



APPLIES TO ACADEMIC YEAR 2013/2014

GRA 6436 Managing Business-to-Business Relationships

Programme

Master of Science in Business (Marketing), Master of Science in Strategic Marketing Management, Specialization Course

Responsible for the course

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Department

Department of Marketing

Term

According to study plan

ECTS Credits

6

Language of instruction

English

Introduction

Most firms have at least some involvement in business-to-business (B2B) marketing. By some estimates, between half and two thirds of all transactions in a developed economy take place in B2B relationships and more than half of all employment in most countries is found in B2B markets. B2B sourcing of products and services typically represent more than fifty percent of a company's total costs and more than ninety percent of e-commerce is B2B. Importantly, the structure of total value added to the economy has changed considerably over recent decades. For example, in most OECD countries the share of industry has fallen while services now account for well over sixty percent of total gross value added. Notably, the majority of service value added is B2B. Also, among what we typically consider as "industry value chains" (as introduced by Michael Porter), we see major changes. For example, what does it mean that more than sixty percent of Fortune 100 firms offer solutions rather than pre-developed goods and services? How can we understand value creation and claiming in such business-to-business relationships? How should managers develop marketing strategies for such companies? This course is designed to answer these and other strategic marketing questions.

Learning outcome

This course is designed to provide an introduction to the area of business-to-business relationships in marketing, with an emphasis on understanding the processes of value creation and value claiming in B2B-relationships. It will identify, review, evaluate and critique a variety of topics in the area. Considerable emphasis will also be placed on strategies for conducting empirical research on business-to-business marketing (e.g., as it relates to the thesis).

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Describe the nature, structure, and distinguishing characteristics of B2B markets.
2. Show how marketing creates value for the B2B firm and its business customers.
3. Understand how value is created by identifying and solving problems.
4. Evaluate market opportunities and effectively segment a B2B market.
5. Show how firms involved in B2B relationships can design governance structures that give incentives to create value and ensure efficient ways of distributing the value created between the parties.
6. Design effective marketing strategies for new and existing B2B products and services.

While we will draw on a number of different streams of work, the course is organized around my idiosyncratic perspective of business-to-business relationships. This course is not intended to be a comprehensive review of the literature. I have purposely restricted the required readings in order to dig deeply into each. A list of recommended readings will be provided.

Prerequisites

See study plan. It is assumed that every student is familiar with the general principles of research design, measurement, and multivariate statistical analysis.

Compulsory reading

Other:

A list of articles from journals as well as book chapters will be provided. The journals include e.g., Journal of Economics and Management Strategy, Journal of Marketing, Journal of Marketing Research, Organization Science, Academy of Management Review, Strategic Management Journal, Harvard Business Review, Marketing Theory, The Journal of Law and Economics, Review of Marketing Research, Journal of Law

Economics and Organization. The book chapters are amongst other from the Handbook of Business-to-Business Marketing and from various textbooks in B2B marketing and organizational economics.

A list of cases will also be provided. The cases may have to be bought from international databases such as European Case Clearing House, or Harvard Business Press. The cases will either be discussed in class or may be required for completing some of the assignments.

During the course there may be hand-outs and other material on additional topics relevant for the course and the examination.

Recommended reading

Other:

An extensive list of recommended articles will also be provided on most of the topics in the course. The list consists of both old classics as well as cutting edge research from top journals.

Course outline

This course is divided into four sections.

In the first section we introduce the topic of the course, and what distinguishes B2B marketing from consumer marketing.

In the second section, we discuss the role of value creation in B2B relationships, and how firms can create value through identifying and solving valuable problems through B2B-relationships, how firms can segment B2B markets and formulate value propositions.

In the third section we elaborate on how firms can create efficient governance structures, such as incentive systems, relational contracts, and formal contracts, and thereby claim the values they create in B2B relationships.

In the fourth section we discuss how firms can develop marketing strategies for both value creation and value claiming.

A detailed schedule with dates will be distributed during the first meeting.

Computer-based tools

It's learning

Learning process and workload

A course of 6 ECTS credits corresponds to a workload of 160-180 hours.

A set of required readings will be assigned for each meeting. The readings will be a mix of scientific articles and case descriptions. Students are expected to thoroughly read and analyze all of the required readings prior to each meeting. My own style is to combine some lecture time with discussion time.

I may ask students to prepare discussion questions for specific readings. Depending on the number of course participants students may be asked to prepare discussion questions for more than one meeting. A copy of the questions should be distributed to each of the course participants prior to the meeting (TBD). The discussion leader(s) will have the responsibilities of leading the discussion and summarizing and synthesizing the readings with some brief closing remarks.

To a large extent, the value of this course will depend on the students' level of preparation and participation in the discussion. Course credit will be given based on quality of class participation, hand-in assignments, and a written exam (see Evaluation below).

If students have to miss class on a particular day, it is the students' responsibility to get notes from a classmate. Let me know as soon as possible if you have to miss a class.

During the semester, if students experience any problem(s) with the class or any of the classmates I expect the students to report any problem(s) that they are not able to resolve themselves to me as soon as possible.

In this course class attendance is not mandatory. However, unexcused absence will result in a lower participation grade.

Please note that it is the student's own responsibility to obtain any information provided in class that is not included on the course homepage/It's learning or text book.

Examination

The course grade will be determined on the following basis:

- 40% - Written assignments
- 20% - Class participation
- 40% - Written exam (3 hours)

Students will be required to complete four different assignments during the course. The assignments can be written as a group project, with groups consisting of no more than three members. The assignments may also be completed on an individual basis. The assignments will be posted on It's learning 14 days before each deadline. Several of the assignments will require extensive use of spreadsheet analyses, for example using Microsoft Excel's Solver. Deadlines for handing in the assignments will be provided once the course has started. Each assignment should be no more than 3 pages long.

Class-participation is based on both the quantity and quality of participation in class discussions. However, sheer quantity of comments, with little depth or relevance to the focal issues, will not be rewarded (although not punished).

Note also that the topics we deal with in assignments and in class discussions are highly relevant for the final exam, so that working well with the assignments and prepare well for class discussions, also implies good preparation for the exam.

Specific information regarding student evaluation beyond the information given in the course description will be provided in class. This information may be relevant for requirements for class-participation, the assignments or the written exam.

This is a course with continuous assessment (several exam elements) and one final exam code. Each exam element will be graded using points on a scale (e.g. 0-100). The elements will be weighted together according to the information in the course description in order to calculate the final letter grade for the course. You will find detailed information about the point system and the cut-off points with reference to the letter grades on the course site in It's learning.

Examination code(s)

GRA 64361 continuous assessment accounts for 100% of the final grade in the course GRA 6436.

Examination support materials

A bilingual dictionary for the written exam

Exam aids at written examinations are explained under exam information in the student portal @bi. Please note use of calculator and dictionary in the section on examaids

Re-sit examination

It is only possible to retake an examination when the course is next taught.

The assessment in some courses is based on more than one exam code.

Where this is the case, you may retake only the assessed components of one of these exam codes.

Where this is not the case, all of the assessed components of the course must be retaken.

All retaken examinations will incur an additional fee.

Additional information

Honor Code

Academic honesty and trust are important to all of us as individuals, and represent values that are encouraged and promoted by the honor code system. This is a most significant university tradition. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the ideals of the honor code system, to which the faculty are also deeply committed.

Any violation of the honor code will be dealt with in accordance with BI's procedures for cheating. These issues are a serious matter to everyone associated with the programs at BI and are at the heart of the honor code and academy integrity. If you have any questions about your responsibilities under the honor code, please ask.