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## New Frontiers in Brand Communication and Consumer Engagement

Prof. STEFANIA VITULLI

### 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.

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:
  - › Brands, branding and brand management
  - › Dialogue and relationships for competitive advantage in conversational markets
  - › The new postmodern consumer
  - › Hedonic consumption and emotional branding
  - › Leisure, postmodernism and reliability
- Developing Consumer-brand engagement
  - › Toward a definition of Consumer-brand engagement
  - › A framework for consumer-brand engagement
  - › The role of consumers in value co-creation
- Branded entertainment and unconventional communication
  - › Storytelling
  - › Branded Entertainment
  - › Social networking and brand communities



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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" 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

Attendance and class participation	20 % of final grade
Assignments	40 % of final grade
Final exam	40 % of final grade

## COURSE READINGS AND MATERIALS

Some readings (books, essays) will be available during the course and some other essays and lecturer's slides will be available on Blackboard.

## COURSE CONTENTS SUMMARY

**Lesson 1:** Course presentation and introduction

The role of stakeholders in corporate communication: what changed. Stakeholder intelligence in a stakeholder-driven marketplace. From Uberization to Revamping.

**TEAM ASSIGNMENT TO DO FOR Lesson 3, Morning Slot (to be presented to ClubHouse Brera)**



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## Readings

- Slides: CORPORATE
- Exponential Organizations. Salim, I., Why new organizations are ten times better, faster, and cheaper than yours (and what to do about it), Diversion Books, 2014

## Lesson 2:

The role of stakeholders in corporate communication: what changed. From Uberization to Revamping.

Culture&Behaviour: the role of values in consumption

## Readings

- Keller, K. L. (2009). Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment. *Journal of Marketing communications*, 15(2-3), 139-155.
- The Cluetrain Manifesto: Introduction + 95 Thesis. <http://www.cluetrain.com/>
- Muniz, A.M., O'Guinn, T. (2001) Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27, 4, pp. 412-432.

## Lesson 3/4:

Networking role in building reputation: real vs. virtual communities. **Company visit expected: CLUBHOUSE BRERA** Foro Bonaparte 22, Green Metro Station: LANZA

## BREAK

Networking role in building reputation: real vs. virtual communities. **Company visit expected: COPERNICO 38** Yellow Metro Station: SONDRIO

Introduction to brand communication (brand positioning, brand equity, product/brand). **INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENT TO DO FOR Lesson 8 (to be presented to Dr. Gabriele Ghini)**

## Readings

- Slides: BRAND
- 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.



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### Lesson 5:

From Consumer to Prosumer: how stakeholders and shareholders co-create brand value. The dialogic multiplatform.

#### Readings

- Slides: BRAND
- 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

**Lesson 6:** Brand communication. How to build a unique selling proposition in a dialogue brand/consumer.

**Company visit expected in a Creative Agency: ABC TEAM PRESENTATION to be done in ABC Agency. Brief given there.**

**Lesson 7:** From Consumer to Prosumer: how stakeholders and shareholders co-create brand value. The dialogic multiplatform

The new CCO: transforming enterprises in a changing world - Ddiscussing the William Page Report

#### Readings

- Slides: BRAND
- 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
- <http://www.awpagesociety.com/thought-leadership/the-new-cco-transforming-enterprises-in-a-changing-world>



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**Lesson 8:** Corporate communication and social conversation. How to build/destroy a web reputation. Personal and executive branding in a revamping perspective. **Guest speaker expected: GABRIELE GHINI, headhunter**

### Readings

- Slides
- Bilton, N. (2013). *Hatching Twitter: A True Story of Money, Power, Friendship, and Betrayal*. Portfolio/Penguin, New York.
- WEARESOCIAL.COM
- MASSRELEVANCE.COM

**Lesson 9:** 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
- FUTUREOFSTORYTELLING.ORG
- Rose, F. (2012), *The art of immersion*, W. W. Norton, New York
- 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 BJ, 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.
- 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 social conversation strategy)

### BIO OF INSTRUCTOR

**Stefania Vitulli**, Contract Professor in Business Communication, teaches also in Seminars in Corporate Communication and Global Communication, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. Journalist (Arts for Panorama, Il Giornale, Il Foglio, Icon) and creative advisor. Her current research topics include environmental communication, green marketing and publishing communication.

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