MGT/P/B 448 Practicum for Marketing Strategies

Instructor: Olivier Rubel

Course Description

The course will provide opportunities to apply the concepts covered in the “marketing strategies” class through a group project involving the analysis of strategic marketing decisions based on business-related issues. Possible project topics include for example sales forecasting in a competitive environment, marketing resources allocation (e.g. advertising), new product sales forecasting, brand crisis management…More ideas are listed below.

The project topics could emerge from strategic marketing challenges faced by students in the workplace, or in coordination with an organization, or through a case study. To do so, students will be asked to

(i) To form groups and identify an appropriate topic;
(ii) To define a research protocol, especially for those planning some data collection;
(iii) To analyze the information collected using the tools and concepts covered in the class 248;
(iv) To summarize the research findings in a 10-20 pages report.

Contacts time

Contacts times between students and the instructor will take place both in person and electronically.

In-Person Contact

Each week, 40 minutes meetings will be allocated for each section:

- After class for Sacramento students;
- During dinner for Bay-Area students;
- During a pre-specified time slot for Davis students.

Other Medium for Contact

Electronic communication will be done via emails (or any other communication medium favored by both students and the instructor, e.g. Skype or Phone) to answer students’ questions and concerns.

Illustrative Readings

The readings for this class include those for the Marketing Strategies class.
Description

The practicum nicely complements the Marketing Strategies class through a project. The project topic is your choice, and should involve applications of the concepts learnt in 248 to a real-world problem.

Each team will analyze the situation using the competitive marketing analysis approaches covered in 248. As a group, you will write a report that includes your analysis and findings.

1- Deliverables

Weeks 0-1 Form groups and identify a topic for the report. Some ideas are listed below, but I encourage groups to leverage their collective creativity to pick their own topics.

Week 2: Submit 1-page project proposal. Correspond with professor to improve and finalize proposal.

Week 5-6 Prepare and submit project progress report.

Week 10: Submit final report by 12pm the day following the last day of 248.

Note that peer evaluation forms will be provided to make sure that everyone is making his/her share of the work as initially agreed between the group member. These forms will be used to converge to an individual final grade, i.e. no free riding!

2- Grading

1. Project proposal (10 points). Research objectives (why is it interesting? How is that relevant), Research Method (how are these research objectives going to be met). Other criteria: Timeliness, Initiative, and Effort.


3. Final presentation and report (70 points). Criteria: Clarity, Organization, Quality and Credibility of Arguments (or Data), Ambition and Complexity of Project ((How challenging was the project topic?)), Timeliness of submission. How well was the project executed (data collection, analysis) executed? How convincing were the conclusions? Quality of the writing (e.g. level of professionalism), formatting of the report (e.g. table of content, references)
Remark: Note that you are not going to be graded on the number of pages and compactness of report will be appreciated.

Remark: Weekly meetings, in person or via email/skype/phone will help you moving forward with the project. So you groups are expected to meet with me on a regular basis.

3- Some ideas for the Topics

A- Analysis of Competitive Strategies

Write an essay analyzing crucial competitive actions over the last 5-15 years, pursued by a family of firms/products.

1. State the background facts, describe what competitive factors are at play, the key milestones in competitive strategies and actions chosen by the firms

2. Analyze whether these actions were smart or not, did they suitably take into account the competitive factors of the industry, what were the outcomes, and to what extent are they consistent with theory (and therefore could have been reasonably predicted).

3. Conclude with some lessons learnt and suggestions/directions for management decisions in other industries.

Example of Topics:

- Launch of Google chrome: a new step in the browser war?
- Google and Verizon
- Competition between social networking websites
- Competition in cause-related organizations (American Red-Cross, Feeding America, …)
- Competitive Implication of Peer-to-Peer File Sharing Systems
- Competition between blogs: should you link to another blog?
- ….
B- Analysis of New Competitive Marketing Practice

Write an essay analyzing new of competitive marketing actions

1- Identify a phenomenon of interest that directly involves one or many elements of the marketing mix (e.g. Price, Advertising, Distribution, Product)

2- Collect and analyze some data/information corresponding to this phenomenon, in order to understand whether (or to what extent) that phenomenon is at play.

3- Discuss (a) what you observe (i.e., what the data/observation tell) and (b) whether the observations are consistent with theory (i.e., why you should/should not expect to see this happen).

Example of Topics:

- Marketing Strategies in Turbulent Times (recessions, product recalls, …)
- Competitive implications of product-harm crises
- Competitive implications of the rise of private labels
- Competitive implications of category captains (from the manufacturer’s point of view and/or from the retailer point-of-view)
- Competitive implications of price-matching guarantees
- Competitive implications of Paid-Search Advertising (advertising on search engines such as Google)
- Managing customer relationships under competition
- Generic and branded Advertising
- Competitive implications of negative advertising
- Strategic channel design: Internet, Name-Your-Own Price, …
- Advanced selling and probabilistic Selling
- Pass-through in channels
- Competitive impacts of frequent-shopper programs in retailing
- …. 

3- Other Remarks

- Take the posture of a business analyst rather than a consultant working for the company you’re focusing on.
- Weight the pros and cons of the strategies adopted
- Use concepts covered in 248 (especially beyond the Porter’s 5 forces), but feel free to fuel your reasoning with what you know from other classes: OB, Finance, Strategy, Operations, …
- Try to use data as much as possible: either by making sense of the data you can encounter while doing your research OR by working on a dataset you manage to have access to.
- Be analytical as much as possible.
- If you have to make assumptions, please feel free to do so.