Syllabus of Record

Program: CET Barcelona
Course Code / Title: BC/MKTG 340 The Business of Fashion: Culture, Communication, and Brand Strategy
Contact Hours: 45
Recommended Credits: 3
Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: Marketing / International Business, Media Studies, Spanish Studies
Language of Instruction: English
Prerequisites / Requirements: None

Description

This course examines the business of fashion through the lens of communication, branding, and strategic storytelling. Students explore how fashion brands convey meaning, identity, and cultural values while engaging diverse audiences across digital, print, and social media platforms. Emphasis is placed on how designers and companies shape coherent narratives that align creative vision with market positioning. Drawing on Barcelona's distinctive cultural and creative ecosystem, the course situates fashion business and communication within a broader urban and global context. Students analyze real-world case studies, learn about strategic communication concepts, and evaluate the role of visual storytelling, media strategies, and branding in shaping fashion as both a commercial enterprise and a form of cultural expression.

Objectives

Through their participation in this course, students will:

- Analyze how fashion brands communicate identity, values, and cultural meaning through diverse media channels.
- Explain key principles of business strategy, fashion branding, and audience engagement.
- Identify the business models that shape luxury, contemporary, and fast-fashion communication strategies.
- Examine Barcelona, Catalonia, and Spain's fashion and design ecosystems as case studies of local-to-global brand strategy.
- Interpret fashion as a form of cultural expression, examining how brands construct, negotiate, and market cultural identity and heritage.
- Apply strategic frameworks to the development of fashion-related branding and media concepts.
- Evaluate the role of digital media, influencers, and public relations in shaping contemporary fashion brands.
- Practice the approaches and tools to create a cohesive fashion communication strategy that integrates narrative, visual identity, and market positioning.

Requirements
Active participation is essential in this course. Students are expected to attend each class and field study course component as outlined in the CET Attendance Policy. Students are expected to read all assigned materials before the relevant class session and come prepared to participate thoughtfully in class discussions. All assignments must be submitted via Canvas unless otherwise noted.

Graded assignments include:

- **Participation**: Students are expected to contribute actively to class discussions, linking concepts and terminology from readings, lectures, and guest presentations with their own observations of the Barcelona fashion scene.

- **Case Studies:** In small groups, students analyze the following topics. Produce 3-page written executive report and present their findings in a 10-minute class presentation.
    - *Brand Audit Executive Report and Presentation:* the branding of a Barcelona-based, Catalan or Spanish fashion designer/firm.
    - *Integrated Marketing Communication Strategy Report and Presentation:* a fashion brand's integrated marketing communication (IMC) strategy.

- **Guest lecture response report**: Individual written report (500 words) connecting the guest lecture to relevant course concepts and themes.

- **Field study report and presentation**: Two individual written reports (500 words) and 5-minute individual presentations connecting the field studies experiences to relevant course concepts and themes.

- **Midterm exam**: Multiple-choice and short-answer questions assessing comprehension of key concepts, frameworks, and terminology from the first half of the course.

- **Final exam**: Multiple-choice and short-answer questions assessing comprehension of key concepts, frameworks, and terminology from the second half of the course.

Grading
The final grade is determined as follows:

Participation *(see rubric below)*	15%
Case studies (2 at 15%)	30%
Written component: 7.5%	
Oral component: 7.5%	
Guest lecture response report	5%
Field study report and presentation (2 at 5%)	10%
Written component: 3%	
Oral component: 2%	
Midterm exam	20%

Final exam 20%

Class Participation Grading Rubric

	A – 90-100% Exemplary	B – 80-89% Proficient	C – 70-79% Developing	D – 60-69% Unacceptable	F – 0-59% Missing
Frequency of class participation	Actively contributes 2+ times per meeting	Actively contributes at least 1 time per meeting	Actively contributes at least half of the time during term	Actively contributes less than half of the time during term	Does not contribute
Quality of class participation*	Contribution is always thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, frequently interacting with peers	Contribution is mostly thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, usually interacting with peers	Contribution is somewhat thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, sometimes interacting with peers	Contribution is rarely thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, rarely interacting with peers	Does not contribute or interact with peers
Level of class preparation	Always fully prepared and on task	Mostly prepared and on task	Somewhat prepared and on task	Rarely prepared and on task	Consistently unprepared and not on task

Readings / Resources

080 Barcelona Fashion. (2025, April 1). *080 Barcelona Fashion promotes an industry that creates 80,000 jobs in Catalonia* [Press release]. Departament d'Empresa i Treball, Generalitat de Catalunya. https://080barcelonafashion.cat

ACCIÓ – Catalonia Trade & Investment. (2026). *The fashion and leather sector in Catalonia*. Generalitat de Catalunya, Ministry for Business and Labour. https://catalonia.com

Amed, I., D'Auria, G., Bain, M., Balchandani, A., Baum, C., Barrelet, D., Grunberg, J., Li, A., Maki, R., Michaelidou, L., Rölkens, F., & Zipser, D. (2025). *The state of fashion 2026: When the rules change*. The Business of Fashion & McKinsey & Company.

Bain & Company, & Fondazione Altagamma. (2025). *Luxury goods worldwide market study*. https://www.bain.com

Barnard, M. (2013). *Fashion as communication* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Barron, L. (2021). The return of the celebrity fashion muse: Brand endorsement, creative inspiration and celebrity-influenced design communication. *Fashion Theory*, 25(6), 757–776. https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2019.1688001

Berk, G. G., & DeLong, M. R. (2023). *Communicating fashion: Trend research and forecasting*. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing. https://open.lib.umn.edu/communicatingfashion/

Business of Fashion. (n.d.). *The Business of Fashion (BoF) news, insight, and intelligence portal*. https://www.businessoffashion.com

Buyukaslan Oosterom, E., Baytar, F., & Maher, M. (2023). Fashion marketing with virtual humans as influencers. In A. S. M. Sayem (Ed.), *Digital fashion innovations: Advances in design, simulation, and industry* (pp. 163–178). CRC Press / Taylor & Francis Group. https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003264958-13

Cope, J., & Maloney, D. (2020). *Fashion promotion in practice*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Custo Barcelona. (n.d.). *Collections, lookbooks, and brand materials*. https://www.custo-barcelona.com

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited. (2025). *Global powers of luxury goods*. Deloitte. https://www.deloitte.com

Desigual. (n.d.). *About us, press, and sustainability reports*. https://www.desigual.com

Emerald Publishing. (n.d.). *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*. Emerald Group Publishing. https://www.emerald.com/jfmm

Fashion United. (n.d.). *Global fashion industry network*. https://fashionunited.com

Knight Frank Research. (2023). *The wealth report series: Luxury investments* (Q2 2023). Knight Frank LLP.

Ko, E., Costello, J. P., & Taylor, C. R. (2019). What is a luxury brand? A new definition and review of literature. *Journal of Business Research*, 99, 405–413. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.08.023

Lascity, M. E. (2021). *Communicating fashion: Clothing, culture, and media*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Loewe. (n.d.). *Journal, campaigns, and heritage materials*. https://www.loewe.com

Lowe, A. (2023). Brand storytelling and management. In *Fashion brand management* (pp. 145–168). Kogan Page.

Lyst. (n.d.). *The Lyst Index: Fashion's hottest brands and products*. https://www.lyst.com/data/the-lyst-index/

Mango. (n.d.). *Corporate press & sustainability reports*. https://shop.mango.com/corporate

Mitterfellner, O. (2019). *Fashion marketing and communication: Theory and practice*. Routledge.

Putra, A. R. R. (2024). Colonial America: The gateway to Barcelona's fashion rise. *Sentris Journal*, 6(1), 65–82. https://doi.org/10.26593/sentris.v6i1.8893.65-82

Rasulova, N. G. (2024). Fashion as a cultural phenomenon. *USA Scientific Journals*, 3(3), 39–41.

Ruiz-Alba, J. L., Morales Mediano, J., Ayestarán Crespo, R., & López Tenorio, P. (2021). Fashion events and e-WOM: Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Madrid. *Event Management*, 25(6), 613–629. https://doi.org/10.3727/152599521X16192004803511

SanMiguel, P., Rus-Navas, A., & Sádaba, T. (2023). Fashion shows: The greatest show on earth. In N. Martins & D. Brandão (Eds.), *DIGICOM 2022: Springer Series in Design and Innovation* (Vol. 27, pp. 406–414). Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-20364-0_35

Sayem, A. S. M. (Ed.). (2023). *Digital fashion innovations: Advances in design, simulation, and industry*. CRC Press / Taylor & Francis Group. https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003264958

Textile & Fashion Sector Snapshot. (2019). *Textile and fashion sector in Catalonia*. ACCIÓ – Catalonia Trade & Investment, Generalitat de Catalunya.

Tortora, P. G. (2020). History and development of fashion. In *Bloomsbury Fashion Central*. Bloomsbury Publishing. https://doi.org/10.2752/BEWDF/EDch10020a

Vézina, B. (2019). *Curbing cultural appropriation in the fashion industry* (CIGI Papers No. 213). Centre for International Governance Innovation.

Vogue Business. (n.d.). *Global fashion industry trends, technology & sustainability analysis*. https://www.voguebusiness.com

Content

Topic 1 – Fashion as Business and Communication

- Introduction: Fashion and history.
- Fashion as industry, culture, and language.
- Key vocabulary: fashion system, clothing, brand identity, positioning, narrative, audience.

- The fashion value chain: design, production, distribution, and communication.
- Overview of Barcelona and Catalonia's historic role in the Spanish textile and garment industry.

Topic 2 – Brand Identity, Creation and Storytelling

- Building brand identity: name, logo, heritage, and voice.
- Brand architecture: Branded house and house of brands.
- Narrative theory applied to fashion: how brands tell coherent stories.
- Case studies: Loewe's reinterpretation of its Spanish heritage; Custo Barcelona's global identity built from a local base.
- Aligning creative vision with market positioning.

Topic 3 – Business Models: Luxury, Contemporary, Fast and Ultra-Fast Fashion

- Communication strategies across market tiers.
- The economics and ethics of fast fashion; Zara, Mango and other Spain-founded case studies.
- How business models shape brand voice and media strategy.

Topic 4 – Traditional and Online Communication in Fashion: From Illustration to Online Magazines

- Print media, editorial storytelling, and fashion magazine
- The rise of fashion photography: the most prominent authors and their legacy.
- Advertising in fashion media: formats and pricing
- Media kits of key fashion magazines and platforms.

Topic 5 – Fashion Shows, Fashion Weeks, Events, and Fashion Film

- Origin of fashion shows their elements, importance and influence.
- The function of fashion weeks as communication and networking platforms.
- Particularities of international fashion weeks and 080 Barcelona Fashion in this context.
- Runway shows, presentations, and events as brand storytelling.
- Fashion film and its importance.

Topic 6 – Retail Environments and Experiential Branding

- Visual merchandising and store design as communication tools.
- The flagship store as brand narrative: window displays, spatial design, and customer experience.
- Comparative analysis of flagship stores along Passeig de Gràcia.
- Pop-ups, showrooms, and experiential retail.

Topic 7 – Digital and Social Media Strategy

- Platforms and their communication logics: Instagram, TikTok, and brand websites.
- Content strategy, visual consistency, and community management.
- E-commerce and omnichannel strategy in contemporary fashion brands.
- Case study: digital strategies of Spanish fashion brands competing internationally.

Topic 8 – Influencer Culture, Media Relations, and Public Relations

- The evolution of fashion journalism and public relations.
- Influencer marketing: collaborations, sponsorship, and authenticity.
- Media strategy around product launches and campaigns.
- Crisis communication in the fashion industry.

Topic 9 – Sustainability and Ethics in Fashion Communication

- Appreciation and appropriation in fashion.
- Greenwashing versus substantive sustainability communication.
- Case study: Ecoalf, SEPIIA and other Spanish sustainable fashion brands.

Topic 10 – Crafting a Fashion Communication Strategy

- Synthesizing communication frameworks into a coherent strategic plan.
- Developing a communication campaign using practical tools
- Developing final project strategies.
- Presentations and course synthesis.

Field study and experiential learning components may include:

- Guided visit to the Museu del Disseny de Barcelona (Design Museum and Hub), including its fashion and textile collection
- Site visit and walking analysis of the Passeig de Gràcia flagship retail district and/or the El Born/Gràcia independent design district
- Guest lectures by Barcelona-based fashion manager, PR, or branding professional

Syllabus of Record is subject to minor changes in Term-specific Syllabus at faculty's discretion.