

ECONOMICS OF STRATEGIC BEHAVIOR

B7216 --- Fall 2018

PROFESSOR WOUTER DESSEIN

SUBJECT TO CHANGE

A. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Contact Information

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Office hours: I am on campus most days. Feel free to stop by at any time, or send me an email to arrange for a meeting.

Required Materials

- Case studies, readings, hand-outs posted on CANVAS.
- Bruce Greenwald and Judd Kahn (2005): Competition Demystified (CD).

B. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the underlying economics of successful business strategy, including

- (i) The sources of long-run competitive advantage.
- (ii) The dynamics of competition and competitive advantage.
- (iii) Strategic interactions (competitive and/or cooperative) between pairs of firms.

Three characteristics distinguish our approach. First, we focus on the large strategic decisions which firms face rather than more detailed, operation/managerial issues. Second, we seek broad principles that can be applied across many firms and markets, rather than anecdotal success stories or institutional details that apply only in limited cases or as a result of quite idiosyncratic factors. Finally, we develop these broad principles from the framework of microeconomic theory. As such, potential answers will be subjected to the rigor of economic analysis to test their validity and applicability.

The approach toward teaching and learning is primarily inductive. That is, you will learn the concepts and principles outlined above largely through examples – this is the essence of the case study method. The goal is to carefully study specific business situations and decisions with the goal of extracting broader principles about business strategy, which will then be available to you in a wide variety of managerial contexts. Course time will be split roughly 65/35 between case discussions and lectures.

Good cases are necessarily complex and ambiguous. In preparing for case discussions, you may find sorting through this complexity and ambiguity to be frustrating. The problems presented in the case discussion may not have one correct answer. However, there will generally be a set of insights and solutions that are better than others. And it is in working through the messy details to find these insights and solutions – both in your own preparation and in class discussion – that the concepts and principles introduced in the readings and lectures will come alive and be enriched for you.

C. REQUIRED PREREQUISITES AND CONNECTION TO THE CORE

The learning in this course will utilize, build on and extend concepts covered in the following core courses:

Core Course	Connection with Core
Managerial Economics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding market competition and equilibrium thinking (in the short-run). 2. Market equilibrium thinking (in the long-run) and barriers to entry. 3. Strategic Interaction among firms and Nash Equilibrium. 4. Pricing with market power.
Strategy Formulation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creation of value vs. value capture. 2. Competing firms.

Students will be expected to have mastered these concepts and be able to apply them in the course.

D. CLASS SCHEDULE

I. Sources and Dynamics of Competitive Advantage.

The first part of the course is focused on understanding the sources and dynamics of competitive advantages. It presents a simplified approach to business strategy, based on the notion that any long-run competitive advantage must rely on “barriers to entry”. Firms without competitive advantages

should concentrate all their efforts on being efficient. Firms that do have competitive advantages need to design strategy with their competitors in mind.

Session	Topic	Cases <i>Other Reading Assignments</i>
Session 1	Intro to Competitive Strategy. Industry Economics & Competitive Advantage	Enterprise Rent-A-Car Competition Demystified (CD) Chapters 1-3
Session 2	Sources of Competitive Advantage.	Aldi: The Dark Horse Discounter* Capital One* CD Chapters 4-5
Session 3	Dynamics of Competitive Advantage & Two-sided markets.	The Economist* Microsoft in Search* CD Chapters 6-7
Session 4	Entry & Competitive Advantage Make or Buy - Vertical Integration	CarMax* ATT – Time Warner (newspaper articles)

*Cases are eligible for case write-ups – see preparation questions at end of syllabus.

II. Shared Competitive Advantages: Managing Strategic Interactions.

After having developed the basic tools for the analysis of competitive advantage, we will use game theory as a framework for analyzing “shared competitive advantages”. The basic issue is simply this – when competitive advantage is shared with other firms, any action I take will elicit a reaction by my competitors. How can I incorporate those reactions in forming strategies so that I am not blindsided, and if possible, can even use them to my advantage? Can I find a way to move away from mutually destructive price competition, toward win-win games? How do I enter an industry, or avoid entry by new competitors? How do I structure and manage my relationship with suppliers and competitors?

Session	Topic	Cases <i>Other Reading Assignments</i>
Session 5	Intro to Strategic Interactions	Bombardier* Shrimp Game <i>CD Chapters 8-9</i>
Session 6	Price Wars & Dynamics of Competition	Philip Morris: Marlboro Friday; “Game Theory: How to make it Pay” (Canvas) “Dynamics of Price Competition” (Canvas)
Session 7	Guest Speaker – Competitive Strategy at International Paper and UTC (John Faraci)	International Paper United Technologies
Session 8	Price Wars, Dynamics of Price Competition & Anti-trust.	Albert Heijn Basics of Antitrust
Session 9	Entry Strategies & Dynamics of Competition;	Ready-to-Eat Breakfast Cereal*; Dogfight over Europe: Ryanair*; <i>CD Chapters 10-11</i>
Session 10	Entry Strategies & Dynamics of Competition;	Red Bull*; Tesla*; <i>CD Chapters 12-13</i>
Session 11	Distributors, Suppliers and Complementors: Friends or Foes? Wrap-up	Power Play (A): Nintendo; <i>CD Chapter 14-15</i>
Session 12	In-class open book case-based final.	

*Cases are eligible for case write-ups – see preparation questions at end of syllabus.

E. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Grading will be based on class participation and on-line case quizzes (30%), 5 case write-ups (35%), and a take-home (but distributed in class) case-based exam (35%).

1) Class Participation and On-line Quizzes (35% - Individual/Type B)

For each case, there will be an online quiz, to be taken by 9am the day of class. Questions are multiple choice and/or require you to write a paragraph justifying your answer. Grading is based on the thoughtful completion of each of the quizzes. Be also prepared to discuss your answers in class.

Class participation is essential in order for you to get the maximum benefit from the course. Your grade will be based on attendance, effort and the content of your contributions to the class discussions. Students who miss 33% or more of classes due to unexcused absences will receive a maximum grade of LP. The evaluation of content will be based on the following:

- **Relevance:** Are your comments clearly related to the case and to the comments of others? Do they move the discussion forward?
- **Fact-Based:** Have you used specific data from the case, from readings, or from personal experience to support the assertions that you are making?

Importantly, I ask that you deal with the cases as you find them; **do not seek outside or post-case data on the firm or industry**. Of course, if you already know things about the case, from previous experience, this can be very useful in case discussions. Please let me know about it in advance, and I will make a point to call on you at the appropriate time.

Case discussion constitutes more than half the class time, so there will be ample opportunity for each of you to participate. In addition to voluntary participation, *I regularly cold call students*. If you feel that you are preparing well but that I am not calling on you enough, please let me know so that I can address the problem.

2) Case Write-ups (30% – Group/Type A)

Submit 5 case write-ups, chosen from the starred (*) cases. Your case write-up should focus on the study question(s) in bold face. *Write-ups can be submitted individually, or in groups of up to four.*

Due date. Day before the case is discussed in class, submitted online on CANVAS (Drop Box).

Format. The write-up should be no longer than 2 pages and consist of 3 parts: Your write-up has to start with a one paragraph summary that states your basic position. The paragraph should be as

concise as possible. Shorter is better. This is an exercise in synthesis. The rest of the write up essentially argues why that position is correct. At the end, you should list concisely 2 or 3 issues or potential problems with your position.

Use. I may occasionally call upon someone or a group to discuss his or her ideas.

3) In-class open book case-based exam (35% – Individual/Type B)

In-class open book case-based exam during last class session. Case will be distributed one week in advance. Students will be able to take the exam home.

Preparation Questions (be prepared to discuss these questions in class)

Case write-ups (* cases) should focus on the questions in bold.

Enterprise Rent-a-Car (Case posted on CANVAS)

1. How attractive is the car rental industry in terms of long-term profitability?
2. Analyze Enterprise's strategy and competitive position. Why has Enterprise been so successful?
3. Should Hertz or Avis launch a frontal assault on Enterprise?

Aldi: The Dark Horse Discounter*

Aldi, the German-based hard discounter, has ambitious growth plans for the US market.

1. Discuss the main elements/choices of Aldi's strategy. Does this strategy result in a cost advantage in the discount grocery segment relative to Walmart?
2. **Does Aldi have a (sustainable) competitive advantage in the US? Yes or no?**
3. **How should Walmart react to Aldi's expansion? Should they imitate some of the key choices of Aldi's? Should they go to a price war to stop Aldi's expansion?**

Capital One*

1. **What, if any, competitive advantages does Capital One have?**
2. **Are these advantages sustainable into the future?**
3. As head of Capital One, what would be your strategic priorities?

The Economist*

1. **What explains the success of The Economist thus far? Why has it managed to succeed while so many other magazines are struggling?**
2. What should Andrew Rashbass' major priorities be going forward? What opportunities can the Economist take advantage of, and what threats should they be sensitive to?

Microsoft's Search*

1. What, if any, competitive advantages does Google enjoy in search. Are these competitive advantages sustainable?
2. **Does Microsoft have a competitive advantage in search? What market share do they need to be profitable? Do you think they will be successful?**
3. How should Google respond to Microsoft?

Car Max*

1. Why is car retailing a low-profit business?
2. **Discuss the main elements of CarMax's strategy. How does it affect consumers' willingness-to-pay? How does it influence costs?**
3. **Does CarMax have a sustainable competitive advantage in the used-car market? How much room does CarMax have to grow?**

Bombardier*

1. **What are Bombardier's and Morrison Knudsen's (MK) strategic advantages and disadvantages in the U.S. railcar market?**
2. Evaluate Morrison Knudsen's strategy.
3. **How should Bombardier respond to the challenge posed by MK?**

Philip Morris: Marlboro Friday

1. How would you describe Marlboro's competitive position in early 1993?
2. What is Marlboro's marketing strategy at that time?
3. How does this compare to RJ Reynolds'?
4. What accounts for Philip Morris' dramatic shift in strategy in April 1993? What are its goals?
5. How should RJ Reynolds respond?
6. What kind of industry future does Philip Morris anticipate?

Albert Heijn: Price Wars Among Retailers

1. How would you describe Albert Heijn's competitive position in 2003?
2. What are the goals of Albert Heijn's dramatic shift in strategy in October 2003?
3. Will Albert Heijn be successful in achieving its goals? Is the new price strategy a smart move?

Ready-to-Eat Breakfast Cereal Industry*

1. **Why has RTE cereal been such a profitable business?**
2. How have the incumbent brands managed rivalry?
3. **And how has entry been avoided for such a long time?**
4. How should RTE cereal producers react to non-branded entry?

Dogfight over Europe: Ryanair (A)*

1. Describe Ryan Air's entry strategy.
2. **Evaluate Ryan Air's entry strategy. Will it succeed?**
3. Place yourself in the shoes of the CEO of BA or AL. How would you respond to Ryan Air's entry?

Red Bull*

1. **At the time Red Bull entered the US market, would Coke have been at a competitive advantage if it had attacked Red Bull? If so, what were its sources of advantage? Why didn't it attack aggressively?**
2. Is there anything that Coke or Red Bull should have done differently?
3. **How was Monster Drinks able to catch up with Red Bull? Why didn't Red Bull react more aggressively? Should Red Bull or Monster have done things differently?**

Tesla Motors.* Tesla Motors attempts to become the first US firm since WWII to successfully enter the car industry with a mass-produced car.

1. Should BMW expect Tesla to grow into a strong direct competitor like Audi (versus Tesla being either limited to a niche or a flash in the pan)? Is Tesla at a competitive advantage or disadvantage? How will that evolve?
2. **What do you think of Tesla's entry strategy? What barriers did it have to overcome? How did it manage to do so? Will other firms follow in Tesla's footsteps?**
3. How do you expect the industry to evolve?

Nintendo

1. Nintendo successfully recreated the home video game business following the Atari-era boom and bust. How did it do so?
2. How did Nintendo capture value from the home video game business? How did it avoid that “content” developers (such as Electronic Arts), or distribution channels (such as Wal-Mart, ToysRUs) captured all the rents?