

IB 355 MANAGING FASHION AND LUXURY COMPANIES
IES Abroad Milan

DESCRIPTION:

The course provides an overview of the fashion system and an in-depth understanding of the strategic, organizational and managerial characteristics of fashion and design-based companies, both in the high end and in the mass market. Brand Management in fashion and luxury industries is the art and the science of creating the 'dream factor': the aim is making people buy products not because they need them but because they desire them; in this way companies may achieve both an increase of the profitability and revenues in the short term and of the brand equity in the long term. The methodology behind can be successfully transferred to other industries too. From this perspective, the course aims at providing the participants the skills for managing key business processes in fashion and luxury companies in a context undergoing a radical evolution. Course objectives can be synthesized as follows:

- to get acquainted with the concepts of fashion, fashion cycle, fashion and luxury;
- to learn about the main landmarks in the development of fashion and luxury companies and how the greatest international designers, brands and countries (France, Italy, US) influenced the current global fashion system;
- to analyze the main business strategies and business models in fashion (luxury brands, fashion designers, premium brands, fast fashion retailers);
- to understand seasonal strategies at the level of product, distribution and communication;
- to understand the peculiarities of growth strategies in fashion and design-based companies with a specific focus on brand extension.

The learning process is facilitated through stimulating teaching methods such as case histories, guest speakers and field projects, taking advantage from being located in a leading fashion center as Milan.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: One basic course in business strategy or marketing is required.

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

The course focuses on three different learning methodologies: in-class lectures, to introduce the theoretical insights and features of the "fashion & luxury" industries; team projects, which will give the opportunity to apply concepts learned in class in a real case study; and finally, field studies, which allow students to gain hands-on experience with the particularities of the "Italian Fashion System" and its dominant Representatives.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Class engagement - 10 %
- Midterm exam - 20 %
- Group project - 30%
- Final exam - 40%

Participation

Students are expected to come to class prepared and to make thoughtful contributions to class discussion.



Midterm

The midterm will consist of short answer questions or multiple choices based on the learning outcomes of the first half of the course – i.e., country of origin effect; the history of Italian, French and American fashion and design; the basics of marketing and branding; the design process and retail environment.

Group Project

Group project should entail 3-4 people per group. A precise briefing on the group project will be provided during the course. Students will work through a detailed analysis of a fashion brand composed of two parts. In the first part, the focus will be on the positioning thanks to the analysis of its brand identity through the main components of the product, retail, and communication identities. In the second part, students will be required to give an answer to a research question on a particular managerial/strategic topic concerning the same brand.

Final Exam

The final exam will consist of two essay questions related to topics covered in the second part of the syllabus – i.e., the main drivers for fashion and luxury consumption; stylistic identity and product development; image identity and communication; retail identity and distribution, the jewelry and watches business models and one question based on case history presented by guest speakers. Students will be required to be brief and to the point: one page maximum for each question.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon completing the course, students will be able to gain a thorough knowledge of the business logic in fashion and luxury industries. They will also be given a key to understanding professional roles such as business unit/brand manager, licensing manager, area manager, retail manager, merchandising manager and communication manager. Yet, all roles will share a common understanding and vision about the culture of excellence, a result-oriented creativity and a sensitivity for aesthetics and market trends.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

As a member of our class community, you are expected to be present and on time every day. Attending class has an impact on your learning and academic success. For this reason, the IES Abroad Milan attendance policy allows for the following number of absences, which are intended to be used for physical and mental health reasons:

- THREE (3) absences in each Italian language course,
- TWO (2) absences in each Area Studies course,
- ONE (1) absence in each seminar course or course meeting 1 day a week,
- ZERO (0) absences in each course of individual music instruction.

Every absence beyond this allowance will automatically result in a penalty of 2 percentage points off the final grade. SEVEN (7) absences will result in a failing grade in Italian language and Area Studies courses. FOUR (4) absences will result in a failing grade in seminars or 1-day-a-week courses. Failure to attend a scheduled exam, test, quiz, or presentation will automatically result in an F grade on that assessment.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students are expected to abide by the IES Abroad Code of Academic Integrity. All work submitted by a student for academic credit should constitute the student's own original work. Any work submitted for academic credit may be subject to review by a textual similarity detection service for the detection of plagiarism and AI usage.

CONTENT:

Week	Content	Assignments
Week 1 <i>Session 1</i>	Course introduction - Defining fashion and luxury <u>Objectives:</u> Familiarize yourself with the course subject. Understand the difference between fashion and luxury.	Readings: Kapferer, J.N., Part 1: How Luxury is Changing in <i>How Luxury Brands Can Grow Yet Remain Rare</i>.
Week 1 <i>Session 2</i>	Business Models and Brand Management in Fashion and Luxury <u>Objectives:</u> Understand the phenomenology of business models and the relationship between strategic positioning and corporate strategy. Set the basis of marketing and branding strategy. Learn the fundamentals for branding. Launch of the group assignment	Readings: - Corbellini, E., Saviolo, S. Branding as positioning and Brand heritage and storytelling in <i>Managing Fashion and Luxury Companies</i>. p.155-165. - Corbellini, E., Saviolo, S. Business models in <i>Managing Fashion and Luxury Companies</i>. p.123-132.
Week 2 <i>Session 1</i>	The role of stylistic identity and product development in brand positioning <u>Objectives:</u> Learn about the concept of stylistic identity, and the product development process in fashion. Launch of the individual assignments	Readings: - Brannon, E.L. Fashion Forecasting Process in <i>Fashion Forecasting</i>.ch.1. - Posner, H. Strategy branding and promotion in <i>Marketing fashion</i>. p. 89-99.
Week 2 <i>Session 2</i>	Jewelry business models <u>Objectives:</u> Gain an initial understanding of the jewelry universe, with examples of business models, categories, market, gems and consumers. <i>Guest instructor: Donatella Zappieri</i>	Course assignment 1: Visit two <i>Dolce& Gabbana</i> retail spaces in Milan, and write a short essay, discussing the overall <i>Dolce&Gabbana</i> business model. <i>Precise locations, deadline and essay requirements will be published on Moodle</i>
Week 3 <i>Session 1</i>	The Luxury Watch Industry <u>Objectives:</u> Understand how the jewelry and watches industry are conceived and their segmentations. <i>Guest instructor: Donatella Zappieri</i>	Readings: Swiss watches magazine article: https://swisswatches-magazine.com/watch-outlook-2025/

Week 3 <i>Session 2</i>	Luxury and Digital <u>Objectives:</u> Identify how online channels have become a decisive factor in marketing success and analyze successful digital communication strategies. <i>Guest instructor: Cynthia Farhat</i>	
Week 4 <i>Session 1</i>	French great couturiers and luxury conglomerates <u>Objectives:</u> Learn about the concept of country branding and how the business models of the greatest French couturiers have evolved from ateliers and workshops into conglomerates.	Readings: Corbellini, E., Saviolo, S. Country models in <i>Managing Fashion and Luxury Companies</i> . p.35 -58.
Week 4 <i>Session 2</i>	The Italian model: from designers to vertical integration <u>Objectives:</u> Learn about the concept of country branding and how the business models of the greatest Italian designers have evolved from pure designers to vertically integrated companies.	Readings: Okonkwo, U. The Dolce vita style blast in <i>Luxury Fashion Branding</i>. p.26-29.
Week 5 <i>Session 1</i>	The American Model and the Asian Model <u>Objectives:</u> Learn about the concept of country branding and how the business models of the greatest American designers have evolved from sportswear companies to licensing giants. Analyse how the economic circumstances and culture have shaped the development of the cutting-edge Asian brands.	Readings: Okonkwo, U. America, fashion and commerce in <i>Luxury Fashion Branding</i>. p.29-32.
Week 5 <i>Session 2</i>	Midterm exam preparation <u>Objectives:</u> Familiarize with the content of the midterm exam.	Assignment: <u>Revise key learnings before this session and prepare for the midterm exam mock-up test.</u>

Week 6 <i>Session 1</i>	Midterm Exam	
Week 6 <i>Session 2</i>	Communication in the Digital Age <u>Objectives:</u> Identify communication trends and strategies for the 'new normal' post-pandemic age. <i>Guest instructor: Erica Corbellini</i>	
Week 7 <i>Session 1</i>	Course-related trip: 10 Corso Como <u>Objectives:</u> Case study on 10 Corso Como in Milan, recognized as the 'first concept store' in the world.	Readings: • https://10corsocomo.com/
Week 7 <i>Session 2</i>	Course-related trip: Armani Silos <u>Objectives:</u> Overview of Armani's collections and universe plus the brand's pertinence to Italian and international fashion.	Course assignment 2: • <i>After visiting the Armani Silos, students are expected to write a short essay, discussing how this space fits into the brand identity and strategy, supporting the essay, if applicable, with visual material. Precise essay requirements will be published on Moodle.</i> • https://www.armanisilos.com/it/
Week 8 <i>Session 1</i>	Sustainable Fashion <u>Objectives:</u> Comprehend the definition and the pillars of sustainable development and identify how sustainability concerns are shaping fashion and luxury businesses.	Readings: • Ellen Macarthur Foundation. <i>A New textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion's Future</i>. P.18-25. • Fashion Revolution. <i>Why we still need a fashion revolution</i>.
Week 8 <i>Session 2</i>	Group assignment workshop <u>Objectives:</u> Workshop with student groups and discuss project development, give feedback.	Workshop <u>Students are kindly required to bring their computers to class (at least 1 per group).</u>
Week 9 <i>Session 1</i>	Omnichannel and Clienteling <u>Objectives:</u> Discuss the omnichannel	Readings: • BCG article: https://www.bcg.com/publications/2025/why-luxury-experience-needs-an-ai-moment

	journey and the role of data integration in competitive positioning and winning over the technology-savvy customer.	-> read and prepare for the class discussion
Week 9 <i>Session 2</i>	The Eyewear industry <u>Objectives:</u> Analyse the Eyewear Industry with the most relevant study cases.	Readings: • https://www.kering.com/en/news/kering-eyewear-acquires-italian-manufacturer-lenti/ • https://www.modaes.com/global/companies/thelios-doubles-its-production-area-with-a-metal-eyewear-factory-in-longarone Assignment: • Online research about Kering eyewear and Thelios – history and business models
Week 10 <i>Session 1</i>	The Beauty Industry <u>Objectives:</u> Analyze the post-pandemic boom of the beauty industry, especially skincare as a market segment and discuss important trends that are changing it.	Readings: • Forbes article https://www.forbes.com/sites/richardkostenbaum/2025/03/03/beauty-retail-in-2025-emerging-trends-shaping-the-market/
Week 10 <i>Session 2</i>	Final exam preparation <u>Objectives:</u> Familiarize with the content of the final exam.	Assignment: <u>Revise key learnings before this session and prepare for the final exam mock-up test.</u>
Week 11 <i>Session 1</i>	Final Project Presentation <u>Objectives:</u> Identify how brands differentiate strategically, analyze sources of competitive advantage.	
Week 11 <i>Session 2</i>	Fashion Professions and the Job Market. How to get into the Fashion	

	Industry <u>Objectives:</u> Understand the different managerial and creative roles in the fashion industry. Identify the best job search steps for a career in fashion. <i>Guest Instructor: Nicola Guerini</i>	
Week 12	Final Exam	

COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:

- 10 Corso Como
- Armani Silos

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Brannon, E.L. *Fashion Forecasting Process*. Fairchild Books, 2010. p. 1-26.
- Corbellini, E., Saviolo, S. *Managing Fashion and Luxury Companies*, Milan: Rizzoli Etas, 2009. p.35-132 and p. 156-165.
- Fashion Revolution, *Why we still need a fashion revolution*. 2020.
- Kapferer, Jean-Noël, *How Luxury Brands Can Grow Yet Remain Rare*. London: Kogan Page, 2015.
- Posner, Harriet. *Marketing Fashion*, London: Laurence King Publishing, 2015. p. 89-99. and p.148-165.
- Uché Okonkwo, *Luxury Fashion Branding*, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016. p.13-58.

SUGGESTED ONLINE SOURCES:

- www.businessoffashion.com
- www.fashionmagazine.it
- www.nytimes.com/pages/fashion/index.html
- www.pambianconews.com
- www.style.com
- www.wwd.com

RECOMMENDED FILMS:

- On the Italian model: *Valentino: The Last Emperor* (2008)
- On the French model: *Marc Jacobs & Louis Vuitton* (2007); *7 Days Out* (2018); *Dior and I* (2014); *House of Cardin* (2020)
- On the American model: *Scatter My Ashes at Bergdorf's* (2013)
- On fashion communication: *Diana Vreeland: The Eye Has to Travel* (2011); *Iris* (2014); *The September Issue* (2009); *Chiara Ferragni: Unposted* (2019)
- On Sustainability: *The True Cost* (2015)