International Communication

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***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course aims to present the complex and highly-articulated world of international business communication, derived particularly from the process of globalisation facilitated by the rise of the Internet and digital platforms.

Three areas will be explored in particular detail: international communication in the luxury-fashion-design sector; analysis of the dynamics of personal branding and digital celebrity cultures implemented in social media and the socio-cultural analysis of the phenomenon of influencers and influencer marketing; tourism communication and how it is adapting to digital platforms.

At the end of the course, students will be able to understand the strategic role that international communication plays in companies operating in global and cross-cultural contexts, as well as the multiple touch-points and the modes of expression through which communication allows companies to create value for the international market. In addition, students will be able to apply their critical skills to international brand communication, focusing on its role in boosting companies’ environmental and sustainability commitment and encouraging emotional attachment, desirability, and distinctiveness in the luxury sector as well as its most innovative trends, whereby people take centre stage as new brands, influencers and trend setters of consumer dynamics and life styles in a techno-mediated environment. In this regard, by completing a *group assignment*, students will have developed the ability to conduct research in the field and critically analyse an emerging brand phenomenon in a way that integrates the world of communication and consumer culture from a multi-disciplinary perspective. Finally, students will develop their planning skills thanks to a group project work aimed at facing the requests of a real company brief; this new ability will help them manage emerging environmental communication and consumer engagement issues that brand have to face in the competitive international context.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Module 1: *Corporate international communication and cultural issues*

1. *International communication and cultural differences*

– Characteristics of the International communication process;

– Barriers to cross-cultural communication;

– International brand and communication standardisation-adaptation;

– The concept of country culture and Hofstede’s cultural indices.

2. *Communication of environmental sustainability and its importance in international communication*

– From the circular economy to green marketing and the communication of “green value”. Global theories and best practices.

Module 2: *Brand and international communication strategies in various sectors.*

*Branding and communication in the cultural promotion of the territory*

The module will provide a conceptual framework of the characteristics of communication for the cultural promotion of the territory. The module will specifically focus on the communication of Milan’s cultural heritage internationally through the analysis of Fondazione Stelline’s communication and promotional strategies.

*Smart tourism and the role of digital communication in the tourist experience*

The module will provide an overview of how digital technologies and innovative ways of enjoying the web and tech-mediated tourist experiences are reconfiguring the tourist experience. In the context of smart tourism and e-gastrotourism, the module will focus in particular on the use of Zoom as a new tourist destination and as a place of consumer acculturation, socialization and performance.

*Influencers and influencer marketing: self-branding and digital celebrity culture on social media*

The module will demonstrate the ways in which the concept and strategies of branding have evolved to engage individuals, who are, to an increasing degree, implementing communicative strategies and establishing socio-cultural self-branding dynamics on the digital platforms. The module will take a socio-cultural approach to consumer culture and the global phenomenon of influencers (or content creators), analysing the phenomena of self-commodification and the construction of the para-social relations underlying the affirmation of influencers as cornerstones of the brand communication system on a global level. The module will analyse a number of global influencers in various sectors, with a view towards understanding the cultural, social and discursive elements of their communicative strategies that have contributed to their success in the world of business, the media and brands.

***READING LIST***

Reading list for students attending the course.

Material published online on Blackboard.

Reading list for non-attending students

E.T. Brioschi, *International communication.* *A spatial projection of total business communication,* Vita e Pensiero, Milan, 2015.

S. Biraghi, *Agenzie di comunicazione e clienti.* *Come cambiano le relazioni nel tempo della discontinuità,* Franco Angeli, Milan, 2017.

R.C. Gambetti, *La comunicazione internazionale.* *Riflessi culturali,* *opzioni strategiche e modalità di gestione*, in R.C. Gambetti, *La comunicazione d’azienda tra contesto globale e sviluppo locale*, Giappichelli, Turin, 2006 (pp. 1-45).

***TEACHING METHOD***

Interactive lectures, seminars and guest lectures by academic and business experts in specific areas, group assignments and a company-based project.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The assessment for *students attending classes* will be structured as follows: a *group project* commissioned by a partner company (module 1) and carried out in teams (40% of the final mark); an individual written exam composed of two open-ended questions on the topics explained in class, on the lecturer’s webpage, and in the reading list indicated above (40% of the final mark); *group assignment* based on the phenomenon of self-branding and the analysis of the personas and communication strategies of the influencers from module 2.

The *group projects* commissioned by a partner company is worth 30% of the final mark. The *written exam* is worth 40% and the *group assignment* is worth 30%.

The assessment criteria for the written exam are as follows: relevance of answers, appropriate use of specialist terminology, well-structured and coherent discourse, ability to make conceptual links between content and ability to apply the concepts learned to the many examples covered in lectures. Both open questions will be marked out of 30 and worth 50% each of the final mark for the written exam.

The *group project* for module 1 will involve devising a communication activation plan in response to the brief presented by the partner company. Projects will be assessed on: their adherence to the brief, variety and depth of the proposal and originality and applicability of the ideas. The four factors will be marked out of 30 and will each be worth 25% of the mark for the project.

The *group assignment* for module 2 will involve analysing the profiles of influencers in various sectors by applying the main netno-graphical methods, with the goal of understanding the symbols and values, socio-cultural norms, consumer and communication rituals and brand strategies that influencers use to build and expand their social influence on the public. The group assignments will be presented in class by students during the course. Although the assignment is to be completed as a group, individuals will be assessed based on their contribution to the task and class presentation. The general assessment criteria for the group assignment are as follows: adherence to the tasks requested, relevance of the profiles of the influencers identified in relation to the dynamics of self-branding and social influence construction illustrated on the course, thoroughness of the netno-graphical analysis of the influencers; profiles and depth of critical analysis demonstrated. The four factors will be marked out of 30 and will each be worth 25% of the mark for the assignment.

*Students who are not attending classes*, will have to take an individual written assessment structured in three open-ended questions on the material indicated in the reading list. They will be tested on the accuracy of the answers, the use of an appropriate jargon, and the ability to create a structured discourse and find links between the different topics.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

There are no prerequisites for attending the course.

Students interested in writing a thesis on International Communications should consult the virtual noticeboard on the lecturer’s webpage on the University website to check the dates of meetings for candidate thesis-writers.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.