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New frontiers in brand communication and consumer engagement

PROF. STEFANIA VITULLI

Area of study:	Marketing, Communication and Media
Area Code:	CM/MK300su
Credit	6 ECTS
Dates	24 June – 5 July (2 weeks)

Course description

The course provides an overview of the latest trends in the brand communication scenario and the role experience, emotions, and entertainment play in building consumer-brand relationships. A particular focus will be given on real communities, web reputation, storytelling, rebranding/branded content/branded entertainment.

The course is organized in three main intertwined learning moments:

1. An “exploratory” session, aimed at setting a common ground illustrating the basics of brand communication (namely, the concept of brand, brand identity, brand positioning, brand equity and their meaning in the brand management process)
2. A “diving” session, aimed at sharing and discussion how innovative and unconventional brand communication initiatives can support brands in engaging and activating consumers as dialogical partners
3. A “field” session, in which students are required to take part in consumer-brand relationship analysis and brand communication co-creation processes

Contents are designed to encourage students to reflect on current dramatic changes in the field of consumer-brand relationships from a humanistic perspective, and to enact these changes in their own communication projects.

Course contents

- Introduction. Key factors in brand communication:
 - o Brands, branding and brand management
 - o Dialogue and relationships for competitive advantage in conversational markets
 - o The new postmodern consumer
- Developing Consumer-brand engagement
 - o Toward a definition of Consumer-brand engagement
 - o A framework for consumer-brand engagement
 - o The role of consumers in value co-creation
- Branded entertainment and unconventional communication
 - o Storytelling
 - o Branded Entertainment
 - o Social networking and brand communities
 - o Executive branding

Prerequisites



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None

Learning goals

- To go beyond traditional brand communication models focused on market control
- To reflect on the role of consumers as owners of brand communication
- To reflect on the new role of content and fiction in giving a "new soul" to brands

Method Of Teaching

The course is based both on theoretical lectures in order to provide a conceptual framework of the topics described above, and on practical assignments as well as field trips. More specifically the “exploratory” session is conceived as a conceptual settle down of brand management basics, supported by examples. The “diving” session is represented by an interplay between theory, anecdotal evidence, and students’ active learning, throughout team work in class and group assignments.

Finally, the “field” session is rooted in practice-based experience of field analysis, company visits, and case study generation. Reading materials will also be provided on-line to allow students going more in depth in the subject matter. Students will be evaluated based on their active participation in class, their effectiveness in the accomplishment of the ongoing assignments, and their ability to analyze and report innovative brand communication case studies.

Grading

Class participation	20 % of final grade
Midterm Exam	20 % of final grade
Group assignments	30 % of final grade
Final exam	30 % of final grade

Course Readings And Materials

The lecturer’s slides, readings and essays for exams and assignments will be available on Blackboard.

Course Contents Summary

Lesson 1

Course presentation and introduction/Creating teams/Collecting emails –

The role of stakeholders in corporate communication: what changed, from Uberization to Revamping to MTP.

Readings:

- Slides: STATE-OF-THE-ART/GATELESS GATE COMPULSORY
- Cornelissen, chapter 1/2/3 COMPULSORY

Lesson 2:

The role of stakeholders in corporate communication: what changed II

Lesson 3:

The new CCO/The new employer as image/reputation tools. Transforming enterprises in a changing world. Corporate communication and social conversation. How to build/destroy a web reputation. Personal and executive branding in a revamping perspective: guest speaker expected.

Readings:



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Slides: A "GATELESS GATE". COMPULSORY
Corporate Communication Essays (Uploaded on BB)

Lesson 4:

Introduction to brand communication (brand positioning, brand equity, product/brand).
Focus on rebranding/branded content/branded entertainment: guest speaker expected.

Readings:

- Slides: A "GATELESS GATE". COMPULSORY
- Gambetti R.C., Graffigna G., Biraghi S. (2012). Grounded Theory approach to Consumer-Brand Engagement: practitioners' standpoint. *International Journal of Market Research*, 54(5), 659-687.
- Keller, K. L. (2009). Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 15(2-3), 139-155.
- Muniz, A.M., O'Guinn, T. (2001) Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27, 4, pp. 412-432.

Lesson 5:

MIDTERM EXAM (3 h.)

TOPICS: Corp comm/Stakeholder relationship – Uberization/Revamping – Executive Branding.
Introduction to Culture&Behaviour: the role of values in consumers'/citizens' choices. I

Readings

- Slides: COUNTRY CULTURE. COMPULSORY
- Prahalad, C.K. & Ramaswamy, V. (2000) Co-opting customer competence. *Harvard Business Review*, 78, 1, pp. 79-87.
- Finnie Å - Grönroos C. (2009). Rethinking marketing communication: from integrated marketing communication to relationship communication, *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 15, 179-195.
- Roderick J. Brodie, Linda D. Hollebeek, Biljana Juric and Ana Ilic (2011). Customer Engagement : Conceptual Domain, Fundamental Propositions, and Implications for Research, *Journal of Service Research*, 2011
- The Hofstede model Applications to global branding and advertising strategy and research, M. de Mooij, G. Hofstede, *International Journal of Advertising*, 29(1), pp. 85–110

Lesson 6:

Culture&Behaviour: the role of search in consumption. II

Readings:

- Slides: BRAND. COMPULSORY
- The meaning of search, google.com/think
- Holbrook, M.B. & Hirschman, E.C. (1982) The experiential aspects of consumption: consumer fantasies, feelings and fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9, 3, pp. 132-140.
- Pine B.J., Gilmore J.H. (1998). Welcome to the experience economy. *Harvard Business Review*, Jul./Aug., 97-105.
- Bowden, J. (2009). The process of customer engagement: a conceptual framework. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, vol. 17, no. 1 (winter 2009), pp. 63–74.

Lesson 7:

INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENT PRESENTATION

TEAM ASSIGNMENT PRESENTATION

Lesson 8:

Company visit expected: HOW A WORKPLACE CAN COMMUNICATE.



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Lesson 9:

From Consumer to Prosumer: how stakeholders and shareholders co-create brand value. The dialogic multiplatform. STORYTELLING FOCUS: What is a story? - Why are we stories? - Why do we look for stories to live? - Why do we look for stories to buy? The art of immersion: how the digital generation is remaking the way we tell stories.

Readings:

- Slides: STORYTELLING. COMPULSORY
- FUTUREOFSTORYTELLING.ORG
- Rose, F. (2012), The art of immersion, W. W. Norton, New York
- MAPTIA.COM: 13 tips for telling stories
- Millar, R. (2014), The anatomy of a good story. Marketing Week, 5/7/2014, p. 30.
- Yang, C. (2013). Telling Tales at Work: An Evolutionary Explanation. Business Communication Quarterly 76(2), p. 132–154

Lesson 10:

FINAL EXAM (OPEN BOOKS: a communication strategy)

Rules of conduct

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory and no absence/s will be excused. Please consider that Field Trips are considered equal to regular classes and indeed you are expected to attend the visits. Unexcused absences will not be accepted. An excused absence will only be granted if you are seriously ill and can support your claim with a local doctor's certificate dated the day you missed class (therefore you must go to the doctor that same day) that has to be delivered to the Professor or to UCSC International Office. Any other absence will not be excused and will result in not being admitted to the final exam, which corresponds to a 0 (zero) in the final exam.

Exam Date: The exam date cannot be re-scheduled. Should the dates of the final exams be moved for force major reasons, UCSC International Office and the Professor will promptly inform you in class and/or via e-mail on the new date agreed. Unexcused absences to the exams will result in a failing grade in the course. In cases of unforeseeable circumstances such as illness or injury on the day of the exams, you must submit a medical certificate and communicate your absence to the Professor and UCSC International Office via email prior to the exam. If the student does not justify his/her absence through sufficient documentation and with adequate notice before the final test, you will receive an automatic Failed. Absences for other unforeseeable circumstances will not be accepted and will result in a failing grade.

Bio of the instructor

Stefania Micaela Vitulli is a communication consultant and journalist. She is adjunct professor of Business Communication, Advertising Management and Corporate Communication at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan. She is research fellow at LabCom, UCSC, and professor and Senior Tutor at the Master in Corporate Communication, UCSC. Her research fields at the moment are sustainability, corporate reputation, CEO branding. She is the author of articles and academic papers on green communication and ecoluxury @: stefania.vitulli@unicatt.it