

Retailing Strategy & Operations - Summer 2017

This course focuses on the roles technology & operations play in the development and implementation of retailing strategy. In the core Strategy Formulation course, you learned about the foundations of corporate success and how managers can devise a set of actions (the strategy) to achieve a competitive edge. Strategy development, at a fundamental level, is to identify an effective match between a firm's distinctive capabilities and selected markets.

This course takes a new look at strategy formulation/implementation: we will focus on a firm's key operational and technological decisions (e.g., processes, capacities, technologies, process improvement, project management, supply chains) in order to understand how effective the firm's resulting operational capabilities (e.g., cost, quality, flexibility, delivery) match the markets it strives to serve.

We plan to discuss the role of technology, vertical integration (or disintegration), supply contracts, speed on retailing strategy. How to serve bottom of pyramid customers? How to create and develop a sustainable supplier base? What shall a firm do within its organizational boundaries and what it should let others do? How should a firm distribute its product and how a firm's distribution strategy enhances (or limits) its global reach? How should a direct selling model or brick-and-mortar model transition towards e-tailing or omnichannel? These are some of the questions we plan to address through cases and company visits.

We will also consider how to translate a business strategy into a set of actions and how these actions can be measured and supported for continuous improvements. However, given shifting market trends and evolving industry dynamics, a short-term match between capabilities and current markets does not necessarily imply a sustainable competitive advantage. What operational and technological capabilities a firm chooses to develop can have a profound impact on strategic options in the future for retailers. In other words, strategic operational decisions made today will determine a retailer's operational capabilities tomorrow which in turn influence its business strategy in the future. Consequently, we will also try to emphasize the long-term impact of strategic operational and technological decisions on evolution of retail strategy.

We will typically have classes in the morning and visit facilities to illustrate the deployment of technology and operations strategy concepts in the afternoons.

Deliverables:

The class will be divided into teams of five to six members. Each team will be responsible for preparing and delivering to the class a seven to ten-minute presentation on their assigned topic. The focus of interest may be one of the company we visit or a topic in retail strategy that is of interest to the group. In addition, the class participants need to complete the appropriate poll before discussion of the case in class.

Possible Cases:

Natura
Benetton
Frogtech
Bharati Airtel
Amazon
My Macy's
Lolita

Possible Visits/Presentations

Macy's
IBM
GILT
Brooks Brothers
Fresh Direct

Grading:

Your grade in the course will be based on your individual as well as group efforts and performance. Your performance will be judged through a variety of mechanisms that will enable us to assess your understanding of the tools and concepts covered your ability to synthesize, integrate, and apply them, and your contributions to the class's learning experience. Thus, in determining your course grade, we will use the following grading scheme to help us judge your performance:

Class Participation	40%
Team Presentation	30%
Participation in Poll	20%