

Course Outline

Course Code : MKT4719
Course Title : Distribution Management: Channels and Platforms
Semester : Semester 1, AY 2026/2027
Faculty : Mr Maurice Tan
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Overview & Objectives

Channels and platforms are the distribution *structures* that connect supply and demand. Whether physical (like retail outlets or logistics pipelines) or virtual (like marketplaces, apps, and APIs), these structures enable transactions by facilitating the flow of information, goods, services, and payments.

In this course, we explore these structures as more than passive conduits; they are strategic assets that shape how buyers and sellers interact. We'll investigate how distribution structures affect business performance, how they respond to product and customer characteristics, and how their design influences the behavior of participants throughout the value chain.

You'll build foundational understanding and applied know-how across three dimensions:

- **Theory:** Frameworks and models that explain how and why distribution structures work
- **Empirics:** Real-world phenomena and data that show how distribution varies by product, industry, or geography
- **Practice:** Strategic applications - how to spot distribution challenges and design structures that resolve them

By the end of the course, students will be able to recognize, analyze, and design distribution structures that align with strategic goals and market realities.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

1. **Explain** how channels and platforms enable the linkage between demand and supply
2. **Identify** structural challenges and opportunities across different distribution environments
3. **Assess** the business implications of those challenges and opportunities
4. **Design** effective distribution structures tailored to specific contexts and goals

These outcomes are designed to support both analytical rigor and creative problem-solving, equipping you for decisions in roles across strategy, marketing, operations, and product.

Course Approach

We will engage a mix of learning materials, including:

- Textbook chapters to ground foundational theory
- Videos and articles that bring concepts to life with contemporary examples
- Instructor notes and handouts for synthesis and application

You are expected to co-create the learning experience by actively researching and sharing examples from the marketplace that illustrate and challenge the frameworks we discuss. Many of our best insights will come from the real-world cases you bring into the classroom.

Preparing for Class

Each week includes required pre-readings to introduce the topic, along with optional material for deeper exploration. You'll find the full class schedule and reading list later in this document. To get the most from each session:

1. **Read the assigned materials thoroughly** - a strong foundation sparks better discussion
2. **Note areas of doubt or difficulty** - formulate thoughtful, prioritized questions to bring to class
3. **Look for patterns and connections** - how do today's topics link back to prior weeks? What's evolving?

If a question goes unanswered in class, you're encouraged to book a 1-on-1 or small group consultation.

Assessment Overview

This course is designed to build your critical thinking, application skills, and collaborative problem-solving in the context of distribution strategy. There is no final examination. Instead, your learning will be assessed through four interlocking components:

Assessment Component	Weightage
1. Class Participation <i>Includes attendance, contribution in discussions (in-class or online), quizzes, and peer critique activities</i>	20%
2. Individual Assignments <i>Short, structured submissions focused on applying course concepts to real-world distribution scenarios</i>	30%
3. Group Exercises & Assignments <i>Team-based tasks that mirror fast-turn strategic thinking and collaborative problem-solving</i>	15%
4. Final Group Project <i>A capstone strategic proposal focused on a real-world distribution challenge</i>	35%
• Business & channel insights derived from quality research	10%
• Application of course concepts to structured analysis & solution design	15%
• Cohesiveness, clarity, and impact of final presentation	10%

Class Participation

Participation is more than attendance—it's about your intellectual presence. It reflects how actively you engage, how well you apply course concepts, and how thoughtfully you contribute to both class and peer learning.

Your participation grade will be based on:

- In-class contributions and online engagement via CANVAS
- Learning quizzes and interactive group discussions
- Written critiques of peer project presentations
- Consistent attendance and punctuality

Note: Absences and late arrivals will result in score deductions. Your presence sets the tone for your learning.

Individual Assignments

- Briefings will take place in **Session 3** and **Session 7**
- Assignments must be submitted in **PowerPoint format**, adhering to the prescribed slide count
- Upload to the specified folder on **CANVAS** by the stated deadlines
- **Plagiarism is strictly penalized** - always credit sources appropriately

Assignments are meant to develop your ability to synthesize course concepts and apply them in business-relevant formats.

Group Exercises & Assignments

- Assignment briefing in **Session 4**
- PowerPoint format, **no more than 7 slides**
- Submit via CANVAS by the deadline
- Penalty applies for plagiarism

These tasks simulate collaborative, short-cycle problem-solving, much like what marketers encounter in fast-paced project settings.

Final Group Project

This capstone project is your opportunity to bring theory to life through strategic design and collaborative insight.

- **Team formation:** Session 3 (4–5 members per team)
- **Submission deadline:** Not earlier than **23 Oct 2025**, via CANVAS
- **Presentation:** Session 12
 - No more than **12 slides**
 - 15-minute live presentation to the class
 - All members must present

Learning Journal (Individual Component)

Alongside the group presentations, each student will complete a **graded Learning Journal**. You'll reflect on insights gained from watching your peers' final presentations, applying critical thinking and comparative analysis. This journal will be assessed as part of your **Individual Assignment** component.

A Note on Free-Riding

All students are expected to contribute meaningfully to group work. The University adopts a firm stance on free-riding. If inequity of contribution is reported and verified, a **peer assessment form** may be used to moderate and adjust final grades to ensure fairness.

Your team deserves your best, be the teammate you'd want to have.

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]

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

References & Resources

Matchmakers – The New Economics of Multisided Platforms

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EnwCOyavVnQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLaeD1YQ8Rw>

Platform & Ecosystem

Platform Revolution – Sangeet Paul Chowdury

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=daQoVUA0wD8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v23jbqJhghk>

Academic Integrity & 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 doubts, 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>

Schedule and Outline

Session	Topic	Reading & Assignment
1	Introduction – Role of Distribution. Demand & Supply	RP Chapter 1
2	Channel Basics – Participants, Functions & Structures. Audits & Gaps	RP Chapter 2
3	Channel – Design (Omni- and Multi-Channel). Key Trends & Challenges. End Users & Touchpoints	RP Chapter 1,9,11
4	Channel Design - Wholesale, Retail & Distributor	RP Chapter 6-8
5	Channel – Franchise, User Analysis	RP Chapter 10
6	Channel - Relationship & Power	RP Chapter 3-4
Recess	Mid-Semester Break	
7	Channel Conflict, Grey Market, International Markets	RP Chapter 5
8	Revise Key Concepts in C-Mgt. Platform Basics - Overview	GP Chapters 1 & 4
9	Platform – Function & Design	GP Chapters 3 & 9
10	Platform – Network Effects	GP Chapters 2 & 6
11	Platform – Strategy, Ecosystem & Market	GP Chapters 8 & 10
12	Group Project Presentation	
13	Summary & Outlook: The Future	GP Chapter 12

Note: Schedule will be updated on week 4 after number of students are confirmed in week 3

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

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

About me . . .

Maurice holds a portfolio of Senior Advisory and Academic roles focusing in Public Healthcare Transformation and Human Capital Development. He most recently served as Senior Consultant with Ministry of Health Office for Healthcare Transformation advising on Digital Mental Health Solution, Population Health Strategy & HealthierSG after transitioning from the Health Promotion Board where he served as Deputy CEO. Concurrently, Maurice also holds appointment across Snr. Adjunct Faculty, Mentorship, Senior Fellowship, Program Directorship & Board roles in NUS Business School, NUS Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, NTU Entrepreneurship Academy and SMU Academy.

In Maurice's last corporate role, he led the M&A Integration/divestiture effort for Microsoft in Asia. Prior to that, he was helping the role of Managing Director & Senior VP leading P&L for 7 years driving Business Strategy, Operations & Transformation for Microsoft's Consumer Businesses in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore & Maxis' Telco business in Malaysia.

Earlier in his career, Maurice led many high-profile marketing campaigns across diverse consumer-centric industries. His operations, sales & marketing leadership experiences span diverse categories from Restaurants, Snack Food, Petcare, Soft Drinks, Mobile Phone, Automotive, Telco to Technology Hardware & Software in country, regional and global roles.

Maurice's career journey and expertise is focus on Consumer facing Businesses (and Population Behavioural Intervention in Public Service) within large complex organizations in pursuit of Change & Transformation.

The theory and concepts of Distribution Management: Channel & Platform resonates with Maurice's industry experience in Channel Management role in FMCG (Mars Inc.), Franchise Model businesses (McDonald's & PepsiCo) and driving Platform business at Microsoft (Xbox Video Game & Windows)