Prof. Thomaï Serdari  
MKTG-GB2326.30.S17  
“Luxury: Processes, products and strategies in luxury brand management and marketing”

Course Description & Objectives

As the core course for the Luxury Marketing specialization at Stern, this course is designed to provide students with an understanding of the fundamentals of luxury. When was the concept of luxury first articulated and what did it mean within its various manifestations? How did the products, consumer tastes, material exchanges, and producer strategies evolve through time? What is the state of the luxury industry today and what is at its core?

Additionally, students will be introduced to principles of luxury branding, design thinking and how these are used as tools to define luxury business strategies.

By the end of this course students will have developed:

- An understanding of the luxury segment of the market as it applies to a variety of industries
- The necessary vocabulary to articulate the nuances that differentiate these products and the ability to do so with clarity and precision in terms of technique, design, and materials
- The critical skills to identify potential new luxury products and how they relate to a variety of markets, including emerging markets.
- Analytical skills by hands-on experience and business case analysis, discussion, and presentation
- The critical skills to distinguish/discover faults in business strategies that are not compatible with or contradict the essence of a particular luxury brand

Course Methods

Class assignments and discussions are designed to develop the critical thinking, communication and managerial skills necessary to successfully plan and launch marketing plans for luxury brands. Each class will include discussion of readings, case analysis and group activities. Students will analyze cases with an action orientation, for example, what steps should we take to further the development of a luxury brand? What are the brand’s strengths or weaknesses and how should they be managed? How can a luxury brand be protected against competitors who use the same suppliers? Which factors increase the value of a luxury enterprise?

Classroom Contributions

The learning experience in a course like this one depends heavily on each student
being prepared to actively participate in every class session. We all have
expectations that will enrich the topic and direction of discussion in the course. This
means that you need to be fully acquainted with the readings and cases for a given
session. Positive participation includes attendance, active involvement in all in-class
exercises and discussions, and maintenance of a classroom demeanor that
encourages the participation of others. You will be evaluated on the quality of your
contribution and insights. Quality comments possess one or more of the following
attributes: (a) Contribute to moving the discussion forward; (b) Offer a different,
unique and relevant perspective on the issue; (c) Build on comments of others; and
(d) Include some evidence or analysis of inherent tradeoffs, i.e., demonstrate
reflective thinking.

**Attendance Policy**

Attendance at all sessions is expected. Absences will significantly impact the class
participation grade.

**Electronic Devices Policy**

Cell phones and other electronic devices may not be used during class.

**Honor Code**

Students must adhere to the school’s Honor Code. All students are obligated to
report to the instructor any suspected violations of the Code (see

**Student With Disabilities**

If you have a qualified disability and will require academic accommodation during
this course, please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD,
998-4980) and provide me with a letter from them verifying your registration and
outlining the accommodations they recommend. Please do this during the first week
of classes.

**Course Grading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Quiz</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final group project</td>
<td>40%    (Brand redesign, Instructions TBA)</td>
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Course Materials

Texts:

There is also a reader containing Harvard Business Cases. You may access this through the Harvard Business Cases website. Link will be provided for you on NYU Classes. Additional articles used for the course will be posted on NYU Classes. Supplementary readings may be distributed in class or posted on NYU Classes.

The following titles are optional but highly recommended if branding is your area of specialization.


Instructor

Thomaï Serdari, Ph.D. is a strategist in luxury marketing and branding. She helps clients launch, grow, and successfully manage luxury brands. She is an expert on luxury and actively studies, values, and reports on companies or funds that operate and invest within the luxury goods market.

Prof. Serdari has been teaching at New York University since 2004. She has developed a variety of courses at NYU, among which: “Cultures of Excess: Product and Fashion Design through Modernity” and “Entrepreneurship in the Business of Art.” She also developed the core courses for the Luxury Marketing specialization at the Leonard N. Stern School of Business, undergraduate and MBA level: “The Core of Luxury: Processes, Products, and Strategies through History,” “Luxury Branding: Brand Thinking and Experience,” “Luxury Launch,” and “Retail Strategy.”

Originally trained as an architect at the National Technical University of Athens, Prof. Serdari received her doctorate in Art History & Archaeology from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University in 2005. She also holds an MBA from the Leonard N. Stern School of Business, New York University, with a specialization in corporate and quantitative finance (2009).

Heavily drawing on her interdisciplinary training, Prof. Serdari launched PIQluxury, a digital platform that provides marketing, consumer and creative intelligence to brand professionals to reinforce the creative direction of brands. She is the co-editor of the first academic interdisciplinary journal on Luxury: History, Culture, Consumption published by Taylor & Francis. Her chapter “Experiments in Suchness: Hiroshi Sugimoto Silk Shiki for Hermès,” appears in John Armitage & Joanne Roberts eds. Critical Luxury Studies: Art, Design, Media, Edinburgh University Press, 2016. She is the author of ‘STEIDL, Printer, Publisher, Alchemist: The Field of Luxury Production in Germany,” published in the November 2015 issue of Luxury: History, Culture, Consumption. She is currently working on sustainable luxury as it applies to: diamond mining in Botswana (book chapter); sustainable luxury fashion (conference paper).

Prof. Serdari is one of the main contributors to the LVMH Fundamentals in Luxury Retail: A CPC/Parsons Collaboration, an education program designed to train and provide a wide range of retail skills to Chinese-Americans.
Detailed Course Outline

Class 1
2/7
Part I  Course introduction
Definition of the following terms: brand, luxury, luxury brand

Required Reading:

Come prepared to discuss your favorite luxury brands
Kapferer, Chapter 3 (Textbook)

Part II  Methodological approaches to understanding luxury

Optional Reading:


Questions:

1. What are some of the approaches that have been used to define the concept of luxury? Do you find them all equally valid and why? Are they applicable today? Explain.

2. Which one of the “anti-laws” of marketing was novel to you? Or which do you find most objectionable? Why?

Class 2
2/14
Part I  Market segmentation beyond the socioeconomic
Application: Luxury Fashion

Required Reading:

Kapferer, Chapter 6 (Textbook)

Berthon, P. et al. “Aesthetics and Ephemerality: Observing and Preserving the luxury brand” (Under: Bibliography)

OPTIONAL:
Nicky Ryan, “Prada and the Art of Patronage,” in Fashion Theory, Vol. 11, no. 1, March 2007, pp. 7-23 (NYU Classes)

Questions: Explain if and why high fashion is a sustainable industry today.

Are the facets of luxury applicable to high fashion? Explain and present examples.

Part II New business models in High Fashion for efficient retail

Required Reading:

Harvard Business Case: “Moda Operandi: A New Style of Fashion Retail” 812040-PDF_ENG 8 p

Questions: 1. What would you define as the elements of business planning that will allow Moda Operandi to succeed in contemporary fashion retail?
2. What are the risks they are facing?
3. What would you say is the biggest danger within the industry that may work against them?

Class 3
2/21
Part I Craftsmanship: How are things made and why it matters

Required Reading:

Kapferer, Chapters 8, 9 & 11


Question: How was Wedgwood innovative? Be concrete and present examples from the case.

Part II Contemporary trends in luxury management
In-class documentary viewing and discussion afterwards
Class 4
2/28
Part I  East vs. West: What does Culture have to do with luxury
Part II  Luxury firms’ strategy: Resources; organization; competitive environment; leadership; global strategic choices

Required Reading:

Harvard Business Case: “Louis Vuitton” W13009_PDF-ENG

Questions:
1. How has LVMH been performing? And how have its competitors been performing?
2. Within the LVMH group Louis Vuitton has been very successful. Why do you think this is the case?
3. What are some of the challenges LV is facing today?
4. What are the options available to LV? If you were the manager, what strategy would you adopt?

Class 5
3/7
Part I  Communicating & Distributing Luxury
The beauty & fragrance industries

Kapferer, Chapters 7, 10

Class 6
3/14
Part I  In-class quiz
Part II  Luxury services

Required Reading:

Harvard Business Case: “Vertu: Nokia’s Luxury Mobile Phone for the Urban Rich”

Question  If you had just been hired as Global Marketing VP at Vertu, what top three marketing priorities would you choose to focus on? Explain how you arrived at your answers.
Class 7
3/28
Part I  Introduction to branding principles: How the anthropological and sociological branding process defines commercial success
Discussion of course methodology (Lecture)

Part II  The new branding paradigm: How design thinking is applied in luxury brand development (Lecture and discussion)

Class 8
4/4
(Lecture and discussion)

Part II  Researching, Measuring, and Protecting Brands (Lecture)
Hospitality: Striving for lifetime value (Business Case Instruction)
HBC  Rosewood Hotels and Resorts: Branding to Increase Customer Profitability and Lifetime Value (2087-PDF-ENG)

Class 9
4/11
Part I  Global Brand Management (Lecture)
Automotive: Branding as competitive strategy (Business Case Instruction)
HBC  BMW of North America: Dream it. Built it. Drive it. (TB0301-PDF-ENG)

Part II  Brands in Retail Spaces and Environments (Lecture and discussion)

Class 10
4/18
Part I  Principles of experiential design (Lecture and discussion)
Brands on the Internet and social media (Lecture)

Part II  Fashion industry: The power of images in a cyclical business environment (Business Case Instruction)
HBC  Shanghai Tang (HKU 650-0DF-ENG)
Class 11
4/25
Part I  Luxury branding as corporate strategy (Lecture and discussion) Guest Speaker: TBA

Part II  Beauty: Start-ups, entrepreneurship, and luxury branding (Business Case Instruction)
        HBC TATCHA: Marketing the Beauty Secrets of a Japanese Geisha (313149-PDF-ENG)

Class 12
5/2
Final Presentations, Brand Re-Design