UK

SYLLABUS 2026-2027

Digital Influence

MODULE SPECIFICATION

Module Code	2627_TFB_1_EN_002
Campus	Oxford
Department(s)	Tech for Business
Level / Semester	Undergraduate Year 3 (U3); Equivalent to FHEQ level 6 Semester 06
Language of Instruction	English
Teaching Method	☒ In-person (face-to-face) ☐ Distance learning (live online) ☐ e-Learning (asynchronous) ☐ Hybrid: _____
Pre-requisite(s)?	Familiarity with popular online social media platforms, such as YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, etc.
ECTS *Reminder: 1 ECTS = between 20 and 30hr- student workload*	5
Equivalent FHEQ credits	10
Study Hours	100 hours which comprise of 30 directed learning and 70 independent learning/assessment hours

MODULE DESCRIPTION

Module Aims	Students examine persuasive digital strategies and their socio-technical impact on consumer behaviour. The module covers AI-driven content design, social media analytics, and psychologically informed UX development, enabling students to devise measurable digital influence strategies for complex business contexts.

Teaching Arrangement	This module blends practical and scientific insights in how to establish and maintain digital influence. It encourages students to discover effective ways to connect impactful online strategies with desired changes in group thinking and behaviour. The module employs project-based learning, reflection, class engagement, social media use, online learning, video creation, demonstrations, as well as frequent class presentations and open discussions.
Learning Outcomes	By the end of this module, students should be able to: 1. Evaluate digital influence strategies and their impact on consumer behaviour and opinion formation. 2. Design and implement persuasive user experiences by integrating social psychology principles with technology. 3. Develop AI-driven influence marketing strategies to optimise content creation and audience engagement. 4. Apply advanced social media management tactics to enhance brand presence and drive measurable online outcomes.
Competency Goals *(Knowledge, expertise and interpersonal skills)*	PGE_U_CG03 - Develop and implement marketing and sales strategy
	PGE_U_CG07 - Improve performance through digitalisation
Alignment with Programme Learning Goals	PGE_U_CG03_LO01 - Analyse macro environment, benchmark and develop marketing strategy
	PGE_U_CG03_LO02 - Develop a business strategy and implement marketing plan
	PGE_U_CG03_LO03 - Design a branding and communication strategy
	PGE_U_CG07_LO01 - Lead a digital transformation initiative

SESSION TOPICS / MODULE SCHEDULE

(Please note, a session/sequence may be more than one scheduled class)

Session 1: Introduction

Content:

- Then vs. now
- Influencer marketing (re-)defined
- Interruption marketing vs. influencer marketing
- Word of mouth: the ultimate enabler of influence
- Rising technologies, disappearing gatekeepers
- Redefining the relevance of influencers in our modern world

References:

- Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate*

Last reviewed: 18/09/2026

your global business. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan.

- Reed, D. (2015) 'Excuse the interruption: How marketing still gets attention', *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, 17(2), pp. 75–76. doi:10.1057/dddmp.2015.48.

Assignments:

- Read:
    - Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan. (Chapters 1 & 2)
    - Reed, D. (2015) 'Excuse the interruption: How marketing still gets attention', *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, 17(2), pp. 75–76. doi:10.1057/dddmp.2015.48.

Session 2: Characteristics of Modern-Day Influencers and the Rise of Influencers Around the World

Content:

- Levels of influence
- Key characteristics of modern-day influencers
- Celebrity influencers, category influencers, and micro-influencers
- Roles of influence: different personas for different use
- Influencer ABCCs: key factors of modern-day influencers
- Common definition of modern-day influencers
- Global phenomenon
- Rise of influencers around the world
- Cultural influence: bridging the culture divide to reach local audiences
- Where in the world do influencers have influence?
- Local vs. global influencers
- Personal branding
- AI influencers

References:

- Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Hwang, S., Zhang, S., Liu, X. and Srinivasan, K. (2024) 'Should your brand hire a virtual influencer?', *Harvard Business Review*, 103(5-6), pp. 56-60.
- Fuchs, J. (2024) *Personal branding: What it is, why to do it, & how I'm building mine*, *HubSpot*. Available at: https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/the-ultimate-guide-to-personal-branding.
- Dennison, K. (2022) *Why personal branding is important and how to build yours*, *Forbes*. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/karadennison/2022/11/28/why-personal-branding-is-important-and-how-to-build-yours/.
- (2025) *Influencer marketing benchmark report 2025*. Influencer MarketingHub.

Assignments:

- Read:
    - Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan. (Chapters 3 & 4)
    - Hwang, S., Zhang, S., Liu, X. and Srinivasan, K. (2024) 'Should your brand hire a virtual influencer?', *Harvard Business Review*, 103(5-6), pp. 56-60.
- Practical digital influence: personal branding
    - After looking at examples, students will use themselves as the subject of a personal

brand

Session 3: Social Media Influencer Holiday Gift Guide Project

Content:

- Understand how social media influencers can use different tools to promote products from brands they partner with

References:

- Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan.

Assignments:

- Create 3 gift guides with 7-10 products on a holiday-themed blog post
    - Aim: demonstrate solid understanding of target audiences through products chosen while being cohesive and appealing
    - Things to include:
        - Gift guide images
        - Explanation of products chosen

Session 4: B2C and B2B Influencer Marketing Landscape

Content:

- B2C influencer marketing landscape:
    - Business to Consumer (B2C) influencer marketing – where are we today?
    - Interested in B2C influencers? Don't forget these considerations...
    - When influencers become brand competitors
    - When influencers become co-creators
    - When influencers become distribution channels
        - Solely a distribution channel? What about all that content?
    - Compensating B2C influencers – can we pay you in jewellery?
    - Getting B2C influencer marketing right
- B2B influencer marketing landscape:
    - Business to Business (B2B) influencer marketing – where are we today?
    - Interested in B2B influencers? Don't forget these considerations...
    - A "day in the life" of a busy "B"-2B influencer
    - For B2B influencers, objectivity is everything
    - To pay or not to pay? The answer is always NO!
        - Well...sometimes it's okay to pay
    - B2B influencers vs. analysts vs. journalists
    - Follower count ≠ B2B influence
    - Getting B2B marketing right

References:

- Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Robertson, T.S. (2022) 'Selling on TikTok and Taobao: The growing power of online video platforms', *Harvard Business Review*, 100(9-10), pp. 54-58.

Assignments:

- Read:

    - Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan. (Chapters 5 and 6)
    - Robertson, T.S. (2022) 'Selling on TikTok and Taobao: The growing power of online video platforms', *Harvard Business Review*, 100(9-10), pp. 54-58.
- Identify advantages and disadvantages of social media influencers
    - Provide a real-life, well-explained example for each statement

Session 5: Continuous Assessment 1

Content:

- Complete the first continuous assessment

Session 6: Discover Influencers

Content:

- Finding the perfect match
- Getting started: target the right audience first
    - Next: target the right influencers who influence that audience
- 3 paths for influencer management: in-house, agencies and software solutions
- What it really takes to identify the right influencers
- Winfluence scorecard (Jason Falls)
- How AI is being used by influencer platforms (e.g. influencity.com)

References:

- Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Falls, J. (2021) *Winfluence: Reframing influencer marketing to ignite your* brand. Entrepreneur Press.

Assignments:

- Read: Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan. (Chapter 7)
- Practical exercise: You are a consultant group being hired by a company that needs help with finding the right social media influencer
    - Use Winfluence Priority Scorecard to justify choices

Session 7: Engage Influencers

Content:

- Developing an effective outreach strategy and outreach brief
- Incentivising influencers – to pay or not to pay?
- Engagement duration: "short-term fling" vs. "long-term relationship"
- Influencer outreach: who, what, and how?
- Getting outreach right: keep it focused, keep it personal

References:

- Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Tan, J. (2016) *How influencer marketing helps Huawei build its brand*, *LinkedIn*. Available at: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-influencer-marketing-helps-huawei-build-its-brand-joy-tan/.

- Bain, P. (2022) *Is paying influencers in free products ever okay?*, *Marketing Brew*. Available at: https://www.marketingbrew.com/stories/2022/05/26/is-paying-influencers-in-free-products-ever-okay.

Assignments:

- Read:
    - Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan. (Chapter 8)
    - Tan, J. (2016) *How influencer marketing helps Huawei build its brand*, *LinkedIn*. Available at: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-influencer-marketing-helps-huawei-build-its-brand-joy-tan/.
    - Bain, P. (2022) *Is paying influencers in free products ever okay?*, *Marketing Brew*. Available at: https://www.marketingbrew.com/stories/2022/05/26/is-paying-influencers-in-free-products-ever-okay.
- Develop a social media influencer outreach strategy, including influencer selections and written pitch to collaborate with them

Session 8: Influencer Marketing Proposal for Gymshark

Content:

- Create an influencer marketing proposal for Gymshark

References:

- Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan.

Assignments:

- Showcase interest, creativity and critical thinking skills regarding picking the right marketing influencer for UK fitness brand, Gymshark

Session 9: Working with Influencers

Content:

- Potential paths to take
- Influencers know best
    - Provide “Freedom within a Framework”
- When to engage – common business initiatives to partner with influencers
- Corporate reputation management
- Amplification of new product launches and brand events
- Product development inspiration
- Product reviews when entering new markets
- Search Engine Optimisation
- How to engage – different paths to influencer collaboration:
    - Incentivise influencers to share brand content
    - Co-create new content with influencers
    - Cultivate brand-managed influencer communities
    - Repurpose existing influencer content
    - Hold in-person events
    - Develop influencer-driven affiliate sales programmes
    - Run competitions and giveaways

- Experiment with influencer social media account takeovers
- Influencer engagement in two words: “freedom” and “creativity”

References:

- Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan.

Assignments:

- Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan. (Chapter 9)
- Find examples of websites with embedded Instagram posts

Session 10: Continuous Assessment 2

Content:

- Complete the second continuous assessment

Session 11: The Dark Side of Influencer Collaboration

Content:

- Know the risks: the dark side of influencer collaboration
  - “Welcome to the Dark Side” -- what risks brands need to be aware of
    - Be aware of the dark side and protect your brand
- French and other European laws for influencer marketing
- Faking influence: how some influencers deceive brands

References:

- Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Tenbarge, K. (2021) *Makeup lovers are boycotting Morphe as the brand stays silent on James Charles sexting allegations*, *Business Insider*. Available at: https://www.businessinsider.com/james-charles-morphe-boycott-sponsors-sexting-grooming-scandal-makeup-2021-4.

Assignments:

- Read:
  - Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan. (Chapter 10)
  - Tenbarge, K. (2021) *Makeup lovers are boycotting Morphe as the brand stays silent on James Charles sexting allegations*, *Business Insider*. Available at: https://www.businessinsider.com/james-charles-morphe-boycott-sponsors-sexting-grooming-scandal-makeup-2021-4.

Session 12: The Dark Side of Influencer Collaboration (cont.)

Content:

- Know the risks: the dark side of influencer collaboration
  - “Welcome to the Dark Side” -- what risks brands need to be aware of
    - Be aware of the dark side and protect your brand
- French and other European laws for influencer marketing
- Faking influence: how some influencers deceive brands

References:

- Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Nizri, E. (2022) *New study: One in four influencers bought fake followers*, *Forbes*. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbestechcouncil/2022/09/09/new-study-one-in-four-influencers-bought-fake-followers/.

Assignments:

- Read:
  - Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan. (Chapter 10)
  - Nizri, E. (2022) *New study: One in four influencers bought fake followers*, *Forbes*. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbestechcouncil/2022/09/09/new-study-one-in-four-influencers-bought-fake-followers/.
- Identify regulations governing influencer marketing practices in different countries and compare the similarities and differences

Session 13: Measure Success

Content:

- What's the return on investment?
- Common ways brands measure the ROI of influencer marketing
- Unlocking influencer ROI: part art, part science
- How AI can increase social media influencer engagement (e.g. ManyChat)

References:

- Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Primasiwi, C., Irawan, M.I. and Ambarwati, R. (2021) 'Key performance indicators for influencer marketing on Instagram', *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research,* 175, pp. 154-163.

Assignments:

- Read:
  - Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan. (Chapter 11 & 12)
  - Primasiwi, C., Irawan, M.I. and Ambarwati, R. (2021) 'Key performance indicators for influencer marketing on Instagram', *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research,* 175, pp. 154-163.
    - Critically summarise article to understand what KPIs are to measure success

Session 14: Exam Revision (Pt. 1)

Content:

- Understand how to effectively answer exam questions to achieve the highest mark

Assignments:

- Preparation of exam revision questions
- Have summary card ready for first sequence

Session 15: Exam Revision (Pt. 2)

Content:

- Exam revision

Assignments:

- Case study:
    - Past exam paper
    - Past resit exam

KEY TEXTS

1. Backaler, J. (2018) *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business*. Glendale, CA: Palgrave MacMillan.

SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS

1. Falls, J. (2021) *Winfluence: Reframing influencer marketing to ignite your* brand. Entrepreneur Press.
2. Reed, D. (2015) 'Excuse the interruption: How marketing still gets attention', *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, 17(2), pp. 75–76. doi:10.1057/dddmp.2015.48.
3. Hwang, S., Zhang, S., Liu, X. and Srinivasan, K. (2024) 'Should your brand hire a virtual influencer?', *Harvard Business Review*, 103(5-6), pp. 56-60.
4. Fuchs, J. (2024) *Personal branding: What it is, why to do it, & how I'm building mine*, *HubSpot*. Available at: https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/the-ultimate-guide-to-personal-branding.
5. Robertson, T.S. (2022) 'Selling on TikTok and Taobao: The growing power of online video platforms', *Harvard Business Review*, 100(9-10), pp. 54-58.
6. Tan, J. (2016) *How influencer marketing helps Huawei build its brand*, *LinkedIn*. Available at: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-influencer-marketing-helps-huawei-build-its-brand-joy-tan/.
7. Bain, P. (2022) *Is paying influencers in free products ever okay?*, *Marketing Brew*. Available at: https://www.marketingbrew.com/stories/2022/05/26/is-paying-influencers-in-free-products-ever-okay.
8. Tenbarge, K. (2021) *Makeup lovers are boycotting Morphe as the brand stays silent on James Charles sexting allegations*, *Business Insider*. Available at: https://www.businessinsider.com/james-charles-morphe-boycott-sponsors-sexting-grooming-scandal-makeup-2021-4.
9. Nizri, E. (2022) *New study: One in four influencers bought fake followers*, *Forbes*. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbestechcouncil/2022/09/09/new-study-one-in-four-influencers-bought-fake-followers/.
10. Primasiwi, C., Irawan, M.I. and Ambarwati, R. (2021) 'Key performance indicators for influencer marketing on Instagram', *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research,* 175, pp. 154-163.
11. (2025) *Influencer marketing benchmark report 2025*. Influencer MarketingHub.

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MODES OF ASSESSMENT

Continuous Assessment (40%)	Case study 1	20%
	Case study 2	20%
Final Exam (60%)	Closed book written exam	

MODULE DESIGN TEAM

- Author: *Liling Sun / Cécile Lamant*
- Reviewer: *Kolawole Yusuff*
- External Reviewer: *Julian Michael Berry*

Last reviewed: 18/09/2026