

CBS Course / Spring 2024
The Business of Aesthetics & Experiences
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Communications from professor and teaching assistants about the course will take place through Canvas. Please make sure you regularly check for announcements and messaging communications.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Aesthetics and experiences -- associated with joy, pleasure, and a distinct look and feel – play a key role in many businesses. Aesthetic and experiential goods and services can increase desirability among customers, enhance product differentiation, strengthen brand resonance, and lead to lasting customer loyalty.

The topic is particularly important in luxury goods, as well as retailing (offline and online), fashion (from fast fashion to haute couture), beauty, hospitality, and other design-driven sectors. But these principles also apply to the marketing of other products like cars, kitchen appliances, and technological devices. As such, we will introduce cases from a wide variety of sectors.

In addition to discussing business cases, the course also will ask you to explore your own aesthetic tastes and preferences for experiences. We understand that tastes are inherently subjective; yet, by

reflecting on what you like and do not like aesthetically, we believe you can sharpen skills that are essential for working in highly “aesthetic businesses”.

No courses other than the core marketing course are required in order to enroll in this course.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The Business of Aesthetics and Experiences will be taught through a combination of case studies, readings, field projects and guest speakers from fields like retail, fashion, beauty, and hospitality. Cases will focus on established and emerging/disruptive companies.

In this course students will learn how to

- ☐ drive aesthetic objectives within an organization including hiring, motivating and supporting the right talent
- ☐ apply “aesthetic intelligence” to creating multi-sensory brands and experiences
- ☐ use their own aesthetic judgment, style and finesse to balance economic and creative interests

To achieve these learning objectives, there will also be assignments and explorations, in-class exercises and breakout group discussions.

Students will analyze aesthetic and experience issues through multiple lenses:

- **Strategy:** What are the strategic risks and challenges of companies that have under-invested and/or degraded the aesthetic elements of their businesses? How can companies re-instill and preserve aesthetic value and leverage it for long-term competitive advantage?
- **Science and Analytics:** What is the scientific evidence for the value of aesthetics? What methodologies and techniques can be used to quantify and measure aesthetic value?
- **Experiential Design:** What are the key customer experiences resulting from aesthetics? How can a business create experiences for its customers? How can experiences be managed at multiple touchpoints?
- **Societal and Cultural Factors:** How important is aesthetics within society? Are there cross-cultural differences? How does society and culture impact aesthetics, and how can aesthetics transform society and culture?
- **Marketing:** How can a business draw attention to the aesthetic value that it provides? How can the business “market” its aesthetic selling proposition? How can a brand be enhanced through aesthetics and experiences?
- **Creative Management:** How do aesthetic businesses approach the management and marketing of artistic and creative talent? In particular, how do they invest in, support and capture value from "superstars"? How do they maintain an appropriate balance of power between creative talent and their counterparts in financial/operational/analytical functions? Conversely, what are the challenges that creatives face in scaling and sustaining their operations in the absence of strong financial partnership.

- **Branding and Communications:** How can aesthetics become part of the core of a brand? What are the key aesthetic elements in branding and communications (traditional and social media)? How can aesthetically focused communications persuade?
- **Organizational:** How do aesthetic businesses build and support the right culture, organizational structure, and decision-making processes to ensure long-term success, especially after the loss of the founders?
- **Digital Impact:** How are digital technologies affecting aesthetic businesses and industries?
- **New Technologies:** Beyond the current digital technologies, how will future technologies—IoT, AR/VR, AI and NFTs (buzzwords we all hear about)—affect aesthetics? Will there be a new, tech-driven aesthetics in the future? How can technology be leveraged in aesthetics businesses?

CLASSROOM NORMS AND EXPECTATIONS

Core Culture

Students are expected to adhere to [CBS Core Culture](#) in this class by being Present, Prepared, Participating.

Inclusion, Accommodation, and Support for Students

At Columbia Business School we believe diversity strengthens any community or business model and brings it greater success. The School is committed to providing all students with equal opportunity to thrive in the classroom by providing a learning, living, and working environment free from discrimination,

harassment, and bias on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or ability.

Students with documented disabilities may receive reasonable accommodations. Students are encouraged to contact the Columbia University's Office of Disability Services for [information about registration](#).

Columbia Business School adheres to all community, state, and federal regulations as relate to Title IX and student safety. Read more about CBS' policies to support [Inclusion, Accommodations and Support for Students here](#).

Honor Code And Academic Integrity

The [Columbia Business School Honor Code](#) calls on all members of the School community to adhere to and uphold the notions of truth, integrity, and respect both during their time in school, and throughout their careers as productive, moral, and caring participants in their companies and communities around the world. All students are subject to the Honor Code for all of their academic work.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

The course will consist of 12 sessions. Grading is based on class participation (25%), assignments (25%), explorations (10%) and a final team project (40%).

Class participation will be based on attending classes and contributing to class discussions. In addition, there will be in-class exercises that will count toward class participation.

Homework assignments will include short written individual assignments. Explorations will be done in teams outside the classroom at various locations in New York City. For example, you may be asked to visit a museum, attend a performance, or tour a store.

The final project will be done in a team of 4-6 students. The team will select a “struggling” company (or brand) that can be turned around through aesthetic strategies. The brand may be struggling because it is a newly launched brand, faces a competitive challenge, or has lost its relevance to customers. The team will research and analyze the company (or brand) and present a business strategy focused on aesthetics, accompanied by implementation materials including visuals, a creative brief and other supporting materials.

COURSE TOPICS

The course consists of two parts, with six three-hour sessions each.

Part 1: Aesthetics and its applications in marketing

1. Introduction: The New AI – Aesthetic Intelligence
 - What is it? Why is it important? How is it developed?
2. Strategy
 - How can aesthetic intelligence be used for developing and differentiating products, building brands and creating customer experiences?

3. Sensory and Experiential Marketing
 - ☐ How do the senses shape perception? How can marketers immerse their customers in multi-sensorial experiences that unleash desirability and leave powerful memories?
4. Luxury Marketing
 - ☐ How are aesthetics and experiences used to manage luxury brands and command immense price premiums?
5. Branding and Communications
 - ☐ How can marketers convey aesthetic values, messages and stories through brand identity and marketing communications?
6. The Challenges of Leading and Nurturing Creative Talent, Building Creative Organizations, and Institutionalizing Creative Concepts
 - ☐ How can managers balance the conflicting demands of creative and functional/technical teams? How are aesthetic businesses structurally organized and managed?

Part 2: The role of aesthetics in business and society

7. Health & Wellness
 - ☐ How can products and experiences be designed to enhance people's health and wellness?
8. Aesthetics and Sustainability
 - ☐ How can aesthetics be incorporated into "green" and "sustainable" initiatives?

9. The Role of Society and Culture

- ☐ What is the role of societal and cultural factors in shaping taste? How can socio-cultural aspects of aesthetics be used to create unique experiences?

10. Impact of Current and Future Technologies on Aesthetics

- ☐ What digital tools and strategies can be used to optimize the aesthetic experience online?
- ☐ How does aesthetics affect next-generation technologies and how do new technologies affect aesthetics and experiences?

11. Final Presentations

12. Final Presentations

DETAILED COURSE PLAN

DATE (TBD)	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENTS AND EXPLORATIONS	PRE-CLASS READINGS
1:	Introduction: The New A.I. – Artificial Intelligence (BS + PB)		<p><u><i>Aesthetic Intelligence</i></u> by Pauline Brown -Chapters 1, 2 and 3: Mastering the Other A.I. -Chapter 4: Designed to Last</p> <p><u><i>Marketing Aesthetics</i></u> by Bernd Schmitt and Alex Simonson Chapter 1: Aesthetics – The New Marketing Paradigm</p>
2:	Strategy (BS)	3 Questions on the EL Case (5 pts)	<p><u><i>Happy Customers Everywhere</i></u> by Bernd Schmitt 1-2 Chapters</p> <p>HBS Case Study on Estee Lauder</p>
3:	Sensory and experiential marketing (BS + PB)	Submission of final project specs (including team members, target company and 1-2 sentence rationale)	<p>Ted Talk: <u><i>Designing for All Five Senses</i></u></p> <p><u><i>Experiential Marketing</i></u> by Bernd Schmitt Chapter 3: A Framework for Managing Customer Experiences</p>

4:	Luxury Marketing (PB)	Exploration of Luxury Car Showrooms: Mercedes Benz, Aston Martin, Ferrari	Luxury brand marketing – The Experience is Everything! by Glyn Atwal, Alistar Williams Stanford Case Study on LVMH
5:	Branding and Communications (BS)	Assignment: Create a mood board for the company you selected for your final project. Incorporate each of its most prominent brand codes. (5 pts) Exploration: Outdoor ads at Time Square OR another part of New York	The Economist – Marketing, What Are Brands For? Article: <u>Basics of Visual Communications</u>
6:	Managing Creative Talent (PB)	Exploration: Window designs of retailers on 4 corners of 57 th St: Louis Vuitton, Tiffany's, Bulgari, Bergdorf Goodman,	Chanel: HBS case study: <u>Coco Chanel: Creating Fashion for the Modern Woman</u> CNN: <u>What Will Chanel Look Like Without Karl Lagerfeld?</u> Louis Vuitton: New Yorker article on Virgil Abloh: <u>Virgil Abloh, Menswear's Biggest Star</u> Hypebeast: <u>Will Vuitton Honor Virgil Abloh in Selecting his Successor</u>

		PB to pose 3 questions on LV case study (re designer succession strategy) (5 pts)	<u>Harper's Bazaar: Pharrell Delivers a True Pop Culture Moment at Louis Vuitton</u>
7:	Health and Wellness (BS)	Health and wellness exploration: Gyms, yoga clubs, and related health and wellness spaces	<p>The rise of wellness travel: https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/wellness-travel-rewilding-yoga-pilgrimages</p> <p>The growing importance of employee wellness: https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2022/04/01/the-growing-importance-of-employee-wellness-how-are-you-responding/?sh=1d48e58e7afa</p>
8:	Aesthetics and Sustainability (PB)	Environmental Exploration: "Green" Spaces in Manhattan	<p>Aesthetics of Sustainability by Morteza Hemmati</p> <p>Fast Company: Green Must Be Beautiful</p> <p>Christian Science Monitor: Art and Environmental Activist</p>
9:	Role of Society and Culture (PB)	Supermarket Explorations: Wegmans, Trader Joe's, Whole Foods	<p>The Cut article: <u>The Tyranny of Terrazzo</u></p> <p>New Yorker Article: It's Time to Stop Talking about Generations</p> <p>Vox: Is Anything Cool Anymore</p> <p>LA Times: Gen Z v. Millennials</p>

			WSJ: Barbie Mania
10:	Impact of Current and Future Technological Advances on Aesthetics (BS)	Sci-Fi Film Exploration: Ich bin dein Mensch OR Ex-Machina OR Her	Wired Magazine: An Essay on the New Aesthetic Guardian: How Tech is Changing Tastes Ted Talk by Joe Gebbia, co-founder AirBnB: <u>"Designing for Trust"</u> Guardian article on AirBnB
11:	Final Presentations		
12:	Final presentations		