



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Social Media Analytics and Consumer Behaviour for User Experience Innovation

2627-2-F6303M021

Learning objectives

The course teaches students to read what people do on social platforms as evidence, and to turn that evidence into a service decision.

By the end of the course students are able to:

- specify a research question on social data with an explicit unit of analysis, sampling frame, constructs and limits;
- obtain social data lawfully under the current European regime (platform terms, GDPR, DSA Art. 40) and document what could not be obtained;
- build and apply a content coding scheme, report an inter-coder agreement figure, and validate AI-assisted classification against human coding;
- read a community ethnographically, telling a cultural pattern from a sampling artefact;
- distinguish a correlation from an effect and specify an incrementality test;
- turn evidence into an intervention placed on a service blueprint, with an owner, a cost and a metric;
- present findings and uncertainty to a non-technical decision maker and defend them under challenge.

Knowledge and understanding. Students acquire the models of online consumer behaviour (trust and risk, self-disclosure, purchase decision, e-WOM, community, status and visibility), always presented together with the state of the empirical record and with real campaign cases, so that they learn the state of the evidence rather than a list of names.

Applying knowledge and understanding. The course is organised in 12 blocks of 4 hours, each split between a lecture part and a laboratory in which teams apply the tools just introduced to their own live case. The four staged deliverables are built on data the students collected themselves.

Making judgements. Every deliverable includes a mandatory counter-evidence section: students must state the limits of their own data, identify the alternative explanation that would defeat their conclusion, and specify the test

that would settle it.

Communication skills. Students present three times during the term, once before an external jury, and produce a one-page executive brief. They receive structured feedback on argument order, data visualisation and slide design. Communicating uncertainty is the subject of a dedicated session.

Learning skills. Students leave with a reusable research protocol (design, codebook, reliability check, counter-evidence) that transfers to any platform, including platforms that do not exist yet.

Contents

The course covers online consumer behaviour and social data analysis methods, applied to service innovation and user experience.

Part one: how the content ecosystem works today, what a brand actually buys when it works with creators, how the feed determines what you later measure, and what the available metrics really mean.

Part two: methods. Social listening with no-code tools, content analysis with a coding scheme and a reliability check, AI-assisted classification and its validation, netnography, reputation analysis.

Part three: the decision. Attribution and incrementality, and translating evidence into a service intervention with an owner and a metric.

Teaching is built on real cases and campaign data from creator management and brand consulting across different sectors (luxury, food, B2B industrial, non-profit). No programming skills are required.

Detailed program

The course runs over 12 blocks of 4 hours. Each block alternates a lecture part and a laboratory on the team's own live case.

1. Every brand is a creator. Why brands lose on platforms they treat as a repository. Case assignment and team formation.
2. What you actually buy from a creator: testimonial, content, community. Three products, one price. Scouting and building a selection matrix from data rather than from follower count.
3. How the feed decides. Ranking, thumbnails and titles, and why most of the work happens before the video starts. Reading the trace: what a like, a save and a comment really measure, and what they hide.
4. Research design. Question, unit of analysis, sampling frame, constructs, validity threats. Data access under the current European regime: platform terms, GDPR, DSA Art. 40.
5. Hero, Hub, Hygiene. Content architecture for a service brand. Giving up editorial control: campaign evidence on why scripted briefs underperform.
6. Community as infrastructure. Owned audience, off-platform migration, creators who became companies. The distribution of the cost of online visibility and the moderation burden.
7. Listening without a budget. No-code tools applied to the team's case: collection, sampling log, first descriptive read.
8. Coding what people say. Building a category scheme, checking inter-coder agreement, validating AI-assisted classification against human coding.
9. Netnography. Reading a community instead of counting it: entry, immersion, field notes, native categories against imported ones.

10. Reputation under attack. Pile-ons, polarisation, misinformation and a crisis protocol that survives contact. Fame can be manufactured, trust cannot: what AI takes and what it leaves.
11. Proving it worked. Attribution, incrementality and the numbers agencies avoid showing. From insight to service: where the finding lands on the service blueprint, with an owner, a cost and a date. Communicating uncertainty.
12. Final pitch before an internal and external jury.

Project deliverables: block 4 (research design), block 7 (data collection and access), block 10 (evidence brief), block 12 (intervention, measurement plan and pitch).

Sustainable Development Goals. Responsible consumption (SDG 12) is addressed in the blocks on metrics, dark patterns and the measurement of a campaign's real effects. Gender equality (SDG 5) is addressed in the block on community and creator labour, covering the distribution of the cost of online visibility and the moderation burden.

Prerequisites

No formal prerequisites. Familiarity with spreadsheets and with basic descriptive statistics (mean, median, distribution, percentage change) is useful. No programming skills are required.

Teaching methods

Roughly 30% lecture and 70% interactive teaching: case discussion, analysis of scientific articles, tool laboratory and team work.

The course runs over 12 blocks of 4 hours. Each block alternates a lecture part and a laboratory in which teams work on their own live case, so that the project advances during class hours. The longer format allows a full work cycle to be completed in class: method introduction, application to the team's data, plenary review.

Students present three times during the term: research design defence in block 4, evidence brief in block 10, final pitch in block 12. Each time they receive structured feedback on argument and presentation design.

Up to 10% of total hours may be delivered at a distance.

All tools used are free or freemium and require no programming.

Assessment methods

Assessment is entirely based on an applied project. There is no written examination for attending students.

Teams of 3 or 4 students follow one real service brand throughout the term and submit:

- research design, max 2 pages (15%): question, unit of analysis, sampling frame, constructs, validity threats, what the study cannot establish;
- data collection and access (15%): corpus, sampling log, source map, what could not be obtained and why, first descriptive read;
- evidence brief, max 8 pages (30%): coding scheme, coded data, inter-coder agreement figure, validation

- appendix for any AI-assisted classification, ethnographic notes, plus a mandatory counter-evidence section;
- intervention and measurement plan (30%): placement on the service blueprint, owner, cost, incrementality test design, 12-minute final presentation with 8 minutes of challenge;
- individual critical note of 800 words (10%): the strongest argument against your own team's conclusion, written alone.

Grading criteria, equally weighted: evidential honesty (limits stated, alternative explanation named, uncertainty quantified or bounded); methodological correctness (sampling, coding, reliability, inference, procedure documented and repeatable); decision relevance (the output changes a company behaviour and names its owner and cost); communication quality (argument order, visual clarity, performance under challenge).

Individual contribution is declared at each deliverable and verified at the final discussion: a student who cannot answer questions about their team's method does not receive the team grade.

Non-attending students. The same project individually and with reduced scope (one platform, one method, minimum 200 coded items), submitted as a single deliverable followed by a 20-minute oral discussion covering the whole programme. Contact the lecturer within the first three weeks of the term to agree the case.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Course slides, campaign datasets and a reading pack for each session, posted on the platform.

Reference books:

- A. Mininno, M. Ascani, M. Pagani, Ogni brand è un creator, 2025.
- M. J. Salganik, Bit by Bit. Social Research in the Digital Age, Princeton University Press, 2018 (selected chapters; freely available online).
- M. Stickdorn, M. Hormess, A. Lawrence, J. Schneider, This is Service Design Doing, O'Reilly, 2018 (selected sections).

Further readings assigned session by session, including articles on coding reliability, platform data access, advertising effect measurement and qualitative research in digital environments.

Semester

First semester

Teaching language

English

Sustainable Development Goals

