UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

International Business

2425-2-F7702M063

Learning objectives

1. To get a good feeling of the important influence of contextual differences on international business & marketing.
2. To understand the unique challenges and processes implied in marketing across borders.
3. To be able to analyse real-life and actual international business/ marketing opportunities and problems and build on best practices to tackle them.
4. To reason on the best entry mode for entering a new country.
5. To reflect on the standardization/centralization – adaptation/decentralization debate.
6. To work out a positioning and an international marketing mix.
7. To understand the core theoretical frames regarding global competitiveness and global marketing/strategy.

Contents

Global strategy and global marketing are quite challenging. It is “doing business across and beyond borders”. This implies companies face lots of challenges when operating in international markets. Inhibitors might block their international expansion objectives. Even multinationals have experienced several international blunders. Most companies are also concerned about whether the world is really that global that borders will disappear. In other words, they want to know if differences in cultural and market factors will persist in the future.
Global managers experience a huge impact of political, legal, and social changes, creating uncertainties on their global strategies. Typical tensions arise in global and globalizing companies along the poles of standardization of the business/marketing approach across countries versus adaptation to each country’s unique characteristics, as well as centralization versus decentralization of decision-making.
During this course we will look at triggers, inhibitors, capabilities, processes, concepts, strategies, and outcomes which might be considered essential for any manager or company operating ‘abroad’ in this globalized world. Parallel with the classes runs a project in which the core analytical frames of the classes will be applied.

Detailed program

Aligning with the structure of the book, the course is divided in five parts:

1. The decision to internationalize
2. Deciding which markets to enter
3. Market entry strategies
4. Designing the global marketing program
5. Implementing and organizing

In the first part, during the first lectures, the motivations for internationalization and foundational concepts are introduced. We focus also on barriers and success factors, and on the theories behind internationalization. Global business is described. In the next set of lectures, the international competitiveness of companies and nations is studied. The strategic drivers of international competitiveness are deeply studied such as value innovation and (digital) servitization. A strategy perspective on internationalization will be developed. In the second part, we decipher market selection in internationalization. The international environment, international marketing research and frames for country selection will be discussed.

The third part looks at entry strategies, that is, once the company has decided to enter additional international markets, it will have to select the most appropriate approach for entering the market. We study in-depth the different strategies to do this (called entry modes) and bring to the fore the reasoning behind choosing the best approach to tap the market potential of a foreign market.
The fourth part introduces which components of the marketing-mix to use as levers to realize the market entry and expansion in the targeted foreign market. The question which elements need adaptation and which remain standardized across markets is a core issue at this stage. The concluding, fifth part looks at organizational and human capital issues to underscore the above developed strategies.

Prerequisites

Students should have followed a marketing principles and/or marketing management course of minimally 6 CTS in order to have the necessary foundation for the Global Marketing course.
Students should have followed a strategic management or corporate strategy course of minimally 6 CTS in order to have the necessary foundation for the Global Strategy course.
Given the number of scientific articles and the English-language book used, it is required to have fluency of English.

Teaching methods

Classes are interactive whether online (OL) or in aula (F2F). We will do our utmost to record the theoretical classes and make these available for post-class viewing. The interactive case discussion and coaching sessions will not be recorded for privacy reasons. On-line format classes run via the Webex platform. Although the majority of the classes are ‘in aula’ (‘in presence’) part of this course will be thought in online modus (‘from a distance’). This is due to the scarcity of aulas [provoked by the restructuring of some buildings]. All classes contain a balanced mixture of interactive teaching by the professor, little videos and cases to be discussed, and applications in group or subgroups, followed by a plenaryreporting and discussion.
The students following both the Global Marketing and the Global Strategy parts participate in a large application project, called the *Duel* task, i.e. a battle between two listed companies. This larger application follows the structure of the course and entails the application of the core frameworks and concepts of each part of the course in a real-life setting. The work implies a weekly application of these concepts and frames based on secundary data (Internet

search followed by interpretation). The students which follow either GM-only or GS-only have a minor application that is clearly more limited in scope. A separate note with the briefing will be provided.
Students that do not follow the classes can apply the concepts on their own organization.

Assessment methods

Oral "closed book' exam. The content to be studied refers to the book Hollensen, Svend, 2020 8th edition), and slides, case studies, readings and videos provided via the electronic learning system from Bicocca. The exam questions are quite open and are more application- and argumentation-oriented than on memory and replication. One application-question will be prepared at home and submitted before the exam and discussed at the oral exam (one-fifth of the evaluation). Also counting one-fifth in the final evaluation is the application project (discussed before).

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Hollensen, Svend (2020), Global Marketing, Harlow, UK, Pearson, 8th edition, ISBN: 978-1-292-25180-6 (print), 978-1-292-25182-0 (ePub) (recommended e-version that can be rented, see a.o., https://www.vitalsource.com/en-uk/referral?term=9781292251820).
Besides, all slides used in class and selected academic articles of the Professors referred to in classes, and provided on e-learning, will be required examination material.

Semester

First semester

Teaching language

English

Sustainable Development Goals

INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE | RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION | PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS