



University of
Zurich^{UZH}

Personal Branding and Digital Marketing

Syllabus 2025
Each Fall Semester

Fast-paced, practical, interactive

Chair for Marketing and Market Research
University Research Priority Program on Social Networks
Department of Business Administration
University of Zurich, Switzerland

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PREAMBLE

Welcome to our “Personal Branding and Digital Marketing” syllabus!

«Personal branding is not about you. It's about putting your stamp on the value you deliver to others»

William Arruda

Today, the Internet and a plethora of social media applications offer various possibilities to build brands and market their value. These tools help differentiate a brand from its competitors, communicate its unique selling proposition (USP), and position it to target audiences. Therefore, understanding digital marketing mechanisms is core to today's brand management discipline. This course should thus be seen as an essential course not only for every marketing student but probably for every student in management.

This course will focus on personal branding through the Internet and social media tools. Personal branding is an essential enabler for individuals, job seekers, and young startup companies to define, communicate, and sell their most vital attributes to a target audience. Becoming a brand seems to be an important first step today to becoming a thought leader in one specific field.

In this course, we:

- Discuss **personal brands** as an essential professional asset.
- Review different **branding strategies** and how to align them to professional career objectives.
- Emphasize how **digital marketing** theories and frameworks support the brand-building process.
- Set up a **social media ecosystem** consisting of several platforms to self-organize and promote a brand in the digital environment and beyond.
- Introduce **AI-based software** and other tools for digital marketing management to feed, grow, analyze, and automate your performance.
- Lay your **hands on brands** to gain practical experience through regular interactive exercises.

This course develops digital abilities in students pursuing careers in any industry as managers or entrepreneurs, regardless of their functional expertise and company size.

The ideal target audience for this course is young students who have always wanted to turn their own ideas and visions into a personal brand and their own company, but who have not yet been able to muster the right mindset, confidence, or the appropriate tools. Students who have already successfully established their own brand can also benefit from the course, but

the course does not provide a detailed introduction to specific tools, such as Google Analytics or similar.

This introductory course is less suitable for students working in a corporate context with a corporate brand.

The course content is designed to be maximally practical and help students acquire highly demanded digital skills in the marketplace. Each session represents a “building block” connected, which enables students to apply all learned principles, week after week, to their branding project.

This course will always take place in the fall semesters. Basic knowledge is not required. A hands-on and can-do attitude is highly recommended. Ongoing exercise is needed next to the class. Respective material will be given in class.

We are pleased to welcome you to this course.

QUICK OVERVIEW

Instructor:

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Chair of Marketing for Social Impact

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Teaching Assistant:

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Research Associate and Ph.D. Candidates

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Office hours by appointment.

Plattenstrasse 14, 8032 Zurich, 4th floor

Type:

Lectures and exercises.

Target Audience:

Bachelor students assigned to the “Wahlpflichtbereich” BWL 4.

Frequency:

Each fall semester.

APS (ECTS):

6

Workload Statement:

Part	Workload	ECTS
Course preparation and exercises	20h + 35h	
Class attendance (lectures)	25h	
Individual work and assignments	20h + 65h	
Final Exam	15h	
Total	180h	6

Maximum Number of Students:

Limited only by room/zoom size.

Prerequisites:

This course does not have entry requirements.

Language:

English

Course Number:

03VL22BO0051

Registration:

Officially register using the booking tool at the University of Zurich. An individual application for this class is NOT necessary.

Grading:

The multiple-choice On-Site exam in Jan. accounts for 100% of the final grade (see “3. Evaluation”). The exam will take place on 13.01.2026, 16.15-18h.

Important Dates:

Course: from 16.09.2025 to 02.12.2025; Each Tuesday from 16:15 to 18:00h.

Deadline to submit presentation: 12.12.2025, 23:59h (not negotiable).

Deadline to submit optional certificates: 12.12.2025, 23:59h (not negotiable).

All submissions must be sent to: *luca.lazzaro@business.uzh.ch*.

Final exam: In-person, on-site 13.01.2026, 16.15-18h.

Location:

Please see the respective information posted on our website and in the VVZ.

SOC-F-106

Note:

The syllabus supports the official information in the electronic university calendar (VVZ – Vorlesungsverzeichnis). In cases of doubt, the official announcement at the VVZ is valid.

1. INTRODUCTION AND DETAILED OBJECTIVES

1.1 Course Purpose and Learning Objectives

The course is a hands-on introduction to the best practices of brand management and digital marketing proven to build and foster a personal brand. Branding is one of the core marketing disciplines. It describes the process of creating a unique name and image for a product or a service in the consumer's mind through consistent communication themes. Branding aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market to attract and retain customers.

The course, conceived as an “interactive, ongoing workshop,” introduces bachelor students to the cultural terrain of brand-building and digital marketing. Students will become accustomed to, understand, and apply branding techniques typically used in digital channels. The program is designed to motivate and encourage participants to practice these concepts in hands-on exercises, develop a spirit of problem-solving, and enhance their ability to think in business terms. The course presents best-in-class examples offering both strategic and operational perspectives of marketing management.

Learning objectives of this course:

I. Self-Awareness & Identity

- Reflect on and articulate your core personal values, strengths, and passions.
- Identify the gap between current self-perception and desired professional identity.
- Analyze how life experiences shape your personal narrative and professional identity.
- Develop a heartset, mindset, and toolset that supports the brand building process.

II. Personal Brand Strategy

- Define a clear and authentic personal brand.
- Identify key audiences and tailor your brand communication to different contexts.
- Develop a visual brand book for your personal brand.
- Develop a strategic approach to evolving your brand over time.

III. Storytelling & Communication

- Craft and confidently communicate your personal brand story in verbal and written forms.

IV. Digital Literacy & Online Presence

- Evaluate and improve your digital footprint across platforms such as LinkedIn.
- Apply principles of consistency, authenticity, and visibility to online branding.

- Create relevant digital content that demonstrates thought leadership and personal values.

V. Critical Thinking & Branding Ethics

- Examine the ethical implications of personal branding in professional and social contexts.
- Critique the influence of social media, consumerism, and societal expectations on identity.
- Distinguish between authentic personal branding and superficial self-promotion.

VI. Action Planning & Lifelong Learning

- Create a realistic, goal-oriented personal brand development plan.
- Reflect on feedback to adapt and grow your brand over time.
- Commit to continuous self-assessment and refinement of your professional identity.

1.2 Course Contribution towards Marketing Management

The course includes a comprehensive presentation of the main tools typically used in digital marketing management and branding. These elements are discussed in class and supported by examples. The approach encourages students to evaluate given marketing situations critically, discuss their applicability, and solve given marketing decision problems.

1.3 Course Contribution towards Analytical Competence

The course presents the main analytical tools in social media marketing necessary to obtain and use data that are applied in the professional world, and which help marketing managers use data appropriately, analyze marketing situations, to formulate marketing strategies and plans, and evaluate their impact on the personal brand building process. The student's understanding of these analytical instruments is realized through theoretical discussions, examples, exercises, and practical assignments.

1.4 Course Contribution towards Correctly Understanding and Applying Marketing Instruments

One course objective is to show how digital marketing instruments can support a personal brand-building process. The tools presented and discussed in class give students an idea of the complexity and pitfalls of typical digital marketing problems.

1.5 Course Contribution towards Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills

As all digital tools are directly applied to realistic situations in the brand-building process of each student. Course participants must conceptualize the related marketing problems and formulate marketing questions for these situations. Problem-solving skills are developed by applying these digital tools and discussing alternatives. The whole brand-building process is accompanied, interpreted, and critically analyzed to foster critical thinking.

1.6 Course Contribution towards Ethical and Social Responsibility

The cases presented in class integrate ethical questions to develop a sense of moral and social responsibility and actively generate an understanding of different cultural perspectives. An open-minded, tolerant, and respectful atmosphere within the class must maintain this. The pedagogical approach adopted in this course encourages students to contribute their opinions, experience, and comments to the discussions developed around the presented marketing methods and seriously consider and discuss each other's views.

1.7 Course Contribution towards the Development of Communication Skills

The capability to effectively work in teams and communicate during the working process is an essential skill for marketing managers. The pedagogical approach adopted in this course encourages students to participate in class, forwarding their opinions, experiences, and comments to the discussions developed around the presented marketing methods. Finally, students are asked to use verbal and written communication during their coursework, reinforcing these skills.

2. COURSE MATERIAL

Students can access our web-based e-learning platform (OLAT) to download the slides presented in class and find other relevant material, such as a workbook, literature, videos, case-studies and templates.

2.1 Homework

One week before each class, students are provided with some inspirational material to review and one self-reflection task to undertake. A folder containing instructions (one per each respective lecture) can be found on OLAT under “Homework.”

2.2 Slide

The slides presented and discussed in class are available on the e-learning platform OLAT before the lecture. Slides can be downloaded for each class. The slides do not entirely cover the entire syllabus and cannot certainly capture the richness of the class interactions.

Therefore, it is highly recommended to attend the course and take notes.

Note on recordings: classes will **not** be recorded, and alternative learning methods (e.g., flipped classroom) are unavailable for this course due to its unique and practical setting. Individuals unable to attend the lectures must review the .ppt presentation independently and catch up with the regular exercises.

2.3 Exercise

Exercises during the class are meant to be discussed and solved in small groups. The course instructor explains the group task during the related session. The document is uploaded before each class on OLAT under “Exercise.”

2.4 Assignment and Canvas

The instructions for the individual assignment (deadline 12.12.2025) are provided during the first lecture and uploaded on OLAT under “Assignment.” These include the individual templates and the PB&DM canvas - a template created explicitly for this course that summarizes the characteristics of your project. In addition, a FAQ document addresses the popular questions concerning the scope and the structure of the two deliverables: the .ppt presentation and the canvas.

2.5 Other material: Workbook “Journal”

A workbook in the form of a personal journal was created to guide students in becoming increasingly self-aware and developing a project that reflects their inner motives. The digital document contains self-reflective exercises connected to each of the lectures. The entire workbook will be made available at the beginning of the semester via OLAT under “Workbook.”

2.6 Other material: Recommended Readings (Books)

The below list of recommended readings contains books that inspired the content of this course. Students are suggested to choose at least one book according to personal interest and read it during the semester.

Primary literature on self-development:

1. *The Mountain Is You: Transforming Self-Sabotage Into Self-Mastery.* Wiest, Brianna (2020). *Thought Catalog Books.*
2. *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones.* Clear, James (2018). *Avery.*
3. *Think Like a Monk: Train Your Mind for Peace and Purpose Every Day.* Shetty, Jay (2020). *Simon & Schuster.*
4. *Find Your Why: A Practical Guide for Discovering Purpose for You and Your Team.* Sinek, Simon et al. (2018) *Portfolio.*
5. *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts.* Brown, Brené (2018). *Random House.*
6. *How to Change: The Science of Getting from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be.* Milkman, Katy (2021). *Portfolio.*

Primary technical literature:

1. *Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future.* Thiel, Peter & Masters, Blake (2014). *Currency.*
2. *This Is Marketing: You Can't Be Seen Until You Learn to See.* Godin, Seth (2018). *Portfolio.*
3. *Designing Brand Identity: An Essential Guide for the Whole Branding Team.* Wheeler, Alina (2017). *John Wiley & Sons Inc.*
4. *Traction: How Startup Can Achieve Explosive Customer Growth.* Weinberg, Gabriel & Mares, Justin (2015). *Penguin.*
5. *Save the Cat! Writes a Novel: The Last Book On Novel Writing You'll Ever Need.* Brody, Jessica (2018). *Ten Speed Press.*

Additional recommendations about literature, podcasts and videos related to the specific lecture's topic are presented at the end of each class.

2.7 Other material: Recommended Online Tutorials and Resources

Students wishing to improve specific operational skills should review the online tutorials and resources below. This process enables course participants to gain familiarity with the most common digital marketing management practices.

1. Google Digital Garage - Online courses on the fundamentals of digital marketing
<https://learndigital.withgoogle.com/digitalgarage/course/digital-marketing>
2. Google Analytics Academy - Online courses and certifications for web analytics
<https://analytics.google.com/analytics/academy/>
3. Facebook Blueprint - Step-by-step tutorials for Facebook and Instagram marketing
<https://www.facebookblueprint.com/student/catalog>
4. HubSpot Academy - Practical online training for digital marketing, sales, and service
<https://academy.hubspot.com>
5. Moz - The beginner's guide to Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
<https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo>
6. Twitter for Business - Resources for digital marketing managers
<https://business.twitter.com/en/resources.html>
7. TikTok for Business - Resources for digital marketing managers
<https://www.tiktokforbusiness.europa.com>

2.8 Other material: Recommended Digital Marketing and AI-based Tools

An always-updated list of Digital Marketing and AI-based Tools is provided via OLAT under "Tool." As this software can significantly increase productivity and improve brand performance, students are highly recommend taking some time to explore available services.

Please note that several tools are available as a freemium version; thus, users might be asked to pay for advanced features. Students are responsible for reading the usage terms and payment conditions before subscribing.

2.9 Other material: Other Sources of Inspiration

Students can also use academic and professional papers published online or in marketing journals to obtain additional information about digital marketing and branding concepts, theories, and methods.

Marketing journals:

Journal of Marketing, Marketing Science, Journal of Marketing Research, Journal of Consumer Research, International Journal of Research in Marketing, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Journal of Interactive Marketing, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Service Research, Journal of Product and Innovation Management.

Practitioner-oriented magazines:

Harvard Business Review, Sloan Management Review, McKinsey Quarterly.

3. EVALUATION

Given the class size, this course consists of just one formal exam. However, access to the final exam is exclusive to students who deliver the individual «Personal Brand» assessment within the deadline and according to the defined requirements.

3.1 Final Exam (100%)

In January, on 13.01.2026, 16.15-18.00h, we will have an in-person final exam. The Multiple-Choice Test covers the content of the lectures and exercises. For each lecture, we will create 5-10 multiple-choice questions. The exam is paper-and-pencil. No material is allowed.

3.2 Presentation and Canvas of Personal Brand (pass/no pass criteria)

A PowerPoint presentation and standard templates (canvas) documenting the personal brand development will be evaluated as a «pass» when fulfilling the evaluation criteria illustrated during the class.

The deadline for submitting the documents is two weeks after the end of the course: 12.12.2025, 23:59h. These documents are essential and required elements of the class. You have to pass the presentation to pass the class!

Note: We define a “personal brand” as branding yourself or a business idea representing your values and beliefs, NOT a corporate brand.

3.3 Online Assessment (uplift)

We may offer you voluntary options during the class to gain a 0.25 uplift in your final grade. Examples might include an additional tutorial, e.g., Google certificates, or tasks such as book reviews and workbook journal completion. Available extra assignments will be communicated via email in due time.

4. ACADEMIC FRAUD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMENTS

4.1 Academic Fraud

Academic fraud is an act by a student that may result in a false academic evaluation of that student or another student. The Honor Code of the University of Zurich applies to all work in this course and will be strictly enforced. The intent of the Honor Code in this course is to ensure that each student claims and receives credits for his/her own efforts. Violations of this are considered academic fraud.

4.2 Usage of AI

Students are actively invited to creatively use AI as assisting tool. Consider it as an assistant, not as a tool creating complete ideas that are not reflected and incorporated to student's own identity. All AI usage must be documented by mentioning the tool, the intent of using it, the outcome, and on request the prompts used to create it.

4.3 Laptops and Mobile Phones

In this class, we resign from technology as best as possible. As such, during the lecture, we don't use laptops nor mobile phones. All documentations must be hand-written. The focus in this course is on the discourse and personal interaction. In the exercises, laptops are allowed. Everybody is expected to turn off/mute all devices that emit sounds and noises that may interrupt the class (e.g., mobile phones, pagers, and watch alarms). If an occasion arises in which a student may need to receive a phone call, they have to inform the lecturer or teaching assistant before class.

4.4 Students with Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustment or accommodations is requested to speak with the instructor during the first day of the course. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities will also need to contact the directors of the school.

4.5 Registration Cards

Registration cards will be handed out at the beginning of the course. Students will be asked to add a recent profile picture and some personal information. The information is kept confidential and is only accessible to our team.

4.6 Name Plates

Nameplates should be used regularly in class to learn the students' names. Name plates will be handed out on the first day of the course.

4.7 Getting in Contact

Emails should be short and to the point. Before sending an email, please check if an answer has already been provided on the public OLAT forum. Questions can also be asked at the beginning or during lectures and exercises.

4.8 Class Dismissal

Students are asked to remain seated and attentive until the lecturer or teaching assistant dismisses the class.

4.9 Important Deadlines and Class Schedule

Important deadlines and the class schedule are communicated in the first lecture. If a student cannot participate in this lecture, they must obtain any relevant information.

We are excited to meet you in class!

