­­­International Communication

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

The course aims to present the complex and highly-structured world of international business communication that has emerged largely as a result of the globalisation facilitated by the spread of the Internet and digital platforms.

Three areas will be explored in particular detail: the international communication of sustainability; analysis of personal-branding and digital-celebrity-culture dynamics at play in social media and the phenomenon of influencers and the creator economy; tourism communication and how it is reconfiguring itself on digital platforms.

By the end of the course, students will have acquired the knowledge necessary to understand the conceptual fundamentals, characteristics and operating methods of international communication applied to the contemporary context by businesses and individuals who are increasingly becoming brands and embarking on business journeys in digital contexts, creating the so-called “creator economy”. By the end of the course, students will have developed critical knowledge of international brand communication with particular regard to its role as a vehicle for the environmental commitment and sustainability of companies, and its most innovative trends, which position people as the new brands in the creator economy. In addition, by participating in a group assignment, students will have gained the capacity for multi-disciplinary field research and critical analysis of the phenomenon of influencers and creators, drawing from to worlds of international communication, brands, digital platforms and consumer culture. Finally, by participating in a group project responding to a real business brief, students will have developed planning skills for solving the emerging communication and consumer engagement challenges that brands face in today's competitive environment.

***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 *(seminar held by Prof. Stefania Vitulli)*

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

Module 2: *Influencers and the creator economy: self-branding and digital celebrity culture on social media*

The module will show how the concept and strategies of branding have evolved by engaging people, who are increasingly implementing communication strategies and enabling self-branding dynamics in digital platforms. The module will take a multidisciplinary approach (combining anthropology, sociology and culture, business, ethics and consumer culture) to the global phenomenon of the influencer and creator economy. Topics covered include:

– Influencers vs. creators; influencer marketing vs. influencer relations.

– The socio-economic context of the influencer and creator economy: attention economy, gig economy, reputation economy, algorithmic culture, surveillance capitalism, neoliberalism.

– Principles of social media marketing: PESO model, marketing funnel, affiliate marketing, remarketing and retargeting, native advertising, search engine optimisation, search engine marketing.

– Influencer and creator ecosystem: the players in the influencer and creator economy and how they are connected. Business case study on Chiara Ferragni. The collab house or “TikTok House”: the Hype House (USA) and Stardust (Italy) models

– Forms of power and influence wielded by influencers and creators.

– Diversity, equity and inclusion vs inequality and stigmatisation in the influencer and creator economy.

– The cultural effects of the influencer and creator economy: self-presentation, dramatisation, intensification, commodification, affective and emotional labour, marketisation, selfie culture, cancel culture, and influencer burnout.

– Ethics and morality of the influencer and creator economy: fake followers, fraudulent influencers, animal/pet influencers, and influencer activists.

– Principles of influencer relations and influencer marketing: partnering with influencers and creators, running campaigns, measuring and assessing campaigns.

– Development trajectories, transformations and technologies:

* influencers and creators as trendsetters (the “cottagecore” trend) and as desire amplifiers (the “mukbang” trend)./
* synthetic media, AI, virtual influencers and the metaverse: hyperrealism, anti-humanism, pan-humanism and alter-humanism. Shudu, Hatsune Miku, Guggimon, Mar.ia, Bee\_nfluencer, Nobody Sausage, the Good Advice Cupcake.

*Smart tourism and the role of digital communication in the tourist experience (seminar held by Dr Angela Beccanulli)*

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, socialisation and performance.

***READING LIST***

Reading list for students attending the course.

Material published online on Blackboard.

R.V. Kozinets, U. Gretzel, R. Gambetti, *Influencers and creators. Business, culture and practice,* Sage, London, 2023.

Reading list for non-attending students

Material published on Blackboard and the following books:

E.T. Brioschi, *International communication.* *A spatial projection of total business communication,* Vita e Pensiero, Milan, 2015 (to study: Introduction, Chapter 1 and Chapter 5).

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).

R.V. Kozinets, U. Gretzel, R. Gambetti, *Influencers and creators. Business, culture and practice,* Sage, London, 2023.

***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); a *group assignment* on the syllabus of module 2, addressing the phenomenon of influencers and creators.

The *group project* 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 and creators in various sectors, with the goal of understanding the symbols and values, socio-cultural norms, consumer and communication rituals and brand strategies that influencers and creators 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 and creators identified in relation to the dynamics of self-branding and social influence construction illustrated on the course, the depth of critical analysis presented and the quality of the presentation. The four factors will each be worth 25% of the final 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.