

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar

Hidden in Plain Sight: Consumer Response to Pseudo-Secrets in Marketing By



Prof. Dafna Goor
London Business School

Date : 18 May 2026 (Mon)
Time : 10:30 am – 12 noon
Venue : GH120c, PolyU

Abstract

Hidden stores with camouflaged entrances and secret menus in restaurants ranging from Michelin-starred to fast-food chains are a growing phenomenon. The present research conceptualizes these offerings as pseudo-secrets and shows that they increase word-of-mouth when products are concealed yet publicly accessible. This effect emerges because, beyond their economic or informational value, pseudo-secrets enhance consumers' sense of social connectedness. Word-of-mouth about pseudo-secrets is more likely to occur through narrowcasting (vs. broadcasting) and diminishes when consumers are dependent on the product or when consumption occurs in private contexts. Evidence from lab and field studies demonstrates robust effects and highlights how marketers can strategically design pseudo-secrets across diverse categories, including fashion, tourism, events, and dining.

Prof. Dafna Goor's research focuses on branding and luxury marketing, exploring how social status, consumer identity, and authenticity impact product appeal and consumer wellbeing. Prof. Goor received her doctorate from Harvard Business School and her research has been published in leading peer-reviewed journals including the *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, and the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, as well as in *The Research Handbook on Luxury Branding*.

All interested are welcome.



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