UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Management and Strategic Choices

2627-1-F6303M004

Learning objectives

The course aims at providing participants with advanced analytical and managerial tools, with a specific focus on the services sector.

Knowledge and Understanding
Students acquire an in-depth knowledge of models and theories of strategic management in services, with particular attention to the specific characteristics of public and private service companies. The course provides mastery of theoretical and conceptual tools to analyze market contexts, competitive dynamics, and strategic choices in the service sectors. The theoretical component is complemented by national and international case studies, films, and testimonials to facilitate conceptual understanding through concrete examples.

Ability to Apply Knowledge and Understanding
Students are required to develop practical group projects, such as evaluating an existing service, proposing a new service, or analyzing real mini-cases. These projects include data collection and analysis, questionnaire design, formulation of managerial recommendations, and, in some cases, the development of economic-financial simulations. The course encourages the ability to design business strategies, assess service performance, and implement innovative solutions in real-world contexts.

Autonomy of Judgment
Through the analysis of complex cases, students are expected to formulate critical judgments on strategic alternatives and propose well-reasoned solutions, evaluating pros and cons. In-class discussions, feedback from instructors on projects, and simulations support the development of independent evaluation skills in business and management decision-making.

Communication Skills
Students must present group projects orally in front of peers and instructors, developing the ability to communicate clearly, concisely, and effectively. Interactive lectures and case discussions foster active participation and debate.

Learning Skills

The course includes self-managed activities such as individual readings, case study analysis, and the development of field projects. It encourages the ability to learn from feedback, multimedia educational materials, and hands-on experimentation in business environments.

STRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF SERVICES

The first part aims to recall a selection of fundamental management concepts and models, so as to build an adequate knowledge base for the topics that will follow. The subsequent parts center on services and their different features relative to goods, by focusing on the approach that is required in services analysis and design, and finally by developing the concepts and models that are needed to define competitive strategies in the services sector. Theoretical lessons are combined with cases and incidents discussions.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF SERVICES

The module explores some specific issues related to the management of services. In particular the module will develop the analysis of positioning and marketing mix choices in the services market, internationalization on global markets and innovation and strategic change strategies. In particular, we will seek to answer the following questions: what are the marketing tools that can be used to build and strengthen the relationship with customers? How do you build sustainable success today? How can we promote and manage innovation in services? How can a service company replicate its success in international markets? How can a service company manage turnaround strategies aimed at bringing it back to a profitable growth path?

Contents

The course “Management and Strategic Choices” is structured in two modules: “Strategic Analysis of Services” and “Strategic Management of Services”.

A balanced and complete approach to managing services’ quality requires a perspective that focuses both on hard and soft services features. Some examples of hard features that directly impact on the customer’s experience are reductions in waiting or delivery time, while soft features are intangible and tacit features such as personnel attitude.

Both aspects have a reciprocal influence, and should therefore be taken into account both in the service package, and in service delivery and management strategies.

Detailed program

STRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF SERVICES

1. Fundamentals of Management

? Models of analysis

? Conditions for business development

? Critical strategic choices and players

2. Services analysis and design

? Design and management of the services process

? Services performance evaluation

3. Competitive strategies in services

? What is strategy

? Environmental analysis (competitive system/segmentation)

? Positioning and competitive choices

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF SERVICES

4. Service process evaluation

5. Market segmentation and positioning

6. Service marketing

? Customers behavior analysis

? Services marketing mix and customer relationship

7. Globalization and international strategies in services

8. Innovation management in services

Prerequisites

Fairly good skills in learning, writing and speaking, together with a general knowledge of economic processes.

Fundamentals of management.

Teaching methods

The course consists of 96 hours, of which approximately 50% consisting of frontal lessons (using slides, audio and video) and 50% of interactive teaching (group projects, discussion of case studies, exercises, sessions of design thinking).

Assessment methods

Mode 1 - GROUP PROJECT + EXAM
For students who choose this method, the assessment will be structured as follows: written test on the contents of the first module (30 points), written test on the contents of the second module (30 points), group project (40).

Mode 2 - EXAMINATION ON BASIC TEXTS AND ADDITIONAL TEXTS
The written examination will take place at the regular examination dates and will be based on the lectures and assigned readings (BASIC TEXTS + ADDITIONAL TEXTS - see below). It comprises open questions in which, in addition to models and theories, an analysis of a case or article assigned in the examination (January and February call) or of the cases discussed in the classroom (all other calls) is required.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Hoffman K. D., Bateson J. E. G., Marketing dei servizi, Pearson Prentice-Hall, 2025.
Handouts, readings and cases in electronic format available on the e-learning platform.

ADDITIONAL TEXTS (MODE 2)
? D. Cavenago, E.Marafioti, Management e design dei servizi. Strumenti e percorsi di analisi e progettazione innovativa condivisa. ESTE Cultura d'Impresa. 2019 ISSN:978-88-98053-34-6.
? The following articles are accessible through the electronic resources of the University Library::

- Virtanen, P., & Jalonen, H. (2023). Public value creation mechanisms in the context of public service logic: an integrated conceptual framework. Public Management Review, 26(8), 2331–2354.
- Osborne, SP, Powell, M, Cui, T & Strokosch, K (2022), 'Value creation in the public service ecosystem: An integrative framework', Public Administration Review, vol. 82, no. 4, pp. 634-645.
- Wilson, R., French, M., Hesselgreaves, H., Lowe, T., & Smith, M. (2024). New development: Relational public services—reform and research agenda. Public Money & Management, 44(6), 553–558.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH | INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE | RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION