We live in a branded world. From the water we drink, to the politicians we vote for, everything is branded. In an over-communicated, hyper-connected, storified, gamified world, brands have expanded their footprint far beyond the niches of FMCG goods, consumer durables or sports gear. Branding is as important for culture and politics as it once was for market commodities. But what is it that makes brands and branding powerful? What explains the global diffusion of branding techniques? Or at an even more fundamental level, what is a brand? How do we go about building a brand? How do we go about managing a brand that already exists? What are the challenges that managers, marketing firms and consumers face when interacting with brands? How do different stakeholders created and maintain brands in dynamic environments? These are some of the questions that this course will attempt to answer.

In this course, we will examine multiple theoretical perspectives on ‘brand’ and will understand how each theoretical approach involves a different brand management toolkit. We will approach branding from multiple perspectives – from rational branding to emotional branding to cultural branding. To complement the theoretical foundations, we will discuss real life strategic challenges that brand and their managers face and learn from the success and failure of particular brand strategies. We will also understand how brands and brand management have evolved in the 21st century and what are the key ethical, environmental and socio-cultural implications of brand management’s evolutionary trajectory. We will explore concepts such as unique selling proposition (USP), mindspace positioning, cultural brand strategy and performance metrics such as brand equity, brand love, share of voice.

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to

* Understand the evolutionary trajectory of brand management
* Identify the building blocks of powerful brand strategies
* Apply appropriate branding approaches to tackle real life brand challenges
* Align epistemological assumptions with appropriate approach
* Analyse and critique branding strategies and come up with alternatives

We will also attempt to understand the challenges of a brand manager in a typical multinational organization, who is working with incomplete data, technological vanishing points, multi-method research reports, changing marketplace dynamics, intensifying competition and increased customer power.

**ASSESSMENT AND GRADING**

I will assess student performance on the following measures:

1. Group Presentations (30%)
2. Individual Assignments (Weekly) (40%)
3. Final Individual Paper (30%)

**STUDENT WORKLOAD**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ACTIVITY | Breakdown (Hours) | Total (Hours) |
| Classroom Hours + Time for Reflection | 17,5 + 17,5 | 35 |
| Case Discussion |  | 50 |
| 1. Personal Reading & Reflection | 30 |  |
| 2. Group Discussion | 20 |  |
| Individual Assignments |  | 50 |
| 1. Personal Reading and Reflection | 20 |  |
| 2. Group Discussion and Presentation | 5 |  |
| Final Individual Paper | 25 | 25 |
| TOTAL |  | 160 |

**PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE (Subject to change based on company schedules)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Session** | **Date** | **Topic** | **Visitors** |
| 1 | Tuesday, April 20 | Course Guidelines & Introduction |  |
| 2 | Thursday, April 22 | Lecture + Case Introduction: Evolution of Brand Management Approaches | Anne Rantanen, Marketing Director, Silmaasema |
| 3 | Tuesday, April 27 | Lecture: Categorizing & Distinguishing brands |  |
| 4 | Thursday, April 29 | Lecture: Diagnosing a brand’s performance | MD & Marketing Director, DeliPap Oy |
| 5 | Tuesday, May 4 | Lecture + Small-Group Discussions: Brands as Cultural Artefacts |  |
| 6 | Thursday, May 6 | Lecture + Small-Group Discussions: Creating and Managing Service & Experiential Brands |  |
| 7 | Tuesday, May 11 | Lecture + Small-Group Discussions: Brand Management in a Trans-local World |  |
| 8 | Tuesday, May 18 | Lecture + Small-Group Discussions: Pressures and Challenges of Managing Brands in the 21st century |  |
| 9 | Thursday, May 20 | Group Presentations |  |
| 10 | Tuesday, May 25 | Group Presentations |  |

**COURSE MATERIALS**

I will post PDF files of assigned readings on mycourses at least a week in advance so students will have ample time to familiarize themselves with the literature.

**GUIDELINES FOR CASE DISCUSSION (BRAND STRATEGY)**

This part of the course would involve coming up with a brand strategy for two real-world brands using the approaches/ideas/insights discussed in the articles and course lectures. Depending on the kind of problems case companies face, you will come up with a diagnosis of the brand challenge and propose a solution.

**GUIDELINES FOR FINAL INDIVIDUAL TERM PAPER**

The final term paper will involve a set of 5 inter-related questions that you will have to reflect on and answer, given all that you have learned in the course. Each of the questions will have a minimum word limit of 500 words and a maximum word limit of 600 words. The deadline for the final term paper will be June 10, 2021 (23:59).