Digital
Essentials
Portfolio

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The world is increasingly turning digital in all industries and dimensions. To become a success marketer, it is necessary to understand this new world…

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Portfolio Introduction

The digital landscape is constantly expanding into newfound areas which businesses must be able to understand and harness the benefits of in order to stay at the forefront of their industry.

In this portfolio, the different branches of Digital Essentials will be explored, explained and applied to real-world business practices in order emphasise my understanding of digital skills and how those skills relate to business, marketing and management. The extensive understanding of digital skills is imperative to the successful operations of any business start-up, and so, my portfolio's purpose is to display a detailed understanding of business practices in the digital space.
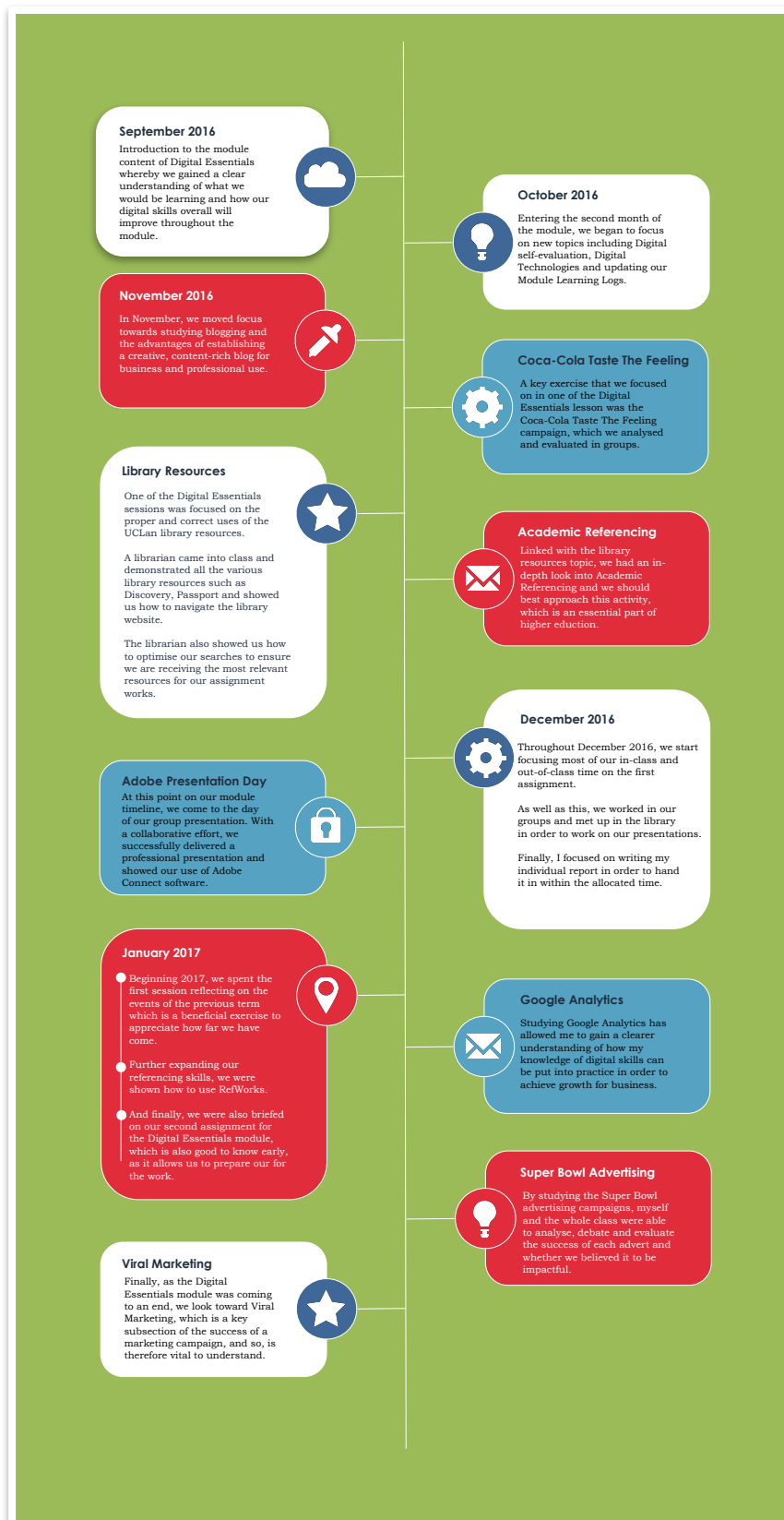
The creation of this portfolio will lead me to the accumulation of my understandings of digital essentials which I then hope to utilise in future university modules and my career in the wider aspect. Acquiring an clear understanding of digital literacies throughout this module of Digital Essentials, will allow me to better prepare and utilise my digital skills for future works, and due to the increasing digital integration of jobs, it is now more necessary than ever before to have a clear and cohesive understanding of digital literacies in all their distinguished categories.

This portfolio is divided into eight different sections, in which I will discuss the utilisation of digital skills within a variety of different aspects. From digital branding techniques, to advertising and formatting skills, categorising my portfolio into these different sections will allow me to demonstrate more clearly, my understanding of what digital essentials actually means in our world today by using real-world examples of the professional utilisation of digital skills, equipment and methods. To end the portfolio, a reflective conclusion will outline and summarise my understanding of digital essentials throughout my time on this module and I will reflect upon the varying and increasing ways in which digital essential methods, tools and techniques can be utilised, especially within marketing, advertising and brand management digitally.
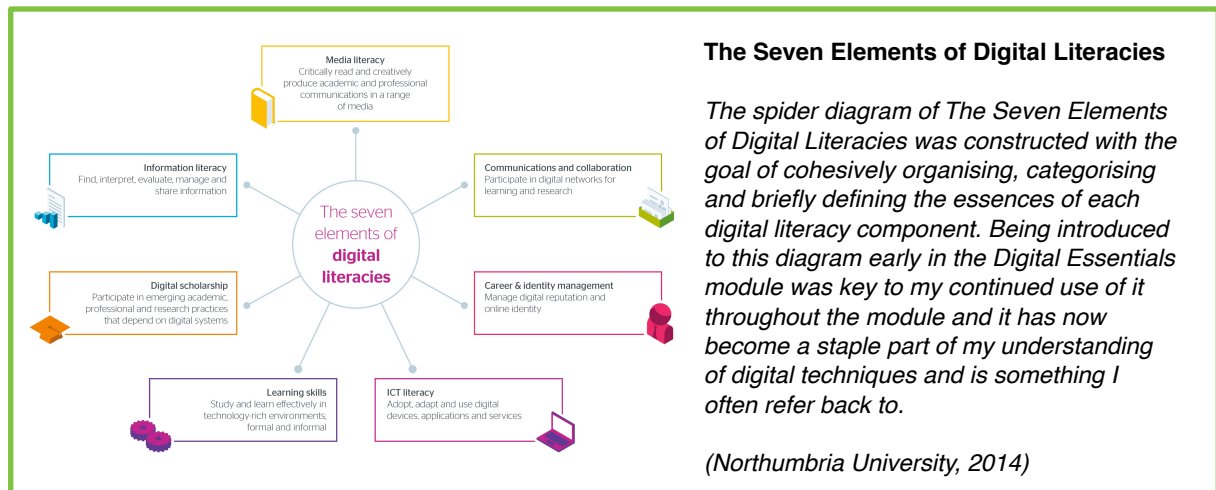
Digital Essentials Timeline

A visual timeline displaying the content of the
Digital Essentials module throughout
the year.

September 2016

Introduction to the module content of Digital Essentials whereby we gained a clear understanding of what we would be learning and how our digital skills overall will improve throughout the module.

October 2016

Entering the second month of the module, we began to focus on new topics including Digital self-evaluation, Digital Technologies and updating our Module Learning Logs.

November 2016

In November, we moved focus towards studying blogging and the advantages of establishing a creative, content-rich blog for business and professional use.

Coca-Cola Taste The Feeling

A key exercise that we focused on in one of the Digital Essentials lesson was the Coca-Cola Taste The Feeling campaign, which we analysed and evaluated in groups.

Library Resources

One of the Digital Essentials sessions was focused on the proper and correct uses of the UCLan library resources.

A librarian came into class and demonstrated all the various library resources such as Discovery, Passport and showed us how to navigate the library website.

The librarian also showed us how to optimise our searches to ensure we are receiving the most relevant resources for our assignment works.

Academic Referencing

Linked with the library resources topic, we had an in-depth look into Academic Referencing and we should best approach this activity, which is an essential part of higher eduction.

Adobe Presentation Day

At this point on our module timeline, we come to the day of our group presentation. With a collaborative effort, we successfully delivered a professional presentation and showed our use of Adobe Connect software.

December 2016

Throughout December 2016, we start focusing most of our in-class and out-of-class time on the first assignment.

As well as this, we worked in our groups and met up in the library in order to work on our presentations.

Finally, I focused on writing my individual report in order to hand it in within the allocated time.

January 2017

- Beginning 2017, we spent the first session reflecting on the events of the previous term which is a beneficial exercise to appreciate how far we have come.

- Further expanding our referencing skills, we were shown how to use RefWorks.

- And finally, we were also briefed on our second assignment for the Digital Essentials module, which is also good to know early, as it allows us to prepare our for the work.

Google Analytics

Studying Google Analytics has allowed me to gain a clearer understanding of how my knowledge of digital skills can be put into practice in order to achieve growth for business.

Super Bowl Advertising

By studying the Super Bowl advertising campaigns, myself and the whole class were able to analyse, debate and evaluate the success of each advert and whether we believed it to be impactful.

Viral Marketing

Finally, as the Digital Essentials module was coming to an end, we look toward Viral Marketing, which is a key subsection of the success of a marketing campaign, and so, is therefore vital to understand.

Digital Literacies

In this section of the portfolio, I will outline and discuss my own personal utilisation of Digital Literacies and how I believe each one has had an integral role throughout my learning on the Digital Essentials module and in the other modules of the course.

The Seven Elements of Digital Literacies

The spider diagram of The Seven Elements of Digital Literacies was constructed with the goal of cohesively organising, categorising and briefly defining the essences of each digital literacy component. Being introduced to this diagram early in the Digital Essentials module was key to my continued use of it throughout the module and it has now become a staple part of my understanding of digital techniques and is something I often refer back to.

(Northumbria University, 2014)

How Have I Used Digital Literacies?

The first and perhaps most diversely utilised of all the digital literacies is Media Literacy and I used this literacy sometimes without even remembering I was using it as it is so integral to higher education writing. Deeply engrained within the research, selection and organisation as well as the presentation of resources and references, I utilised Media Literacy throughout all of my essays by producing higher academic quality writing with correctly referenced sources.

I have used both the Information and ICT Literacies in conjunction, especially during Digital Essentials classes. For example, for some tasks, finding, interpreting, evaluating and managing information has been integral to the fulfilment of the task and in order to best carry out these actions, the adoption of digital devices and applications has been necessary. As well as this, Information Literacy is prevalent in the action of sharing information, for example, during our Assignment One presentations, we were not only information between our team, but also with other teams and the lecturer during our Adobe presentation, another example of ICT Literacy utilisation.

The Digital Scholarship element has made a huge impact upon my studies through the Digital Essentials module as well as other modules, mainly by the utilisation of the Discovery Search system provided by the UCLan library which I have used multiple times to research, locate and select the most relevant and academically sufficient resources to include in essay thus showing my participation on research utilities throughout my academic studies that depend on digital systems.

Academic Referencing

RefWorks Exercise

In one of the Digital Essentials lessons, I participated in an exercise focusing on RefWorks, which is a useful organisational tool for academic referencing.

During that session, I was taught about all the different features of RefWorks that can be used to assist in the process of academic referencing, for example, reference folders to categorise sources and reference for each topic; easy to use and efficient tools for formulating Harvard Referencing style references and also, the site offers storage services so I can keep all my reference lists in one place for all my different modules.

By attending this Digital Essentials class and learning about the different useful features of RefWorks, I believe my academic referencing skills have improved and as a direct result of that, my reference lists for academic assignments and essays will be more accurate and correct to the Harvard Referencing style. Understanding useful sites like RefWorks has strengthened my confidence and abillties in utilise digital services, therefore, the Digital Essentials module has directly assisted in my overall growth digitally.

To reflect, I think that by using RefWorks throughout my academic career, I will create professional, respectable and academically precise reference lists, and due to the importance of reference, especially in professional academic works, I believe I will greatly benefit from being introduced to this site and all of its features. Overall, while using RefWorks, I have also shown use of several Digital Literacies such as ICT Literacy and Learning Skills.

One of the most fundamental differences between education and higher education is the greater implementation of academic referencing, and so, during my first year at the University of Central Lancashire, I have been introduced to a number of different digital softwares and sites to help me understand, prepare for and improve my abilities regarding the construction of professional and accurate reference lists.

Resource Discovery, Selection, Allocation & Referencing

Academic referencing is structured around one's collection of resources, therefore the quality, accuracy and relevancy of those resources greatly impacts upon the overall quality of the reference list.

Throughout the Digital Essentials module, I have learnt and understood, from both the module lecturer and librarian staff, the importance of obtaining high quality resources and I have used my digital skills in order to achieve this. For example, using the Discovery tool on the UCLan library webpage to find search for accurate, update-to-date and relevant resources for academic usage.

As well as this, I had to use the majority of my Digital Literacies in order to firstly search and select my resources, but then I had to interpret the relevancy of the content of those resources and in doing so, I used Information Literacy, Media Literacy as well as Digital Scholarship.

Coca-Cola Campaign

In the "Gif-a-feeling" campaign, Coca-Cola successfully harnessed and portrayed their knowledge of digital techniques and methodology by centring the entire company around a digital format: a gif.

Gifs are a format combining animation and static imagery in order to convey a simple message, but are vastly used throughout social networks, especially when the creator of the gif wishes to express a message quickly and clearly to a wide audience. Coca-Cola have used this formatting technique to encourage user-generated content (UGC) from its customers featuring Coca-Cola products or more simply, just the Coca-Cola brand with the intention of the gifs trending on social networks and driving further attention toward Coca-Cola.

Coca-Cola (Fill & Roper, 2012) is demonstrating their understanding of the power of social network trends and by encouraging UGC, they are still distributing their brand and their product, but the content in which they do this is technically made by customers, not by Coca-Cola themselves. Therefore, the gifs created in this campaign are not seen so much as advertising, but as customers showing their love and interest for the Coca-Cola brand.

"Gif-a-feeling" Campaign
As I watch the "Gif-a-feeling" campaign, I make notes about how effective the campaign has been and how Coca-Cola is using digital tools such as Gifs in order to make their campaign more impactful.

I also note that Coca-Cola encourage consumers to share their Gif creations with their friends on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, thus demonstrating how Coca-Cola are investing in making their campaign go viral.

Formatting

In this section of my portfolio, I will discuss the ways in which understanding formatting will assist me in my studies and career and I will discuss the different ways in which formatting techniques can be utilised to best present, organise and categorise information and data.

Formatting Technique Utilisation

Throughout the Digital Essentials module, I have not only learnt about the different variations of formatting, but also, the different situations in which have even just a basic knowledge of formatting can be very useful.

For example, during an earlier session of a Digital Essentials class, we conducted a Word document formatting exercise in which there were around fifty different tasks to fulfil and it was interesting to see that I knew much less in reality than I thought I did because a lot of the tasks, I either couldn't remember or I just didn't know how to perform them correctly. However, after studying the basics of setting up a Word document page using the exercise as I guide, I better understood how to construct attractive, professional and more cohesive document layouts which has assisted me greatly in my essay writing, thus leading to higher marks by demonstrating my essays in a clear and competent manner.
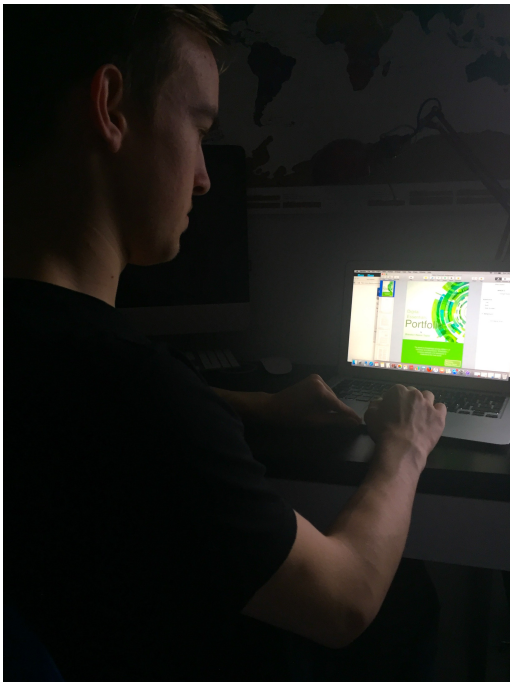
From seemingly simple Word documents to Adobe PhotoShop to professional videography software, it is critical in today's digital world that one has at least a basic understanding of these softwares, especially in a marketing environment whereby more sophisticated softwares are increasingly being utilised by businesses. Therefore, I understand the importance of the formatting exercise and why we were tasked with completing it.

Super Bowl Advertising

As the largest and most culturally influential annual programmes
in American society, the Super Bowl is an advertiser's prime opportunity
to grasp the American public, thus advertisers must ensure they position their brands
perfectly in order to best utilise annual advertising opportunity

The 2017 Super Bowl took place on Sunday 5th February and during our Digital Essentials class that week, we not only watched, but we also studied each advert and discussed how each advert was impactful and relevant and which advert best displayed their product or message for the audience to understand, process and take action upon, either by buying the product or accepting message displayed.

Is the television still relevant?

Throughout the Digital Essentials module, as an individual and as a class, we have discussed the importance of understanding and improving upon our digital skills for their utilisation in business operations. However, amongst the in-depth discussion of digital platforms such as social media, the internet and mobile applications, our discussion of television as a platform seemed to take a back seat, which leads to the question of whether television is still a relevant platform?

As I watch Super Bowl adverts, I write down notes about how each one is impactful, relevant and how well it conveys its message. (Kia Motors America, 2017)

Taking the Super Bowl as a prime example, it would seem as though the platform of television is dead just yet, as digital platforms and traditional platforms such as television have manage to intertwine with one another. For example, during the Super Bowl halftime show, Twitter received an explosive amount of tweets about Lady Gaga's performance, thus demonstrating the relationship between the traditional television platform as the initiator and the new digital platform as the place to come to express, discuss and share messages and ideas with those you wouldn't normally be able to reach.

Brands on Social Media & Viral Marketing

All brands must now be active on social media (Fill, 2009) in order to benefit from its rapidly increasing popularity and in the last couple of years, as more people are introduced to social networking platforms, having a good understanding of how each social network functions, leads to better utilisation of the platform, thus resulting in an increase of influence and reach for one's business.

During the Digital Essentials module, I have learn about the different ways in which brands can better harness the benefits of utilising social media for their business. One of the main ways in which I widened my understanding of brands on social media was through assignment one.

An example of viral marketing (Brassington & Pettitt, 2006) which I studied during a Digital Essentials lesson was the viral marketing campaign exercise whereby we were shown around ten different viral marketing campaigns and we had to discuss which were our favourites and why. As seen in the image below, I thoroughly enjoy studied each campaign in order to attain a greater understanding how the largest brands in the world are positioning their own campaigns to try and ignite a viral sensation.

The viral marketing campaign that drew my attention the most was the [Red Bull campaign](#) (TheRichest, 2014) (Elliott & Percy, 2007) with Felix Baumgartner as it really demonstrated Red Bull's close link with extreme sports and record achieving. Not only that, but this marketing campaign seemed to resonate with me as Felix was actually achieving something impressive and fulfilling, which was something I only saw in one other advert which was the [India & Pakistan Coca-Cola campaign](#) (TheRichest, 2014).

(Emirates, 2017)

On personal reflection, by researching and applying theories and understandings learnt in class time to real-world companies utilising these techniques to further their own business practices, I believe I have learnt more through this because I have seen how digital skills and techniques can be utilised for the betterment of real-world business operations. To conclude, by understanding firsthand that businesses are seeing the value of social media by researching examples, I have seen the relation between theory and real-world practice of the theory, which is something I think I can take with me throughout my career and the further development of my digital skills.

Reflective Conclusion

To reflectively conclude upon all the topics within this portfolio and the wider Digital Essentials module as a whole, I have constructed the follow conclusion to summarise my thoughts.

The main purpose for me personally throughout my experience on the Digital Essentials module has been to improve and greater understanding the latest developments within the digital landscape regarding marketing, advertising and academic softwares. As well as this, I also wished to solidify my understanding of the different components that make up a digitally skilled individual and it was my goal to achieve each of those components, but also to understand that the digital landscape is continuously and constantly expanding, evolving and developing, and so, in turn, my skills and abilities would have to change and evolving in parallel to the digital landscape.

Throughout the Digital Essentials module, the Digital Literacies that I was introduced to very early on in the module have stayed with me throughout and have guided me toward my current position as much more well rounded individual regarding my digital skills, abilities and understanding. I believe that each and every Digital Literacy will continue to guide me, assist me and act as a basis for my digital understanding far into the future, perhaps even as I enter into my career. I don't doubt that the Digital Literacies will change and develop and evolve over time as that seems to be the very nature of the digital landscape, but the fundamental skills will still stand true and relevant for a long time to come.

To ultimately conclude, throughout my time on the Digital Essentials module, I have been exposed to the past, current and future digital landscapes and I have begun to understand my place and my interests and my ambitions within the digital landscape, and so to me, that shows that my experiences on the Digital Essentials module have been beneficially successful to my wider understanding of the digital realm and the skills, abilities and knowledge needed to utilise it to my best advantage.

"The digital landscape will change and develop and evolve over time for that seems to be the very nature of it."

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