

Course Outline

Course Code : MKT4719
Course Title : Distribution Management: Channels and Platforms
Semester : Semester 1, AY 2023/2024
Faculty : Mr Daniel Buenas
Department : Marketing
Email : djbuenas@nus.edu.sg
URL : <https://bschool.nus.edu.sg/marketing/faculty/>

Overview and Objectives

Channels (pipelines) and platforms are the distribution “structures” that link demand and supply. These structures (both physical and virtual) make possible the transactions between buyers and sellers by enabling the exchange of information, product (and service) and payment. In short, the structures enable distribution. This course teaches the learner about these structures, paying particularly attention to the efficiency and effectiveness of their distribution.

The efficiency and effectiveness of a distribution structure are affected by the idiosyncratic characteristics of the product (and service), as well as those of (intermediate and end) sellers and buyers. This course put together the knowledge base needed to understand the impact of these characteristics on the distribution structure and the impact of the design of a distribution structure on the behaviors of sellers and buyers.

This course has theoretical, empirical, and practical components. It exposes the students to the necessary theoretical background to evaluate existing empirical phenomena in distribution. Armed with theory and empirics, students take a step further using the knowledge to discover and appreciate the challenges and opportunities of the existing distribution structures in various product categories.

At the end of the course, the diligent learner will have a well-grounded understanding of the structures that enable the transactions between buyers and sellers and will be competent in applying this knowledge to handle challenges and opportunities in the linking of demand and supply.

Learning Outcomes

Students shall attain the following learning outcomes in order of difficulty:

1. Know how channels and platforms enable demand and supply to link,
2. Identify challenges and opportunities a distribution structure face and why,
3. Appreciate the implications of such challenges and opportunities for business,
4. Design effective structures to resolve challenges and exploit opportunities.

Course Approach

We will use the textbook and articles as the primary teaching materials. In addition, lecture notes and handouts will be made available throughout the semester. There are two types of readings for each session. The pre-class readings are generally meant to introduce concepts, principles and frameworks. The post-class readings are provided for those who are interested to further their knowledge in the topics of the session.

Preparation for Class

A class schedule is provided at the later part of this document. The class schedule contains the topics that I will cover in this course. For each week, it lists the topic for the week and the pre-class readings. Some suggestions for a good preparation before class:

1. Read the essential course material assigned at the minimum. For the highly motivated, proceed to articles provided in the link online.
2. Note down the difficulty you encounter, doubts and questions that you have during the reading. Think carefully about how you want to ask the questions. Prioritize your questions
3. Go through the topics and materials that we cover in previous classes. Can you make a connection?

Assessment

This course has no final examination; it is 100% continuous assessment. Your final grade in the course will be based on four components. The evaluation is as follows:

A. Class Participation (individual)	20%
B. Assignments (individual)	30%
C. Essay (individual)	30%
D. Quizzes (individual)	20%

All works are due at the beginning of the class on the respective due date. The due dates for the works are listed in the class schedule. The details of the evaluation procedure and requirements for items A through D follows below.

Assessment Details

A. Class Participation (20%)

Class participation adds to your own learning experience and benefits the class. Your participation allows me to gauge how much you have learned and helps me to determine the pace of instruction. I expect each of you to participate. To reinforce this expectation, I will “cold call” throughout the class. How can you participate? There are four ways:

1. **By asking questions.** Asking questions help you sharpen your understanding of an issue, a concept, a framework, or a model. You should strive to ask good questions. The best way to field a good question is to prepare for class by going through at least the basic reading.
2. **By giving comments.** The comments you made will show the level of understanding you have of the concepts and issues discussed in class. It also shows how well you have listened and understood the comments, solutions and experiences others have presented and shared.
3. **By providing solutions.** Providing solutions in class allow others to follow through your analysis in details. It allows you to verify your analysis and allows the class to learn from you.
4. **By sharing experiences.** Sharing your experiences gives the class a new perspective to an issue. It gives the class the opportunity to contrast and compare with other experiences they may have.

Keep in mind that your grade for class participation is not simply a function of the amount of "air-time" you take up.

B. Individual Assignments (30%)

There will be three individual assignments. The assignments are meant to test your understanding of the basic concepts. Each assignment is limited to a one-page submission.

C. Essay (30%)

Please pick a product/service category where you will write on the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing distribution structure(s) – channels or platforms, or both.

Content for the essay: Your essay should at least cover the following –

Product, Consumer and Structure: Describe the product/service, the consumer and the distribution structure(s) in details.

Challenges and Opportunities: Discuss the efficiency and effectiveness of the current structures and identify the challenges and opportunities.

There is a strict upper limit of **four** single-spaced pages of text (assuming 12-point font size and one-inch margins) and, if there are, at most **two** pages of exhibits.

Although you will have ample time before the essay is due, I strongly suggest you start as soon as possible. I encourage you to talk to me about your essay, frequently.

Your essay is due at the beginning of the last class.

D. Quizzes (20%)

There will be 2 in-class 30 minutes closed book quizzes. Each quiz is worth 10%.

Course Materials

Required Text: Robert W. Palmatier, Eugene Sivadas, Louis W. Stern, and Adel I. ElAnsary, Marketing Channel Strategy: An Omni-Channel Approach, 9th Edition, Routledge (2019) [RP]

References: On Platforms and Ecosystem, Harvard Business School Publishing (2021) [HB]

Kusum L. Ailawadi and Paul W. Farris, Getting Multi-channel Distribution Right, John Wiley & Sons (2020) [AF]

World Economic Forum on Digital Transformation: Digital Platforms & Ecosystems
<https://reports.weforum.org/digital-transformation/digital-platformsecosystems/>

Advanced References:

David S. Evans and Richard Schmalensee,

Matchmakers: The New Economics of Multisided Platforms, Harvard Business Review Press (2016) [ES]

Geoffrey G. Parker, Marshall W. Van Alstyne and Sangeet Paul Choudary, Platform Revolution, W.W. Norton & Co. (2016) [GP]

Cusumano, Michael A., Annabelle Gawer, and David B. Yoffie, The Business of Platforms: Strategy in the Age of Digital Competition, Innovation, and Power. Harper Business (2019) [MC]

Additional Reading List:

Praveen Adhi, Tiffany Burns, Andrew Davis, Shruti Lal, and Bill Mutell, "A Transformation in Store," McKinsey & Co, May 2019, pp. 1-6.

Arun Arora, Daniel Glaser, Aimee Kim, Philipp Kluge, Sajal Kohli and Natalya Sak, "It's showtime! How live commerce is transforming the shopping experience," McKinsey & Co, July 2021, pp. 1-8.

Steven Begley, Becca Coggins, Matthew Maloney, and Steve Noble, "The next normal in retail: Charting a path forward," McKinsey & Co, April 2021, pp. 1-7.

Briedis, Holly, Brian Gregg, Kevin Heidenreich, and Wei Wei Liu, "The Survival Guide to Omnichannel and the Path to Value," McKinsey & Co, April 2021, pp. 1-7.

Cusumano, Michael A., Annabelle Gawer, and David B. Yoffie, "Platform versus Non-Platform Company Performance: Some Exploratory Data Analysis, 1995-2015," Working paper.
<http://questromworld.bu.edu/platformstrategy/files/2018/07/Platformvs-Non-Platform-Performance-Working-Paper-v2.pdf> (accessed 2021 May 17)

Cusumano, Michael A., David B. Yoffie, and Annabelle Gawer. "The Future of Platforms." Art. 61304. Special Issue on Disruption 2020. MIT Sloan Management Review 61, no. 3 (Spring 2020).

Resil Das, Surbhi Kalia, Dymfke Kuijpers, and Abhishek Malhotra, "Catering to Asian Consumers," McKinsey & Co, June 2022, pp. 1-13.

Eric Hazan, Greg Kelly, Hamza Khan, Dennis Spillecke, and Lareina Yee, "Marketing in the Metaverse: An Opportunity for Innovation and Experimentation," McKinsey & Co, May 2022, pp. 1-7.

Jacobides, Michael G., Arun Sundararajan, Marshall Van Alstyne "Platforms and Ecosystems: Enabling the Digital Economy", World Economic Briefing Paper 2019,
<http://reports.weforum.org/digital-transformation/wp-content/blogs.dir/94/mp/files/pages/files/digital-platforms-and-ecosystems-february2019.pdf>

Kenney, Martin and John Zysman, "The Rise of Platform Economy," Issues in Science and Technology, Vol. XXXII, No. 3, (2016), pp. 1-18.

Wu, Andy, David R. Clough and Sasha Kaletsky, "Nascent Platform Strategy: Overcoming the Chicken-or-Egg Dilemma," Harvard Business School notes 9-719507, May 2, 2019.

Zhu, Feng and Marco Iansiti, "Why Some Platforms Thrive and Others Don't," Harvard Business Review, Vol. 97, No. 1, (2019), pp. 118-125.

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism

Academic integrity and honesty is essential for the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge. The University and School expect every student to uphold academic integrity & honesty at all times. Academic dishonesty is any misrepresentation with the intent to deceive, or failure to acknowledge the source, or falsification of information, or inaccuracy of statements, or cheating at examinations/tests, or inappropriate use of resources.

Plagiarism is “the practice of taking someone else’s work or ideas and passing them off as one’s own” (The New Oxford Dictionary of English). The University and School will not condone plagiarism. Students should adopt this rule - You have the obligation to make clear to the assessor which is your own work, and which is the work of others. Otherwise, your assessor is entitled to assume that everything being presented for assessment is being presented as entirely your own work. This is a minimum standard. In case of any doubt, you should consult your instructor.

Additional guidance is available at:

- <http://www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/administrative-policies-procedures/acceptance-record#NUSCodeofStudentConduct>
- <http://nus.edu.sg/osa/resources/code-of-student-conduct>

Class Schedule

Semester I, AY2023/2024

Session	Topic	Reading & Assignment
1	Introduction	RP Chapter 1; AF Chapters 1, 4.
2	Channel Basics – Functions and Structures	RP Chapter 2; AF Chapters 7-9.
3	Channel – Design (Omni- and Multi-channel)	RP Chapter 1, 9, 11; AF Chapters 8, 11-12, 16. Case on Omni- and Multi-channel
4	Channel – Design (Wholesale, Retail, Franchise) + Case discussion.	RP Chapters 6-8; AF Chapters 9-10. Due: Assignment 1
5	Channel – User analysis	RP Chapter 10; AF Chapter 2.
6	Channel – Relationship, Power and Conflict	RP Chapters 3-5; AF Chapters 3, 5-6. Case on Power and Conflict
7	Channel Strategy + Case Discussion	Due: Assignment 2
8	Platform Basics – Overview	GP Chapters 1, 4; ES Chapters 1, 4 Quiz 1
9	Platform – Function and Design	GP Chapters 3, 9; ES Chapter 8.
10	Platform – Network Effects	GP Chapters 2, 6; ES Chapter 5. Case on Platform Strategy
11	Platform – Strategy, Ecosystem and Market	GP Chapters 8, 10. ES Chapter 7. MJ Due: Assignment 3
12	Platform – Case Discussion	Quiz 2
13	Taking Stock: The future of Channel, Platform and Markets	GP Chapter 12; The Future of Shopping (HBR Dec 2011). Due: Essay

Student should read ahead of schedule by at least 1 week to maximize learning.

Key to Authors –

RP: Robert W. Palmatier, Eugene Sivadas, Louis W. Stern, and Adel I. El-Ansary;

AF: Kusum L. Ailawadi and Paul W. Farris;

AC: Anne T. Coughlan, Erin Anderson, Louis W. Stern, Adel I. El-Ansary;

GP: Geoffrey G. Parker, Marshall W. Van Alstyne and Sangeet Paul Choudary;

ES: David S. Evans and Richard Schmalensee;

MJ: Michael G. Jacobides, Arun Sundararajan, Marshall Van Alstyne

ABOUT ME . . .

Daniel was most recently Director of Strategic Projects and Communications in the Founders' Office at Carousell. Before Carousell, he spent five years at Google as APAC head of competitive and market intelligence and head of operations for Recruiting Enablement.

Daniel also spent over a decade in strategy, corporate development and analytics roles at Singapore Press Holdings. He began his career as a business journalist covering economics and politics.

Daniel holds two undergraduate degrees in computer science and management from Seattle University, and an MBA from the University of Cambridge Judge School of Business.