|  |
| --- |
| **SYLLABUS** |

**BUILDING A STRONG BRAND: HOW TO STAND OUT PROFOUNDLY**

|  |
| --- |
| **General information:** |

Semester/Academic year: **Summer semester /2025**- **2026**

Form of training: **Full-time**

|  |
| --- |
| **Contact information:** |

Assoc. Prof. Vladimir Zhechev, Ph.D.

Marketing Department

e-mail: vladimir.zhechev@ue-varna.bg

|  |
| --- |
| **Course description:** |

 The chief goal of this subject is to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date exploration of the subjects of brands, brand equity, and strategic brand management —the design and implementation of marketing programs and activities to build, measure, and manage brand equity. Additionally, a special emphasis will be paid to the topic of Personal Branding. In particular, communicating the differentiating qualities of a person resembles closely the practice of creating and sustaining brand equity to products. Although the concept of personal branding is not novel, challenges related to how people can define and express their unique value remain. Essentially, a solid personal brand can help to get promoted, close a dream deal, enlarge existing networks, among other major opportunities.

By and large, the illustrious examples of strong (product) brands can be used as a pivot for reflecting on your core values and translate them into actions of revealing true authenticity. In view of that, it is of paramount importance to be able to identify the differentiating sources of brand equity in different markets and start exploring how to apply the same logic to your personal brand. In a world of so many, it is challenging to cut through the marketing noise and promote yourself.

Given the multifaceted manifestations of personal branding, this course will explore opportunities for developing a content plan, personal style and plan of action for taking your own brand to the next level.

|  |
| --- |
| **Course goals:** |

 One of the courses’ important objectives is to provide learners with concepts and techniques necessary for companies to improve the long-term profitability of their brand strategies. It incorporates current thinking and developments on these topics from both academics and industry point of view, and combine a comprehensive theoretical foundation with rich practical insights to assist future specialists in their day-to-day and long-term brand decisions.

 By course completion, students should gain knowledge and skills in the following topics:

* The role of brands and the concept of brand equity;
* The process of brand positioning and the diversity of brand positioning strategies;
* The three main ways to build brand equity: by properly choosing brand elements, designing marketing programs and activities, and leveraging secondary associations;

 Specific personal branding objectives:

* Audit the sources of brand equity of successful players on different markets;
* Identify their personal brand’s aim and objectives;
* Analyze their current brand equity (education, achievements, professional network, life experiences);
* Identify gaps between current and desired brand equity;
* Design a value proposition that can be enacted in the different business circumstances;
* Embody the personal brand by using the right mix of media channels to convey the value proposition.

|  |
| --- |
| **Organization of the work process/ Forms of control:** |

* Lectures are delivered in an interactive format with industry examples, case studies and personal experience.
* Student involvement through role-play, analysis of case studies, self-reflection, presentation, design of creative personal brand message / value proposition.

**Forms of evaluation: A capstone project**:

*Develop a personal branding plan.*

Instructions:

**Self-Assessment:**

Conduct a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) to understand your unique value proposition.

Identify your key skills, experiences, and attributes that differentiate you from others in your industry.

**Personal Brand Statement:**

Craft a compelling personal brand statement that clearly communicates your unique value and professional identity.

**Online Presence:**

Audit your current online presence (LinkedIn, personal website, social media profiles) and ensure consistency with your personal brand.

Update your LinkedIn profile to reflect your personal brand, including a professional photo, headline, summary, and detailed experience (if necessary).

**Networking Strategy:**

Develop a networking strategy to connect with key influencers, mentors, and industry leaders.

Outline specific actions you will take to expand your professional network, such as attending industry events, joining professional groups, or leveraging alumni networks.

**Resume and Cover Letter:**

Redesign your resume and cover letter to highlight your personal brand. Use specific examples and achievements that demonstrate your strengths and align with your career goals.

**Presentation:**

Prepare a 10-minute presentation summarizing your personal branding strategy and how it positions you.

**Presentation General Evaluation Criteria:**

1. How rich in content is the presentation? Is it relevant and consistent?
2. How rich in content is the analysis?
3. Are the outlined personal conclusions and recommendations feasible?
4. Organization of the presentation (Are the speakers organized and do they make transitions between topics smoothly?);
5. Is the speaker’s demeanor professional?);
6. Visuals (Are visuals used effectively? Do the visuals help illustrate the important points?

|  |
| --- |
| **Thematic content:** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **No.**  | **TITLE OF UNIT AND SUBTOPICS** |
|  |  |
| **Topic 1. Introduction to branding** |
| 1.1. | Importance of brands. Brands vs. products |
| 1.2. | Brand elements |
| 1.3. | What can be branded |
| 1.4. | Branding challenges and opportunities |
| 1.5. | Brand equity and the strategic brand management process |
| **Topic 2. Consumer-based brand equity and brand positioning** |
| 2.1. | Customer-based brand equity |
| 2.2. | Brand knowledge |
| 2.3. | Sources of brand equity |
| 2.4. | Brand positioning |
| **Topic 3. Choosing brand elements to build brand equity** |
| 3.1. | Criteria for choosing brand elements |
| 3.2. | Options and tactics for brand elements |
| **Topic 4. Designing marketing programs to build brand equity** |
| 4.1. | Integrating marketing |
| 4.2. | Product, pricing, and channel strategy |
| **Topic 5. Integrating marketing communications to build brand equity** |
| 5.1. | The new media environment |
| 5.2. | Four major marketing communication options |
| 5.3. | Developing integrated marketing communication programs |
| **Topic 6. Personal branding** |
| 6.1. | Importance of personal brands |
| 6.2. | Personal branding audit |
| 6.3. | Designing of value proposition and network strategy |

|  |
| --- |
| **Literature:** |

**REQUIRED (BASIC) LITERATURE:**

1. Keller, K. & Swaminathan, V. (2019). Strategic Brand Management: 5th Global Edition. Pearson Higher Ed. Chapter 1.

2. Deloitte Global Marketing Trends 2023, 2023, available at: https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/insights/topics/marketing-and-sales-operations/global-marketing-trends.html, last accessed: 09.02.2024.

3. Deloitte – the CMO Survey, 2024, available at: https://cmosurvey.org/results/, last accessed: 09.02.2024.

4. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/goldiechan/2024/01/03/50-empowering-personal-branding-quotes-for-your-journey/>

5.The Weber Forecast: UNLOCK24, 2024, available at: https://www.creativebrief.com/agency/weber-shandwick-x-lot/insights/weber-forecast-unlock24, last accessed: 09.02.2024

6. Yondr Creative Technologies Trends Report, 2024, available at: https://lp.yondr.ag

ency/trendsreport24, last accessed: 09.02.2024

7. Ogilvy - 6 Trends Revolutionizing Media in 2024, 2024, available at: https://www.ogilvy.com/ideas/6-trends-revolutionizing-media-2024, last accessed: 09.02.2024