Strategic Communication and Social Media: Theory and Practice

Section I: Course Overview

Course Code: COM336LHR

Subject Area(s): Communication, Business

Prerequisites: One 200-level course or two 100-level courses in Communication, Business, or another relevant subject area

Language of Instruction: English

Total Contact Hours: 45

Credits: 3

Course Fees: N/A

Course Description

This course is designed to teach students about the challenges and opportunities connected to social media management and marketing. While businesses are becoming increasingly aware of the relevance and impact of social media and online communications, there is still a lot of confusion in terms of how social engagement impacts business metrics in a measurable and reliable way. This course outlines the rules of online communication and community building used by brands to foster profitable customer interactions. Moreover, the course discusses and analyzes the most relevant strategies adopted in the context of social media management and identifies benefits and limitations for each strategy.

Lecturers, activities and field studies introduce academic theories and frameworks related to social media management, and they identify and assess online brand strategies, with the aim of providing recommendations and insights on how to increase the impact of their social media presence.

Learning Objectives

- Identify media formats, including owned media, earned media, shared and paid media.
- Explain how social media contributes to the customer journey.

- Evaluate the role of social media in effectively conveying the functional, social, and emotional value of products and services.
- Determine the operations and practices connected to assessing, developing, and delivering an effective and profitable social media strategy.

Section II: Instructor & Course Details

Instructor Details

Name: TBC

Contact Information: TBC

Term: TBC

Course Day and Time: TBC

Office Hours: TBC

Grading & Assessment

The instructor assesses students' mastery of course learning objectives by using the forms of assessment below. Each of these assessments is weighted toward the final grade. The Assessment Overview section provides further details for each.

Engagement - 20%

Social Media Audit Group Project - 30%

Multiple Choice Exam - 10%

Social Media Communication Plan - 40%

Assessment Overview

This section provides a brief description of each form of assessment listed above. Forms of assessment may be slightly modified in the term syllabus.

Engagement (20%): Students are expected to be engaged in class, to have read the CEA CAPA Engagement Policy, and to understand the Class Engagement Rubric that outlines how engagement is graded.   One component of engagement will be for students to build a *Knowledge Bank" which will include various resources (academic textbooks, journals, websites, blogs, reports, videos etc) that they have researched and that are relevant to this course.

Students will create a digital file that can be prepopulated weekly, and the link to the repository/knowledge bank should be shared with the entire class. Engagement includes preparation for the weekly classes and the quality (rather than quantity) of participation.

Case studies will be assigned for class discussion each week, and students are required to work closely with their final research project partners in preparing for these class discussions. Students will be graded for this assessment component based on their level of preparedness and quality of class interventions.

Social Media Audit Group Project (30%): Each student group will select a brand from Westfield that utilizes social media as part of its marketing strategy and will analyse the brand's social media presence across a single platform (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter).

The analysis should include the following: the effectiveness of the brand's social media in conveying the brand's key messages, its ability to connect with its target audience (particularly in relation to its competitors in the UK marketplace), strengths and weaknesses of the current approach, and recommendations for improvement.

Each group will present their analysis via a 20-minute group presentation to the class.

	Excellent (90-93+)	Good (80-89%)	Average (70-79%)	Pass (61-69%)	Fail (60%)
Introduction	Concise overview of brand background and chosen platform. Engaging and relevant.	Good introduction covering key points.	Basic introduction of brand and platform.	Weak or unfocused introduction.	No clear introduction.
Methodology	Comprehensive description of analytical approach and metrics used.	Strong explanation of methodology.	Adequate overview of methodology.	Limited detail on methodology.	No methodology outlined.
Analysis	Deep, critical analysis of social media presence and engagement. Insightful comparative evaluation.	Strong analysis of social media presence and competitors.	Satisfactory analysis of social media presence. Basic competitor comparison.	Limited analysis lacking critical assessment.	Little to no analysis presented.
Recommendations	Highly insightful, well justified recommendations tailored to brand/audience.	Strong, relevant recommendations provided.	Basic recommendations proposed.	Recommendations lack detail or justification.	No clear recommendations.
Presentation Skills	Excellent clarity, structure, timing and delivery. Engaging visual presentation.	Clear, concise, and well-paced. Good visuals.	Satisfactory structure and delivery. Appropriate visuals.	Presentation lacks clarity or flow. Poor visuals.	Unclear, disorganized, poor delivery and visuals.
Speaker Notes	Comprehensive, detailed notes for every slide.	Strong notes for most slides.	Basic notes provided.	Very limited notes.	No speaker notes.
Q&A Response	Excellent understanding demonstrated. Insightful responses	Strong knowledge shown. Good responses.	Satisfactory responses with some grasp of analysis.	Limited ability to discuss analysis and recommendations.	Poor comprehension of analysis and recommendations.

	Excellent (90-93+)	Good (80-89%)	Average (70-79%)	Pass (61-69%)	Fail (60%)
	reflecting analysis.				

Multiple Choice Exam (10%): This exam will cover material taught in the first half of the term.

Social Media Communication Plan (40%): For this project students will assume the role of a social media strategist that has been hired to develop a 12-month social media communication plan. Using the SOSTAC framework, students will create a strategic plan that includes:

- Situation Analysis: Summary of the organization's background, competitive landscape, target audience insights, and SWOT analysis.
- Objectives: Clearly defined SMART Social Media objectives for the campaign period of 6 months.
- Strategy: Overall social media strategy to achieve the outlined goals and objectives.
- Tactics: Details on recommended social platforms, content types, messages, posting frequency, tactics, and activities. Create a calendar to incorporate social media posts using two social media platforms. Create relevant digital content for the social media campaign.
- Action: Provide timelines, workflows and responsibilities for executing the tactics.
- Control: Provide information about governance policies, processes for listening and measurement, and key performance indicators.

The plan should demonstrate a clear understanding of the audience and should provide recommendations tailored to achieve the stated goals through strategic social media communications.

Deliverable: Submit a portfolio outlining the proposed social media plan via Google Site https://sites.google.com/new.

	Excellent (90-93+)	Good (80-89%)	Average (70-79%)	Pass (61-69%)	Fail (60%)
Situation Analysis	Thorough analysis demonstrating deep strategic understanding of landscape, competitors, and target audience.	Strong analysis of landscape, competitors and audience.	Adequate analysis of landscape, competitors and audience.	Basic analysis of landscape, competitors and audience.	Inadequate or lacking analysis.
Objectives	Clearly defined, SMART objectives strongly aligned to overall strategy.	Well-defined, SMART objectives aligned to strategy.	Defined objectives related to strategy.	Objectives defined but limited alignment.	Objectives poorly defined or not aligned.
Strategy	Creative, innovative social media strategy tailored to brand and audience.	Strong social media strategy tailored to brand and audience.	Acceptable social media strategy for brand/audience.	Basic social media strategy presented.	Strategy is poor or unrelated to brand/audience.
Tactics	Comprehensive details on optimized platforms, content, timing. supporting materials.	Strong tactics with details on key platforms, content, timing. Good	Adequate tactics proposed. Some details on platforms, content, timing.	Basic tactics lack optimization. Minimal platform/content details.	Tactics lack detail or optimization.

	Excellent (90-93+)	Good (80-89%)	Average (70-79%)	Pass (61-69%)	Fail (60%)
		supporting materials.			
Actions	Logical, achievable workflows and timelines for executing tactics.	Reasonable workflows and timelines outlined.	Some workflows and timelines provided.	Limited workflows and timelines.	Unclear or missing workflows and timelines.
Control	Robust governance, listening, measurement and KPIs integrated throughout.	Good governance, listening, measurement and KPIs.	Adequate control systems outlined.	Basic control systems need development.	Control systems Excellent inadequate or missing.

Active Learning

Experiential learning is an essential component of education abroad, and participation in field studies is a required part of coursework. In this course, students explore the city in which they are studying using a variety of methods. This provides the opportunity to gain nuance and perspective on the host context and course content, as well as to collect information and resources for assigned papers, projects, and presentations.

- Westfield Trip
- Brand Museum

Readings and Resources

The below readings and resources are representative of what will be assigned as required in this course but may vary slightly in the term syllabus.

All students are given access to the online library of the University of New Haven (UNH), accessible here, and are expected to comply with UNH Policies regarding library usage.

Wherever possible, required readings are made accessible through the online library or Canvas. Students are responsible for obtaining all required readings.

Each course utilizes Canvas as its LMS. Students are expected to check Canvas regularly for updates and deadlines. Canvas is also the primary platform for contacting your instructor in case of questions or concerns about the course.

Required readings:

The following selected papers should be read and incorporated into your research papers and presentations:

Algesheimer, R. (2005), The social influence of brand community: evidence from European car clubs. Journal of Marketing,

Y, Chen & X, Zhao (2021). Digital Dialogue in online brand communities: examining the social network outcomes of brands' dialogue with Facebook users. Telematics and Informatics

De Veirman, M. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude, International Journal of Advertising

Fang, C & Zhang, J. (2019). Users' continued participation behavior in social Q & A communities: A motivation perspective. Computers in Human Behavior

Helal, G. (2018). Social media brand perceptions of millennials, International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management

Morgan-Thomas, A. (2020). Digital ecosystem and consumer engagement: A socio-technical perspective, Journal of Business Research, 121, pp. 713-723

Ozuem, W. (2008). Communicating in the new interactive marketspace, European Journal of Marketing

Ozuem, W. (2021). Determinants of online brand communities' and millennials' characteristics: A social influence perspective, Psychology & Marketing

Ozuem, W. (2021). Effects of online brand communities on millennials' brand loyalty in the fashion industry

Ozuem, W. (2021). Exploring customers' responses to online service failure and recovery strategies during Covid-19 pandemic: an actor network theory perspective, Psychology & Marketing

Recommended Readings

Ozuem, W and Willis, M (2022) Digital Marketing Strategies for Value Co-creation: Models and Approaches for Online Brand Communities, London: Palgrave MacMillan
Tuten, T and Solomon, M (2018) Social Media Marketing, London: Sage

Useful discipline specific academic journals include (all available online via library):

European Journal of Marketing
International Business Review
Journal of Business Research
Psychology and Marketing
Journal of Advertising
International Journal of Advertising Research
International Journal of Research in Marketing
Journal of Marketing
Journal of Marketing Management
Management International Review
Marketing Theory
Information Technology and People

Other resources that students should consult to aid the learning process include:

American Marketing Association: http://www.marketingpower.com/
Marketing Magazine http://www.marketingmagazine.co.uk
Marketing Science Institute: http://www.msi.org
Marketing Today: http://www.marketingtoday.com/
Marketing Week: http://www.marketingweek.co.uk/
World Advertising Research Centre: http://www.warc.com/
Chartered Institute of Marketing: http://www.cim.co.uk.

Course Calendar

Session 1	
Topics	INTRODUCTION TO SSM AND SYLLABUS

Activity	Understand the fundamental concepts of social media marketing: After completing this module, students will be able to define social media marketing, identify its significance in modern business, and explain the key components of a social media marketing strategy. Analyze various social media platforms: Students will be able to describe and compare different social media platforms, including their features, target audiences, and usage trends, enabling them to make informed decisions about platform selection for marketing campaigns. Interpret a social media marketing syllabus: By the end of this section, learners will be able to read and interpret a social media marketing syllabus, understanding its structure, learning objectives, and assessment methods, which will help them navigate the course effectively.
Readings and Assignments	Review course syllabus

Session 2	
Topics	**SMM AUDIT**
Activity	Conduct a comprehensive social media audit: Students will develop the skills to assess an organization's social media presence, including content quality, engagement metrics, audience demographics, and competitive analysis, leading to actionable insights for improvement. Identify strengths and weaknesses: After learning the audit process, participants will be able to identify an organization's social media strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to strategize ways to leverage strengths and address weaknesses effectively. Create an audit report: Students will be able to compile their audit findings into a structured report, including clear visualizations and recommendations, demonstrating their ability to communicate insights and propose actionable strategies.
Readings and Assignments	Y, Chen & X, Zhao (2021). Digital Dialogue in online brand communities: examining the social network outcomes of brands' dialogue with Facebook users. Telematics and Informatics

Session 3	
Topics	**CUSTOMER JOURNEY**
Activity	Construct customer personas: Learners will develop the ability to create detailed customer personas, considering demographic, psychographic, and behavioral factors, leading to a better understanding of target audiences. Map customer journeys: Students will learn to map out the customer journey across different touchpoints, identifying pain points, motivations, and opportunities for engagement, which will enable them to tailor marketing efforts accordingly. Optimize personas and journeys: After analyzing customer journeys, participants will be able to refine personas and optimize the customer journey, ensuring a more personalized and effective approach to social media marketing. Students select social media platform.
Readings and Assignments	Ozuem, W. (2021). Exploring customers' responses to online service failure and recovery strategies during Covid-19 pandemic: an actor network theory perspective, Psychology & Marketing

Session 4	
Topics	**WESTFIELD TRIP**
Activity	Field Study
Readings and Assignments	Prepare questions for tour guide Fang, C & Zhang, J. (2019). Users' continued participation behavior in social Q & A communities: A motivation perspective. Computers in Human Behavior

Session 5	
Topics	**CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS**
Activity	Lecture and discussion
Readings and Assignments	De Veirman, M. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude, International Journal of Advertising

Session 6	
Topics	**SM AUDIT INDIVIDUAL**
Activity	Share SM Audit with class
Readings and Assignments	Bring all audit materials to class

Session 7	
Topics	**Midterm Break**

Session 8	
Topics	**STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR SOCIAL MEDIA**
Activity	Develop a social media strategy: After completing this module, students will be able to formulate a comprehensive social media strategy by setting clear goals, identifying target audiences, selecting appropriate platforms, and defining key performance indicators (KPIs). Create a content calendar: Learners will acquire the skills to design a content calendar that outlines the timing, types of content, and distribution channels, ensuring a consistent and cohesive online presence aligned with strategic objectives. Implement crisis management procedures: Students will learn how to incorporate crisis management protocols into their social media strategy, including monitoring online conversations, addressing negative feedback, and maintaining brand reputation during challenging situations.
Readings and Assignments	Morgan-Thomas, A. (2020). Digital ecosystem and consumer engagement: A socio-technical perspective, Journal of Business Research, 121, pp. 713-723

Session 9	
Topics	**STP PERSONA COMMUNITY**
Activity	Apply Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning (STP): Participants will understand the STP framework and its importance in identifying market segments, selecting target audiences, and positioning brands effectively within competitive landscapes.

	Develop detailed customer personas: Learners will develop the ability to create detailed and accurate customer personas by gathering and analyzing demographic, psychographic, and behavioral data, enhancing their understanding of diverse customer segments. Build engaged online communities: Students will learn strategies to build and nurture engaged online communities around specific personas, fostering meaningful interactions, user-generated content, and brand advocacy.
Readings and Assignments	Ozuem, W. (2021). Effects of online brand communities on millennials' brand loyalty in the fashion industry

Session 10	
Topics	CONTENT
Activity	Craft compelling content: After completing this module, students will be able to create high-quality, relevant, and engaging content for different social media platforms, taking into consideration the preferences of target audiences. Optimize content for platforms: Learners will develop skills in tailoring content to suit the unique requirements and features of various social media platforms, enhancing visibility, user experience, and engagement. Analyze content performance: Participants will learn how to use analytics tools to measure the effectiveness of their content, interpret engagement metrics, and make data-driven adjustments to improve future content strategies.
Readings and Assignments	Helal, G. (2018). Social media brand perceptions of millennials, International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management

Session 11	
Topics	BRAND MUSEUM
Activity	Field Study
Readings and Assignments	Algesheimer, R. (2005), The social influence of brand community: evidence from European car clubs. Journal of Marketing,

Session 12	
Topics	INFLUENCER MARKETING
Activity	Identify suitable influencers: Students will learn how to identify and evaluate influencers who align with their brand values and target audience, ensuring authentic and effective influencer partnerships. Negotiate influencer collaborations: Learners will develop skills in negotiating contracts, terms, and compensation with influencers, creating mutually beneficial partnerships that achieve marketing objectives. Measure influencer campaign impact: Participants will be able to assess the impact of influencer marketing campaigns through relevant metrics, such as reach, engagement, and conversions, and use these insights to refine future influencer strategies.
Readings and Assignments	Ozuem, W. (2021). Determinants of online brand communities' and millennials' characteristics: A social influence perspective, Psychology & Marketing

Session 13	
Topics	TALENT PERSONAL BRANDING

Activity	Recognize key talent attributes: After completing this module, students will be able to identify the essential attributes and skills required for successful social media management and content creation, including creativity, adaptability, and communication skills. Develop personal branding: Learners will develop strategies to enhance their personal brand as social media professionals, positioning themselves as experts in the field and building credibility among peers and potential employers. Collaborate in cross-functional teams: Participants will learn how to collaborate effectively with colleagues from various disciplines (e.g., marketing, design, analytics) to create cohesive social media campaigns, reflecting real-world industry practices.
Readings and Assignments	Ozuem, W. (2008). Communicating in the new interactive marketspace, European Journal of Marketing

Session 14	
Topics	**SMM PLAN PRESENTATION**

Session 15	
Topics	**SMM PLAN PRESENTATION (Continued)**

Section III: Academic Policies and Standards

Academic Policies
Students are expected to review and understand all CEA CAPA student policies, including our Academic Policies and Engagement Policy. CEA CAPA reserves the right to change, update, revise, or amend existing policies and/or procedures at any time. Additional requirements that may be associated with a specific course or program are addressed in the term syllabus.

Student Learning & Development Objectives
CEA CAPA has identified Student Learning and Development Objectives (SLDOs) for all programs in all locations: content in context, navigating differences, power and equity, critical thinking and intellectual curiosity, career and professional development, and sustainability and migration.
These are meta-level learning objectives that transcend coursework and are infused across all elements of program delivery, beyond specifics of course offerings, addressing student learning holistically and framing it a larger learning context.