



Strategic Branding

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Course Description

Welcome! How does your favorite brand seem to understand you so well? How did their marketing team “get inside your head” like that? How do marketers come up with creative ideas?

Good (and maybe even surprising) news: You do not have to consider yourself creative to succeed in branding... you just have to have a system for observation, organization, and strategic application of core principles and tactics.

In today’s fast-paced and technical marketing landscape, branding and content marketing that drive conversions are some of the most essential and sought-after skills. This course will provide you with a comprehensive understanding of both branding strategies and branding implementation/applications.

This course is divided into three sections:

- 1) The first section of this course will focus on gaining insights into brand positioning, theories of persuasion, storytelling, and content marketing strategy.
- 2) The second section of this course will focus on the application of these theories both in the traditional and digital marketing landscape.
- 3) The third section of this course will focus on the brand lifecycle: Brand building and architecture, brand maintenance, brand growth, brand management, and internal branding.

You will have the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the topics above through the use of case studies, readings, videos, templates, and guided exercises. You will also will have a chance to demonstrate mastery of these topics with an experiential learning assignment.

In the final class, you will have the opportunity to apply theories of corporate branding to the management of your personal brand. The average American spends over eight hours a day on communicating digitally (email, text, social media and the like). Managing your brand across these mediums is essential to personal success within a company and aligns well with your MBA journey and objectives.

This course is designed for both marketing and nonmarketing professionals. Branding is a strategic asset at the core of any successful company, product or service. The ability to understand the management of this important asset is cornerstone to all aspects of business, especially in our current

business climate of information overload. Application of the principles that lead to a strong brand and the ability to “cut through the noise” is essential.

Disclaimer: This syllabus is subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances or events. However, students will be notified in writing if changes do occur.

Course Materials

- a. Book.** Aaker, Daniel (2014) *Aaker on Branding: 20 Principles that Drive Success*. (ISBN: 978-1614488323)
- b. Movie.** Barbie, 2023. Available on most streaming services for purchase or rent.
- c. HBR Textpak.** A link to the Harvard coursepack will be posted to Canvas. Items in the coursepack are noted with **[HBS]** at the end of the item.

Linked library items are available online or through the UC Davis library. If noted, links will need to be accessed from on campus or by using the [library VPN](#). Some items will need to be searched for directly. The link will take you to main the database page of the journal. Click on “Search within this publication” and then search for the indicated text written as, “AN [Insert number]” in the second field.

Readings are listed in the order in which they appear in the course:

- HBS Core Curriculum: Deshpande and Keinan, **Brands and Brand Equity**. (2014, revised 2019) HBS 8140. **[HBS]**
- HBR Article: Keller, Sternthal, and Tybout, [Three questions you need to ask about your brand](#). (September 2022 Publication) **[Needs VPN, search for, “AN 7269414”]**.
- HBS Core Curriculum: Avery and Gupta, **Brand Positioning**. (2014) HBS 8197 **[HBS]**
- HBR Article: Avery, **Brand Storytelling**. (2019, revised 2020) HBS 519049. **[HBS]**
- HBR Case: Rowe and Khambati, **Gillette and the #MeToo Movement**. (2020) HBS W20544. **[HBS]**
- HBR Article: Berger, [How to Persuade People to Change their Behavior](#). (2020) HBS H05KK7 **[Needs VPN]**.
- HBR Article: Cialdini, [Harnessing the Science of Persuasion](#). (2021) HBS 7915 **[Needs VPN, search for, “AN 5329110”]**.
- HBS Core Curriculum: Avery and Teixeira, **Marketing Reading: Marketing Communication**. (2016) HBS 8186. **[HBS]**
- HBR: Case: Fournier and Wojnicki, **Selecting a New Name for Security Capital Pacific Trust**. (2020) HBS 500054. **[HBS]**
- HBR: Case: Avery and Chekitan, **The Park Hotels: Revitalizing and Iconic Indian Brand**. (2014, revised 2017). HBS 314114. **[HBS]**
- HBR: Case: Robson and Beninger, **Does Mattel’s Iconic Barbie Doll Need a Makeover?** (2015). HBS W16090. **[HBS]**
- HBR Article: Aaker, [Secrets of Social Media Revealed 50 Years Ago](#). (2011) **[Needs VPN]**.

- HBR Article: Edelman, [Branding in the Digital Age: You're Spending your Money in all the Wrong Places](#). (2010) [Needs VPN, search for, "AN 55461895"].
- HBR: Case: Avery and Fuller, AWAY: **Scaling a DTC Travel Brand**. (2019, revised 2020) HBS 520051 [HBS].
- HBR Article: Fournier and Lee, [Getting Brand Communities Right](#). (2009) [Needs VPN, search for "AN 37022046"].
- HBR: Case: Murray, **Best Self of Best Company? Peloton Searches for a Voice**. (2019) HBS UV7898 [HBS].
- HBR Article: Petersen, **Applying the Principles of Branding to Build Personal Brands**. (2014) HBS ES1466 [HBS].

c. **Canvas Website.** This course has a complete website built on Canvas. I will use Canvas to make announcements via email. All assignments, templates, and announcements to support this course will be posted on Canvas. Lecture slides will be posted in PowerPoint (for ease of notetaking) and PDF format prior to each class. All of the content in the lecture slides, assignments, and templates is copyrighted (and in some cases trademarked) and intended for your personal use only.

d. **Optional Reading.** Some students ask me for recommendations to go deeper into this topic. Here are books that I recommend throughout the quarter (I always put my reading recommendations on my class slides when the appropriate topic comes up in lecture as well.)

Optional reading materials are listed in the order in which they appear in the course:

- Miller, Donald. (2017) *Building a Storybrand: Clarify your Message so that Customers will Listen*.
- Cialdini, Robert. (2007) *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*.
- Berger, Jonah. (2013) *Contagious: Why Things Catch On*.
- Bayan, Richard. (2006) *Words that Sell*.

Course Requirements and Grading

Your course performance and participation will receive a letter grade made up of the following components:

1. Individual: Pepsi/Coke Assignment (5%).
2. Group: Group Project Part I: Brand Statement (5%).
3. Group: Group Project Part II: Brand Perceptual Map or Strategy Canvas with Rationale (10%).
4. Individual: Park Hotels Case Analysis (20%).
5. Group: Group Project Part III: Collateral Redesign (5%).
6. Group: Group Project Part IV: Cornerstone Content (5%).
7. Individual: AWAY Luggage Case Brief (10%).
8. Group: Group Project Part V: Complete Branding Brief (15%).
9. Individual: Peer Review (5%).
10. Individual: Class Participation (20%).

Total: 100%

Grading Cut Points:

Note: I round down when a fractional percentage is less than or equal to .4. I round up when a fractional percentage is less than or equal to .5.

97-100%: A+: A premium grade awarded in rare instances when a student has performed far above the standard expected for a class.

93-96%: A: Awarded to students for outstanding performance, well above the standard for completion of the class.

90-92%: A-: Awarded to students for strong performance, above the standard for completion of the class.

87-89%: B+: Awarded to students who have fully met all the requirements of the class.

83-86%: B: Awarded to students who have met all the requirements of the class.

80-82%: B-: Given to students whose performance in a class has been deficient but exhibits basic understanding of the material.

Assignments

Assignment 1: Pepsi/Coke Assignment. (5%).

Please refer to assignment in Canvas. Summary instructions below.

Write a succinct note in Canvas containing the following:

- 1) Your name and emphasis in the MBA program (if you have one). (1 point).
- 2) Your current job, future career goal(s), and why you are taking this class. (1 point).
- 3) Please state whether you like Pepsi or Coke with three specific reasons why. Note: You need to commit to one or the other so that our class simulation works on the first day. (3 points).

Assignment 2: Group Project Part I: Brand Statement (5%).

Please refer to assignment in Canvas. Summary instructions below.

During our brand positioning lecture, we will learn how to make a brand statement which will eventually become part of your final branding brief. The format is below:

“For (target market), Brand X is the only brand among all (competitive set), that (unique value claim), because (reasons to believe).”

Rubric:

4 points: One point will be awarded for the *correct* (properly applied example from definition) application of each term: Target market, competitive set, unique value claim, reasons to believe.

1 point: One point will be awarded for thoughtfulness, namely: Did the group think about their ideal customer properly? Did the group add the correct amount of specificity to the application of the statement?

Assignment 3: Group Project Part II: Brand Perceptual Map or Strategy Canvas with Rationale (10%).

Please refer to assignment in Canvas. Summary instructions below.

- 1) Create either a perceptual map or strategy canvas to illustrate where your brand is currently in the market and where your team plans to reposition it in the market (2 points).
- 2) Rationale (competitive analysis): In this section, you will summarize competitive and complimentary industries to yours in 500 words or less. Please discuss brand associations, brand parity, brand distinctions, and consumer relevance, resonance, and realism. (8 points: 1 point for each term of the 7 terms that are defined and applied properly and 1 point for accurate citations.)

Assignment 4: Barbie Case Analysis (20%).

This assignment will give you the opportunity to audit and reposition a brand, based on concepts learned in class to date. Please refer to assignment in Canvas. Summary instructions below. Don't forget to have fun.

Please answer all case questions in a total of 1,200 words or less.

1) Please describe at least three strengths of the Mattel's Barbie brand as presented by the case. Note: Focus on customer segments, positioning and content.

Please use case and class terms to *define* and *defend* your answer. Class terms may be used from any of the readings or lectures thus far.

2) Please describe at least three weaknesses of Mattel's Barbie brand as presented by the case. Note: Focus on customer segment, positioning, and content.

Please use case and class terms to *define* and *defend* your answer. Class terms may be used from any of the readings or lectures thus far.

3) Please describe at least two ways the Barbie movie repositioned Barbie as a brand? Specifically:

a) What was the perceived change of Barbie's value positioning?

b) What was the change in audience segments targeted by Barbie, if any?

c) Please name one other change that stood out to you and relate it to a class term.

4) What is one additional change you would have made or suggest Barbie should make as they move forward post rebrand?

RUBRIC:

QUESTION 1: Please apply and define at least three class terms with three examples to answer this question. **6 points total. One point for each term, and one point for each example.**

QUESTION 2: Please apply and define at least three class terms with three examples to answer this question. **6 points total. One point for each term, and one point for each example.**

QUESTION 3: Please answer each sub question with a class term and accompanying example from the movie. One point per sub question will be rewarded for correctly defining a term and another point for correctly applying an example. **6 points total.**

QUESTION 4: One point for suggestion and another point for rationale. **2 points.**

Note: Missing citations result in a one-point deduction per question in which they are lacking. They add credibility to business writing and it is illegal not to include them. Please pay careful attention to citing sources and backing up assertions.

Assignment 5: Group Project Part III: Collateral Redesign or Defense (5%).

This assignment will give your group the opportunity to simulate a logo redesign as a brand manager. You will work with the graphic designer from my company to complete this assignment. For complete instructions, please refer to assignment in Canvas. Summary instructions below.

Your group will be given the opportunity to redesign the logo for the brand that you choose to reposition for your final group project. Groups will use my *Logo Creation Guide* posted in Canvas as a guide for providing instructions to my designer. You should have had practice using many of these questions in the *Park Hotels* case. If your group chooses to keep the logo the same, you will use my *Logo Creation Guide* to defend why. This will be incorporated into your final branding briefs.

RUBRIC:

5 points: Group provided detailed answers to questions with reasons for their assertions. Citations were included if necessary.

4 points: Group provided sufficient answers to questions with reasons for their assertions. Citations were included if necessary.

3 points: Group provided basic answers to questions with few reasons for their assertions.

2 points: Group provided incomplete answers to questions with no reasons to back up their assertions.

1 point: Group provided insufficient information.

Assignment 6: Group Project Part IV: Cornerstone Content (5%).

Please refer to assignment in Canvas. Summary instructions below.

Cornerstone content serves as a guide for brand collateral. It is also how CMOs and consulting agencies pitch ideas for rebrands or brand enhancements. For this project, your cornerstone content will be 2-4 brief paragraphs that bring your rebrand to life using theories from our storytelling, value positioning, and theories of persuasion, in partnership with my *Seven Step System™* template. This will be included in your final branding brief.

RUBRIC:

5 points: Group expertly applied necessary components of *Seven Step System™*, storytelling, and theories of persuasion.

4 points: Group accurately applied necessary components of *Seven Step System™*, storytelling, and theories of persuasion.

3 points: Group did not apply all necessary components of *Seven Step System™*, storytelling, and theories of persuasion. **2 points:** Group provided incomplete answers to questions with no reasons to back up their assertions.

1 point: Group provided insufficient information.

Assignment 7: AWAY Luggage Case Brief (10%).

AWAY luggage is a Direct-to Consumer (DTC) brand who found themselves at a crossroads in brand growth. This case is cornerstone to the course because it presents you with an opportunity to act as a brand manager and make strategic decisions that will support the future success of the brand.

Question/prompt:

Using terms from our brand positioning, brand architecture, and/or brand management units, please describe in 500 words or less which strategic branding moves AWAY Luggage should make next. Specifically:

- 1) Using appropriate class concepts/strategies, please state what AWAY luggage should do next and why. **(RUBRIC: 5 points: 2 points for correctly defined and applied terms, 2 points for relevant examples of each. 1 point for correct citations.)**
- 2) Using appropriate class concepts/strategies, talk about why you did not choose an alternate strategy. **(RUBRIC: 5 points: 2 points for correctly defined and applied terms, 2 points for relevant examples of each. 1 point for correct citations.)**

8. Group: Group Project Part V: Creative Branding Brief (15%).

Please refer to assignment in Canvas. Summary instructions below.

Groups will complete and present a creative branding briefs. A branding brief is a document used internally by CMOs and externally by agencies in partnership with CMOs to define and exemplify a rebranding campaign. Once completed, you will be able to use this throughout your career as a best practice.

Branding briefs will be turned in as a PDF report with an accompanying presentation. Detailed outlines, templates, and past examples of projects are provided in Canvas. The main parts of the project are as follows:

Branding Brief (required)	Appendix (required)
Cover page (1)	Ideal Customer Interview Summaries
Executive Summary and Branding Goal (2)	Rationale for secondary target audiences
Competitive landscape and/or brand audit rationale (3-4)	Ideal Customer Avatars for secondary audiences
Perceptual Map or Strategy Canvas (5)	StoryBrand Brandscript™ exercise
Target demographic and rationale (6)	Website homepage site map and content
Ideal Customer Avatar (7)	Lead magnet

Logo and brand specs (optional redesigned logo) and rationale (8) Cornerstone Copy (8) Awareness campaign (9-10) Long-term management (11)	Email script Social media post examples for specific mediums Commercial (video) script
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Projects will be graded on your group’s ability to strategically apply class concepts to your rebrand projects. This project is a chance to apply the knowledge you’ve gained throughout the quarter and I hope you have fun completing it as well.

Assignment 9: Peer Review (5%).

Please refer to assignment in Canvas. Summary instructions below.

Students will grade team members on a scale of 0-5. Students will not grade themselves.

0: Absolutely no contribution to project.

1: Virtually no work contributed to project. Virtually no insights contributed or meeting attendance.

2: Very little work and insights contributed to project. Most meetings missed.

3: Group member contributed, on average, half as much as other group member in regards to work, insights, and attendance.

4: Group member contributed a fair amount of work, insights, and attendance.

5: Group member contributed an excellent amount of work, insights, and attendance.

Assignment 10: Class participation (20%).

Please refer to assignment in Canvas. Summary instructions below.

Each week students will be graded on class participation. Students can expect to receive full points for arriving to class on-time, paying attention to the discussion at hand (versus other matters), and providing thoughtful comments that advance the discussion. Agreeing and restating other comments or lecture content does not advance a discussion. Examples, applications, and insightful questions do. I understand that not all students always get a chance to participate and certain personality types may feel more challenged by participation than others. As such, you may email me up to two applied examples each week from class concepts we discussed if you feel that your participation is lacking. This should be completed no later than 48 hours after class.

If a student has an excused absence for illness or emergency, they may make up 80% of their participation grade by watching the recording and writing a *brief* (300 word or less) reflection on three insights that they gained in branding following that week’s lecture/discussion.

RUBRIC:

Students will be awarded up to two participation points each week:

2: Student arrived to class on time and provided at least two meaningful comments that advanced the discussion.

1.8: Student arrived up to half an hour late and/or provided less than two meaningful comments with no applied examples sent.

1.6: Student missed class with an excused absence and provided three insights to make up the class.

1.4: Student arrived to class over an hour late and/or provided no comments and with no applied examples sent.

0: Student missed class with no makeup

[Class Behavior and Operations](#)

Academic Conduct and Integrity:

I am honored to work in partnership with students of high integrity, honesty, and collegialism. All students in the University of California system are expected to uphold these brand values, and it shows. Please regularly review and make sure you are well-versed in the [Code of Academic Conduct](#). I take all violations of this Code of Conduct extremely seriously. Namely plagiarism, misplaced collaboration, or cheating will not be tolerated. Please talk to me if you have any questions about how to interpret the content of this document and thank you for upholding the values that we all hold dear at the UC Davis Graduate School of Management.

Learning Safety and Principles of Community:

In order to facilitate a learning environment where all students feel safe to grow, it is expected that you treat each other with respect and dignity, encouraging learning, sharing, and new ideas. In both this program and in business, this is essential to drive innovation, discovery, and creativity forward. To ensure that our learning environment in the classroom remains safe and collaborative, it is not acceptable behavior to insult, harass, or demean any member of the class. Professional business behavior should be modeled in the classroom and differences should be celebrated as a way to counteract blind spots come to complete solutions of business problems.

You are required to adhere to the UC Davis Principles of Community, [linked here](#). Please review this document so that you can be as collaborative as possible and an upstander in driving productive discussion forward. If you feel that you have been harassed, demeaned, or insulted in any way, please contact me immediately.

Student Accommodations:

UC Davis is committed to educational equity in the academic setting and in serving a diverse student body. If you are interested in learning how disabilities are accommodated can visit the Student Disability Center (SDC). If you are a student who requires academic accommodations, please contact SDC directly at sdc@ucdavis.edu or 530-752-3184. If you receive an SDC Letter of Accommodation, please submit it to me as soon as possible and no later than within the first two weeks of the course.

Engagement, Discussion, and Growth Mindset

Engagement and discussion will be significant learning tools for this course. You are expected to be focused on the discussion at all times and to participate as much as possible. Use of devices (smartphones, laptops, etc.) is permitted, as long as you are using them to find examples that enhance class discussion and activities.

Marketing is a dynamic and complex field and when practiced properly can introduce new perspectives, change behavior, and even change the world. In marketing, and specifically in branding, we never reach a point where we are “done.” There are always new ways to craft a message and different ways to deliver a strategy to strengthen and grow a brand. As such, students should come open to learning new ideas and strategies and push themselves to go deeper during our discussions and as you apply examples in your classwork. I will always celebrate a willingness to take chances and make new connections.

Above all, I hope that you are prepared to have some fun and be amazed at the ideas you can produce when given the right tools and frameworks (I will be providing many on Canvas and I am dedicated to YOUR success). Marketing is one of my great passions in life and I hope it rubs off on those I teach!

Course Schedule

(Fill in class meeting time and room here)

Week One: Introduction to Strategic Branding

Reading (to be completed prior to class)

Aaker: Part I & II

HBS Core Curriculum: Deshpande and Keinan, **Brands and Brand Equity**. (2014, revised 2019)
HBS 8140. [HBS]

Assignment

Assignment 1: Pepsi/Coke Assignment. (5%)

Individual: Class participation (2%)

Week Two: Brand Positioning

Reading

HBR Article: Keller, Sternthal, and Tybout, [Three questions you need to ask about your brand.](#)
(September 2022 Publication) [Needs VPN, search for, "AN 7269414"].
HBS Core Curriculum: Avery and Gupta, **Brand Positioning**. (2014) HBS 8197 [HBS]

Assignment

Individual: Class Participation (2%)

Week Three: Brand Building and Creation: Storytelling, Vision, and Messaging

Reading

HBR Article: Avery, **Brand Storytelling**. (2019, revised 2020) HBS 519049. [HBS]
HBR Case: Rowe and Khambati, **Gillette and the #MeToo Movement**. (2020) HBS W20544. [HBS]

Assignment

Assignment 2: Group Project Part I: Brand Statement (5%).
Individual: Class Participation (2%)

Week Four: Brand Building and Creation: Persuasion and Influence

Reading

HBR Article: Berger, [How to Persuade People to Change their Behavior](#). (2020) HBS H05KK7 [Needs VPN].
HBR Article: Cialdini, [Harnessing the Science of Persuasion](#) (2021) HBS 7915 [Needs VPN, search for, "AN 5329110"].

Assignment

Assignment 3: Group Project Part II: Brand Perceptual Map or Strategy Canvas with Rationale (10%)
Individual: Class Participation (2%)

Week Five: Brand Building and Creation, Assets

Reading

Aaker: Part III

HBS Core Curriculum: Avery and Teixeira, **Marketing Reading: Marketing Communication**. (2016)

HBS 8186. (**Note: Sections 2.1&2.2 p. 1-12**). [HBS]

HBR: Case: Fournier and Wojnicki, **Selecting a New Name for Security Capital Pacific Trust**. (2020)

HBS 500054. [HBS]

Assignment

Individual: Class Participation (2%)

Week Six: Branding Implementation: Brand Audit and applications in traditional marketing

Reading

HBR: Case: Robson and Beninger, **Does Mattel's Iconic Barbie Doll Need a Makeover?** (2015). HBR W16090. [HBS]

Assignments

Assignment 4: Individual: Barbie Case Analysis (20%)

Assignment 5: Group: Group Project Part III: Collateral Redesign (5%)

Individual: Class Participation (2%)

Week Seven: Brand Implementation: Applications in digital marketing

Reading

HBS Core Curriculum: Avery and Teixeira, **Marketing Reading: Marketing Communication**. (2016)
HBS 8186. (**Note: Sections 2.3&2.4 p. 12-48**). [HBS]

HBR Article: Aaker, [Secrets of Social Media Revealed 50 Years Ago](#). (2011) [Needs VPN].

HBR Article: Edelman, [Branding in the Digital Age: You're Spending your Money in all the Wrong Places](#). (2010) [Needs VPN, search for, "AN 55461895"].

Assignments

Assignment 6: Group: Group Project Part IV: Cornerstone Content (5%)

Individual: Class Participation (2%)

Week Eight: Brand Management: Managing Brand Growth and Brand Extension

Reading

Aaker Part IV & V

HBR: Case: Avery and Fuller, **AWAY: Scaling a DTC Travel Brand**. (2019, revised 2020) HBS 520051 [HBS].

Assignments

Assignment 7: Individual: AWAY Luggage Case Brief (10%)

Individual: Class Participation (2%)

Week Nine: Brand Management: Internal Branding and Measuring Brand Effectiveness

Reading

HBR Article: Fournier and Lee, [Getting Brand Communities Right](#). (2009) [Needs VPN, search for "AN 37022046"].

HBR: Case: Murray, **Best Self of Best Company? Peloton Searches for a Voice**. (2019) HBS UV7898 [HBS].

Assignment

Individual: Class Participation (2%)

Week Ten: Conclusion: Personal Branding and Project Presentations

Reading

HBR Article: Petersen, **Applying the Principles of Branding to Build Personal Brands**. (2014) HBS ES1466 [HBS].

Assignments

Assignment 8: Group: Group Project Part V: Complete Branding Brief (15%)

Assignment 9: Individual: Peer Review (5%)

Individual: Class Participation (2%)

Thank you... now go change the world with your brand messaging, stories, and value!