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New frontiers in brand communication and consumer engagement

PROF. STEFANIA VITULLI

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| Area of study: | Marketing, Communication and Media |
| Area Code: | CM/MK300su |
| Credit | 6 ECTS |
| Dates | 23 June – 4 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

- Key factors in brand communication/How to build a brand strategy
- Brands, branding and brand management
- Dialogue and relationships for competitive advantage in conversational markets
- The new postmodern consumer
- **BRAND COMMUNITIES FOCUS**
- Developing Consumer-brand engagement: company visit
- Unconventional communication: personal branding, storytelling and its techniques
- Social networking and brand communities

Prerequisites

None



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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” sessions are conceived as a conceptual settle down of brand management basics, supported by examples. “Diving” sessions are represented by an interplay between theory, anecdotal evidence, and students’ active learning, throughout team work in class and group assignments; “field” sessions are 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

Midterm Exam 30% of final grade
Group assignment 30% of final grade
Final exam 40 % 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 and their evolution

Lesson 2

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.

How to build personal brand through online presence in social media, and to curate your content to create narrative and a strong impactful community that will support company brand. How to replicate the same process with clients, using their key figures’ reputation to promote the company brand.

Lesson 3

Brand Communities role and definitions - The role of stakeholders in brand communication

Lesson 4

Field trip: TBD

Lesson 5

Introduction to brand communication plan
What is a communication strategy and how to build it
The communication strategy flow in projects and presentations
Focus on Brand Communities as a reputational advantage



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Lesson 6/7

MORNING Midterm Exam
AFTERNOON Brief Final Exam, guest speakers expected

Lesson 8

Team presentation
One-to-one individual essay discussion with the Professor

Lesson 9

Professional work in class, tutoring and pre-check final exam with Adv and Comm Agency

Lesson 10

Academic check and tutoring for final exam presentation with Professors

Lesson 11

FINAL EXAM TEAM PRESENTATION: a communication strategy
Presentation will be to a Brand Communication Agency & Company managers Jury + Professor + Peer to Peer Jury

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 and course coordinator

Stefania Micaela Vitulli: creative and project management consultant, journalist, drama critic and playwright. She teaches Corporate Communication, Sustainability Communication, Personal Branding and Adv Management 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. She is co-author of "CEO branding nella reputation economy" (Egea, 2021), articles and academic papers on green communication, sustainability, CEO branding and the reputation economy. She has a diploma in Buddhist Philosophy at the Dalai Lama Nalanda University, New Delhi, where she is enrolled in the Master in Buddhist Philosophy.
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