

Title: Perceptions of Potency and Need: Consumer Judgment in Emerging Wellness and Controlled Substance Categories

Speaker: Prof. Chethana Achar, Kellogg School of Management

Area: Marketing

Date: 23.06.2025, Venue: K21 @ 4.00PM

Abstract:

This talk presents two lines of research examining how consumers construct inferences about novel, stigmatized, or risky product categories—such as psychoactive substances, weight loss medications, and nutritional supplements—by drawing on contextual cues. The first line explores how perceived product need moderates consumer responses to advertising: higher perceived need reduces skepticism, boosts efficacy expectations, and increases support for both product adoption and policy endorsement. The second line of work shows that high-frequency usage labels (e.g., “daily use”) reduce perceived product potency, thereby increasing the likelihood of off-label or overuse behavior. Together, these findings reveal how consumers rely on heuristic cues—such as perceived necessity and usage frequency—to navigate ambiguity in emerging health and wellness markets, with implications for marketing, regulation, and consumer well-being.

Speaker Profile:



Chethana Achar studies social stigma and how it shapes consumer behavior, with a focus on public health marketing. She investigates how stigmatization of health issues and risky behaviors shapes consumers' likelihood for seeking healthcare support for mental health issues, vaccinations, illness screenings, etc. Her research into stigma also examines the marketing regulated substances such as cannabis & psychedelics, minority ownership branding, and how health judgements play out in crowdfunding spaces.

Prof. Achar teaches the Marketing Research & Analytics MBA elective at Kellogg and is a winner of the Sidney J. Levy Teaching Award.

Webpage Link:

https://www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/faculty/directory/achar_chethana/