

**Course Syllabus – DRAFT**

**ISEN 461- Sustainable Branding (1.0 credits)**

**Northwestern University**

**Course Synopsis:** This course covers many of the fundamental topics in branding, particularly sustainable branding. Beginning with an exploration of brand strategy and motivations, the course progresses to an understanding of key themes such as brand design and brand architecture. It also discusses assorted topics such as brand auditing, transparency in sustainable practices and the key role of social media in branding today. All topics covered apply a unique sustainability-centered focus, with careful differentiation between B2C and B2B brands in the market. This course employs case studies as the primary mode of assessment in order to demonstrate the application of course learnings in the real world.

**Course Goals:**

Among other goals,

- **Understanding Brand Image:** This course aims to provide students with a greater understanding of the brand image as a key deliverable of the marketing process.
- **Understanding Brand Strategy:** Students will understand the process of creating a consistent, applicable brand messaging strategy as well as the particularities of sustainable brands.
- **Understanding Brand Architecture:** Students will understand brand portfolios under a single firm, and will understand how their treatment differs from a single brand.
- **Technology as a Driver for Sustainable Branding:** Students will understand the role of innovation in driving sustainable branding. Additionally, they will understand the importance of cutting-edge technology such as social media in the field of branding and marketing.

**Grading/Assessment:**

Grading will be based on the following rubric:

| Component             | Weight | Details   | Due |
|-----------------------|--------|---|-----|
| Effort and Attendance | 15%    | Effort will be graded through attendance, class participation and pop quizzes on the readings for the day. This ensures that the readings are done and that students are engaged in work outside the classroom. | -   |

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| Case Study Assignments | 60% | Written, individual submissions. Case study assignments constitute the bulk of the grading for this class and are the primary mode of assessment. Students will be given cases and certain questions pertaining to them, which they will be expected to answer in detail. Submissions should engage with both the specifics of the situation and the broader themes of the class. (7.5% per case)  |          |
| Final Presentation     | 25% | <p>Students will work in pairs for this assignment. They will work with their instructor to pick a pre-existing company in a pre-existing industry to focus on. Students will be role-playing as consultants to these companies, analyzing their current branding strategies and proposing solutions that draw from class material or from other research data. This presentation should last no longer than 15 minutes, and should be accompanied by a 3-4 page executive summary of the solutions being presented, to be handed in to the instructor on presentation day. Students will not be allowed to select a company that has already been discussed in the form of case studies for class. Preferably, they should select a firm from an industry that has not been touched upon in class.</p> <p>Students will also be involved indirectly in the presentations of their peers: as their peers are presenting, students will prepare questions about the presentation or the firm's choices. These will be handed in to the instructor and may be counted as a component of the participation grade.</p> | Week #10 |

**Grading Policy:**

- Grades will be assigned based on all the work you have completed during the semester following the traditional practice of A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, D=60-69, F<60.

**Course Readings: (all will be reformatted appropriately)**

*Required Reading*



Driesener, Carl, and Jenni Romaniuk. “[Comparing Methods of Brand Image Measurement](#).” *International Journal of Market Research*, vol. 48, no. 6, 2006, pp. 681–698., doi:10.1177/147078530604800605.

Briggs, Tom. “[Social Media's Second Act: Toward Sustainable Brand Engagement](#).” *Design Management Review*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2010, pp. 46–53., doi:10.1111/j.1948-7169.2010.00050.x.

Brady, Arlo. “[How to Generate Sustainable Brand Value from Responsibility](#).” *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2003, pp. 279–289., doi:10.1057/palgrave.bm.2540124.

Hanaysha, Jalal, and Haim Hilman. “[Product Innovation as a Key Success Factor to Build Sustainable Brand Equity](#).” *Management Science Letters*, vol. 5, no. 6, 2015, pp. 567–576., doi:10.5267/j.msl.2015.4.009.

Hill, Jessica, and Hyun-Hwa Lee. “[Sustainable Brand Extensions of Fast Fashion Retailers](#).” *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2015, pp. 205–222., doi:10.1108/jfmm-09-2012-0056.

<https://www.thedrum.com/news/2019/06/14/when-brands-go-green-how-sustainability-and-environmentalism-shape-marketing>

<https://www.greenbiz.com/blog/2014/06/05/anatomy-sustainable-brand>

<https://www.patagonia.com/footprint.html>

[McKinsey: The Business of Sustainability](#)

[The New Rules of Green Marketing: Strategies, Tools, and Inspiration for Sustainable Branding](#)

#### *Recommended Reading*

O'Connor, Noëlle, and Peter Bolan. “[Creating a Sustainable Brand for Northern Ireland Through Film-Induced Tourism](#).” *Tourism Culture & Communication*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2008, pp. 147–158., doi:10.3727/109830408786177515.

Minton, Elizabeth, et al. “[Sustainable Marketing and Social Media](#).” *Journal of Advertising*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2012, pp. 69–84., doi:10.1080/00913367.2012.10672458.

Lee, Yung-Kil, and Jin-Woo Park. “[Impact of a Sustainable Brand on Improving Business Performance of Airport Enterprises: The Case of Incheon International Airport](#).” *Journal of Air Transport Management*, vol. 53, 2016, pp. 46–53., doi:10.1016/j.jairtraman.2016.01.002.

Many other articles from the *Journal of Brand Management* may be of use here.

**CLASS OUTLINE**

| Weekly Topic  | Description   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>1: Brand Image &amp; Measurement</b></p>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Course logistics and overview, clarification of any questions.</i></li> <li>● <i>What will the case exercises look like? How to go about answering case-based questions.</i></li> <li>● Introducing brand image as the key deliverable of a branding exercise.</li> <li>● What are the methods used for measuring brand image? Scaling vs sorting style techniques, example of Likert rating scale. How effective are these methods for data collection?</li> <li>● How do you diagnose a brand image problem? Brand image as a key aspect of marketing strategy.</li> <li>● Sustainable branding as a key subset of broader focus on brand image</li> </ul> <p>CASE STUDY #1</p> |
| <p><b>2: Brand Strategy: Value Proposition and Demographics</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Understanding the value proposition of sustainable firms.</li> <li>● Differentiating between the employee value proposition and the consumer value proposition.</li> <li>● What are the psychological bases of the value proposition? How might these differ intuitively for sustainable firms?</li> <li>● How do demographics of consumers (in the case of sustainability GenX / Millennials / GenZ) affect the sustainability value proposition? What are the demographics of consumers likely to consume B2C sustainable brands?</li> </ul> <p>CASE STUDY #2</p>  |
| <p><b>3: Brand Design</b></p>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Understanding the fundamental principles of brand design. How does brand design play into the creation of a broader brand image?</li> <li>● Systematics frameworks for designing brands: for example consistent messaging, understanding audience, active employees as the face of the brand.</li> <li>● Understanding the connection between brand design and brand strategy.</li> <li>● How do you evaluate brand design?</li> </ul>   |

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|  | CASE STUDY #3   |
| 4: Brand Design & Sustainability                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued evaluation of brand design. How might the criteria for evaluating brand design differ for sustainable offerings?</li> <li>What is the role of storytelling in sustainable brand design?</li> <li>Sustainability messaging and its crucial role in the creation of a brand. How does sustainability messaging differ for B2B products and B2C products?</li> <li>How does the idea of storytelling relate to consistent messaging?</li> </ul> <p>CASE STUDY #4</p>  |
| 5: Brand Architecture                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broadening the conception of brand strategy to include multiple brands. Understanding brand portfolios along with respective trade-offs.</li> <li>How are strategic brand portfolio decisions evaluated?</li> <li>Co-existence of sustainable and conventional offerings within a single brand portfolio. What strategies are used in such a situation?</li> <li>Applying concepts of messaging and sustainable marketing to a broader portfolio of brands.</li> </ul> <p>CASE STUDY #5</p>  |
| 6: Brand Auditing and Brand Dynamics             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brand audits: what are they and what is the purpose? Basic overview of the methodology of performing a brand audit. Do existing methodologies capture sustainability well enough?</li> <li>Analyzing the results of a brand audit / brand dynamics: when and when does it not make sense for a brand to change its value proposition over time? Does it make sense to extend the brand?</li> <li>Trade-offs in brand extension, systematic frameworks to approaching brand extensions as a possibility.</li> </ul> <p>CASE STUDY #6</p> <p><i>Students must have discussed and finalized their industry and firm for the final presentation with their instructor by the end of Week #7.</i></p> |
| 7: Brand Authenticity & the Role of Transparency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistent sustainability messaging applied: sustainable marketing and package design.</li> <li>What are the impacts of seemingly minor elements like color choices, typography, logos, fonts in the design and success of packages?</li> </ul>  |



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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication strategies and other tactics applicable to boost returns.</li> <li>• How do these prescriptions differ based on whether the product is B2B or B2C?</li> <li>• Role of transparency, material sustainable practices in product design and the supply chain</li> </ul> <p>CASE STUDY #7 (Patagonia)</p>  |
| <p><b>8: Sustainable Branding, CSR, Greenwashing</b></p>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building brand equity and business value by innovating for sustainability. Understanding the various market drivers that have an impact on sustainability innovation.</li> <li>• What impact do CSR policies have on brand? Are they enough? How</li> <li>• Greenwashing – what is it? How to avoid it?</li> </ul> <p>CASE STUDY #8 (Lego)</p>   |
| <p><b>9: Leading the Sustainable Brand Forward: Social Media</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The challenges of managing brands over both short-term and long-term horizons.</li> <li>• New challenges in managing a sustainable brand in the age of social media. Is social media more important to sustainable brands due to target demographics of B2C firms?</li> <li>• Key brand performance indicators available through social media. What governance principles should a brand adhere to on social media?</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>10: FINAL PRESENTATION WEEK</b></p>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will present their final presentations and will hand in their executive summaries to the instructor.</li> </ul>   |