection (through scraping, API calling and free online tools), basic network analysis, digital content analysis, cross-platform analysis, data visualization. The course will be delivered using a mix of keynote speeches, frontal lessons, hands-on activities, and group works.

In its first edition the Summer School will focus on the topic of *platformization of consumer culture*. Students will be both introduced to the conceptual array of platform theories and invited to experiment with digital methods to explore consumer culture processes unfolding on digital platforms. Especially during the group work sessions, students will have the opportunity to explore the phenomenon of platformization of consumer culture through ad hoc case studies (such as the consumption of nostalgia on Facebook, the radicalization of food consumption on YouTube, or the creation of brand publics on Instagram).

The first edition of Summer School will be inaugurated by the keynote speech of Prof. Janice Denegri-Knott (Bournemouth University), one of the most prominent international scholars in the field of Digital Consumption and Co-Author of *Digital Virtual Consumption* (Routledge).



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Committees

School Directors:

Alessandro Caliendo (Università degli Studi di Pavia; alessandro.caliandro@unipv.it)

Alessandro Gandini (Università degli Studi di Milano; alessandro.gandini@unimi.it)

Guido Anselmi (Università degli Studi di Milano; guido.anselmi@unimi.it)

Teaching assistants

Lucia Bainotti

Giulia Giorgi

Ilir Rama

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Programme

The school will be articulated into 5 days. The mornings will be dedicated to teaching activities (related to the topics and delivered through the modalities illustrated above); these activities will be managed by the School directors and teaching assistants. The afternoons will be dedicated to student activities (overseen by Teaching Assistants). During the last day of the school students will present their work and receive feedback from directors and teaching assistants. A final discussion will conclude the School activities. Below a more detailed schedule of activities

Day 1 (31 May): Platformization of Consumer Culture

- 10:00 -10:30 Welcome from the Directors
- 11:00-12:30 Keynote lecture, Prof. Diego Rinallo (Kedge Business School)
- 15:00-16:00 Assignment of research themes and formation of working groups

Day 2 (1 June): Digital Methods & Data Collection

- 09:00-10:45 Seminar 1: Digital Methods (Alessandro Caliandro)
 - 11:00-12:45 Seminar 2: Data Collection (Guido Anselmi)
- Afternoon
- Working groups session (groups are free to organise themselves on their own)

Day 3 (2 June): Basic techniques for digital data analysis

- 09:00-10:45 Seminar 1: Social network analysis (Alessandro Gandini)
 - 11:00-12:45 Seminar 2: Digital content analysis (Ilir Rama)
- Afternoon
- Working groups session

Day 4 (3 June): Advanced Techniques & Data Visualization

- 09:00-10:45 Seminar 1: Cross-Platform analysis (Giulia Giorgi & Lucia Bainotti)
 - 11:00-12:45 Seminar 2: Data visualisation (Beatrice Gobbo)
- Afternoon
- Working groups session

- Day 5 (4 June): Presentations & Concluding discussion
- From 09:30 on: Presentations & concluding discussion

School Staff

- Guido Anselmi (guido.anselmi@unimi.it)
- Alessandro Caliandro (alessandro.caliandro@unipv.it)
- Lucia Bainotti (lucia.bainotti@unito.it)
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Administrative Office

- Alessandra Cazzaniga (alessandra.cazzaniga@fondazionealessandrovolta.it)
- Olga Introzzi (olga.introzzi@fondazionealessandrovolta.it)



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Application

The School will be held online

Call for Application

Ideally, the School is meant for master and phd students who wish to learn digital methods and apply them to their research project in the field of consumer culture. Of course, the School will welcome any other kind of scholar and/or professional who wish to approach the digital methods paradigm (e.g. a scholar not interested in consumer culture will easily apply the methodological models learnt during the Summer School to her field of expertise, such as political communication, sociology of health, etc.).

The School will host a maximum of **30 participants** and will be held withing the premises of Villa Grumello (<https://lakecomoschool.org/contact/location/>).

To participate in the Summer School candidates must send their applications at this email address, alessandro.caliandro@unipv.it, **by the 15 March 2021**. Applications must entail a **CV** and **presentation letter**, containing: a) brief bio; b) interests of research; c) motivation to participate in the Summer School).

Fees

The School fee is **180 Euro**. Fee includes: a) welcome package (document folder, block-notes, pen, badge); b) welcome aperitivo; c) social dinner; d) daily lunches; f) daily coffee breaks.

The School makes available **2 scholarships** for meritorious students.

The fee **does not** include accommodation. Anyway, for students belonging to the LCSAS network (Politecnico di Milano, Università degli Studi dell'Insubria, Università degli Studi di Milano Bicocca, Università degli Studi di Milano, Università degli Studi di Pavia), FAV provides **8 free accommodations** by its hostel (foresteria) located in Villa Grumello (more information at the following link: dmcs.lakecomoschool.org/accommodation).

For the rest of the students, FAV will suggest a list of hotels/hostel. Please check the accommodation page on the website.

The scholarships will be appointed by the School's Directors after the assessment of CVs and presentation letters.

The free accommodations will be allocated according to the chronological order of the registrations.



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Protetto: Registration

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Venue and Accommodation

Course Location:

- Placed in a central position within Europe, close to four international airports, the summer school is hosted in an outstanding old noble palace located on the shoreline of beautiful Lake Como. The Lake Como School is an international research facility running short term programmes on a wide range of interdisciplinary subjects, sharing a common focus on advanced scientific fields. Find out more here: <https://lakecomoschool.org/about/>
- The school will be held at Villa del Grumello, Via per Cernobbio 11, Como (Italy).

HOW TO GET THERE:

- How to reach Como: look at the page <https://lakecomoschool.org/contact/travel-info/> for instructions on how to reach the town by plane, train or car.
- Villa del Grumello is 20 min on foot from Como city center – you can also take a bus, lines 6 and 11 (bus stop: “Como Via Regina Piscine Villa Olmo”, just after “Villa Olmo”).
- From the main Train Station (Como S. Giovanni), the nearest bus stop to catch line 6 and 11 is “Piazzale Rocchetto”

Accommodation:

Villa del Grumello has a **guest house** (“foresteria”) with 19 beds in 2- or 4-bed rooms. The rate is **36,30 euros** per night (breakfast not included; a kitchen for self preparing breakfast is available). Please notice that **only shared accommodation with other students is allowed** (no accompanying persons).

Accommodation (arrival on Sunday and depature on Friday) is free of charge for 8 students belonging to the Universities that founded the Lake Como School (Univeristà dell’Insubria, Università di Milano, Università di Pavia, Università di Milano Bicocca, Politecnico di Milano). More details on the form.

To book a room via the **School Secretariat**: you can download and send the accommodation form.

*The secretariat will provide information on other accommodations available where to stay during the school.

Important! For all school speakers and attendees!

We have learned that third part companies are contacting school speakers and attendees offering to make travel arrangements (hotel and flight bookings) on our behalf and asking for credit card details in order to proceed. PLEASE NOTE these agencies are not authorized by us, this is most likely a fraud. For any doubt do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you!

ACCOMMODATION FORM (PDF)

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General Information

- *Application Submission Deadline:* 15 March 2021
- *Notification of Acceptance/Rejection:* 2 April 2021
- *Notification of Scholarship Attribution:* 2 April 2021
- *Registration Deadline for Participants:* 30 April 2021
- *Notification of Free Accommodations Attribution (max 8):* 22 April 2021

To registrate to the Summer School please follow this link: dmcs.lakecomoschool.org/registration

Please Note: If the Covid-19 situation will not make hosting the Summer School with the premises of Villa Grumello possible, the School's courses will be delivered in a virtual format (which modalities and fees will be communicated as soon as possible).

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