

Course information 2025-26

IS3183 Management and Social Media

General information

MODULE LEVEL: 6

CREDIT: 30

NOTIONAL STUDY TIME: 300 hours

MODE: Locally Taught and Independent Learner Route Only (not available for Online Taught students)

Summary

The course is about social media and the broader context of digital economy within which social media platforms operate. The course analyses social media as economic organisations. The focus of the course is on how social media make user participation on the platforms they command the engine for generating data that form the basis for their operations. While having originally supported the making of revenue through advertising, such data have over the years been increasingly employed to support other objectives as well such as the development of specialised services, analytics, and technological innovation, including AI. The course combines theory and case study examples that illustrate the variety of contexts in which social media organisations are active today.

Conditions

Please refer to the relevant programme structure in the EMFSS Programme Regulations to check:

- where this course can be placed on your degree structure; and
- details of prerequisites and corequisites for this course.

You should also refer to the Exclusions list in the EMFSS Programme Regulations to check if any exclusions apply for this course.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the course is to:

- Analyse how social media contribute to the making of the contemporary digital, data-based economy.
- Analyse the organisational complexity of social media and their gradual transition from social networking sites to platform ecosystems.
- Analyse how social media engineer social participation to generate data that serve the optimisation of internal purposes and the pursuit of market objectives.
- Assess the role which current computing and communication technologies play in transforming user platform participation into revenue generating services.
- Analyse the types of services social media platform develop for platform users (e. g., feeds and recommendations), advertisers and other third parties such as analytic companies, business owners and start-ups.
- Evaluate the role of technical design and information architecture in the making of the services produced by social media platforms.
- Analyse the business models pioneered by social media and the ways these models change traditional commercial media business models and practices.

Learning outcomes

At the end of this course and having completed the essential reading and activities students should be able to:

- Analyse the technological, social, and economic forces that make social media such ubiquitous and often powerful economic actors.
- Assess the modus operandi of social media and the logic on the basis of which social media are able to sustain their business operations.
- Analyse how user participation online is an essential force through which social media construct a range of services for third parties and for users themselves.
- Link social participation to data production and assess the significance of data for revenue generating services.
- Critically assess the importance of data generated on social media as a distinct and critical form of big data and an important force of the digital economy.
- Analyse the development of the Internet and appreciate the dominant role social media play in shaping the ways the Web is currently developing.
- Assess the significance of social interaction and participation online and the role that active user participation plays in the current transformation of the Web and the digital economy.
- Analyse and evaluate recommender systems in general and personalisation as a ubiquitous service strategy in particular.
- Think critically and creatively about the emerging digital world and the formation of business ecosystems in which social media play a central role.

Employability skills

Below are the three most relevant employability skills that students acquire by undertaking this course which can be conveyed to future prospective employers:

1. Digital skills
2. Decision making
3. Creativity and Innovation

Essential reading

The key text of the course is:

Parker, G. G., Van Alstyne, M. and Choudary, S. P. (2016). *Platform Revolution*. London: Norton (ISBN 978-1-324-00608-0)

Alaimo, C. and Kallinikos J., (2017). Computing the Everyday, *The Information Society* 33/4: 175-191.

Alaimo, C. and Kallinikos, J. (2019) Recommender Systems. In *The Oxford handbook of media, technology and organization studies*. Oxford University Press, chapter 36, pp. 401-411.

Alaimo, C., Kallinikos, J., & Aaltonen, A. (2020). Data and Value. In *Handbook of digital innovation*, Chapter 9, pp. 162-178.

Alaimo, C., Kallinikos, J., & Valderrama, E. (2020). Platforms as Service Ecosystems: Lessons from Social Media. *Journal of Information Technology*, 35(1), 25-48.

Anderson, C. (2008). *Free: The Future of a Radical Price*. London: Random House, chapter 2, pp. 18-33 (ISBN 978-1-9052-1147-0).

Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2008). Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13, 210-230.

Gorwa, R. (2019). What is platform governance? *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(6), 854-871.

Helmond, A., Nieborg, D. B., & van der Vlist, F. N. (2019). Facebook's evolution: Development of a platform-as-infrastructure. *Internet Histories*, 3(2), 123-146.

Nieborg, D. B., & Helmond, A. (2019). The political economy of Facebook's platformization in the mobile ecosystem: Facebook Messenger as a platform instance. *Media, Culture & Society*, 41(2), 196-218.

Teece, D. J. (2010). Business Models, Business Strategy and Innovation, *Long Range Planning* 43 (2,3): 172-194.

Tiwana, A. (2013). *Platform ecosystems: Aligning architecture, governance, and strategy*. Newnes. Chapters 2 and 5, pp. 23-47 and pp. 73-115

Subramaniam, M. (2022). *The future of competitive strategy: Unleashing the power of data and digital ecosystems*. MIT Press. Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4, pp. 27-120

Zittrain, J. (2008) *The Future of the Internet*. New Haven: Yale University Press, chapters 1, 2 and 4, pp. 7-35 and 63-100 (ISBN 978-0-141-03159-0).

Assessment

This course is assessed by a three-hour and fifteen-minute closed-book written examination.

Syllabus

The course covers a spectrum of themes including:

- A history of social media and the transformations they have undergone in their life course.
- A description of the Internet ecosystem and the technologies that have supported increasing levels of social participation and the role of social media.
- An account of how social media work as multisided markets.
- An account of how social media engineer user participation, to make it the engine of data production on social media.
- A detailed exposition of the significance data assumes in the making of most services' social media deliver.
- A description of the value creation process in ways that break with the traditional product-centric view of value, but also the more recent understanding of value as user product or service experience.
- An account of the business models pioneered by social media.
- The assessment of the value creation process of social media, featuring the generation, shaping and commercialisation of the data produced on social media.
- An exposition of how recommender systems work.
- An assessment of the role social media play in the current digital economy.
- An exposition of the challenges raised by social media platform governance and regulation.
- An assessment of the role social media play in the current digital economy