Retail Strategy
MKTG-UB.88.001
Fall 2022: Wednesdays, September 7 – October 19, 6:20 – 9:00pm

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Marketing Department   Classroom   TBD
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Course Description & Objectives

This course is designed to provide students with an understanding of the forces that shape the increasingly competitive and rapidly evolving retail industry. We will explore the demographic, economic, competitive and technological developments that are transforming the marketplace as well as how parameters impact consumer behavior and the effectiveness of retailers' business models. As retailing is constantly evolving due to new entrants and the use of technology, accelerated by the recent pandemic, we will explore what defines success for new players and failure for those now losing market share.

By the end of this course students will be able to:
- o Analyze retailers' customer and competitive positioning
- o Evaluate retail concepts and their performance across formats and value propositions
- o Understand the fundamentals of retail operations and strategy
- o Use tools used by equity analysts when valuing retail companies

Course Materials

Classes will be highly interactive, referencing several case studies and supplemental reading materials:

A reader containing **Harvard Business Cases** will be accessible through the Harvard Business Cases website. A link will be provided for you on Brightspace along with articles and book excerpts used for the course.

Guest speakers will be announced at the beginning of the semester and **supplemental reading** will be recommended to provide background for discussion.

Additional references may also be found in this text, which is optional.
Fisher, Marshall & Ananth Raman. *The New Science of Retailing*, Harvard Business Press, 2010

Grading

1. **Class participation** (**30%**)   Students are expected to attend all classes in-person and contribute to discussion. Students should exhibit critical thinking and an understanding of course material while also encouraging the participation of others through a high-level of engagement. Quality contributions and insights including asking thoughtful questions of guest speakers or sharing unique perspective.

2. **Case analysis and discussion** (**30%**)   Students will be asked to analyze three cases to be discussed in class, along with a brief written evaluation addressing critical questions provided by the course instructor. Thoughtful answers should include references to the case, public sources, and store visits.

3. **Quiz** (**10%**)   Students will take a brief quiz half-way through the semester to demonstrate critical thinking and an understanding of key concepts covered in the first few sessions.

4. **Final assignment** (**30%**)   Students will divide into self-selected case groups of three. Each group will select a retailer from a list provided by the course instructor and will prepare a strategic analysis along with potential growth opportunities to be presented to a panel of experts in the final class session.

   Final presentations will be evaluated on:
   a. Thoroughness of information sources leveraged for analysis
   b. Breadth and depth of assessment of the retailer
   c. Level of insight developed from the evaluations
   d. Methods used to determine growth opportunities
   e. Conclusions reached and recommendations proposed

Instructor
Becky Abtalion is a fashion retail executive focused on the digital space. She has worked for some of the largest best-in-class brands and retailers in the world, including Ralph Lauren, Louis Vuitton, and Macy's. After starting her career as a department store merchant, she transitioned into general management for e-commerce in both direct-to-consumer and

wholesale. In her current role at Ralph Lauren, she is responsible for securing lead online positioning for the brand with top retailers across North America.

Becky received her MBA from Stern in 2016 through the Langone program. Focusing on luxury marketing and international business, she also spent a semester abroad at SDA Bocconi in Milan.

Detailed Course Outline
Class 1:   Identifying retail market trends and KPIs
Introduce the course and discuss structure of retail industry including types of retailers, market segments and channels, evolving market trends, the retail life cycle, and KPI analysis.

Recommended Reading: TBD articles about current market trends

Class 2:   Evaluating retail performance
Provide an overview of the key financial metrics used by equity analysts to evaluate the health of a retailer and the internal metrics used by retail executives to monitor the day-to-day business.

Recommended Reading: TBD Recent Earnings Report for one of select retailers

Guest Speaker TBD (45-minute discussion about investor relations)

Class 3:   Formulating strategy in retailing
Discuss strategic positioning and execution, customer segmentation, merchandising strategy, and key points of differentiation.

Required Reading & Assignment: TBD Harvard Business Case + 3 questions for discussion

Guest Speaker TBD (45-minute discussion about retailer positioning)

Class 4:   Capitalizing on e-Commerce
Highlight the importance of digital commerce in the retail landscape, discuss the advent and evolution of pureplayers and digital natives, and set framework for omni-channel.

Required Reading & Assignment: TBD Harvard Business Case + 3 questions for discussion

Guest Speaker TBD (45-minute discussion about digital)

Class 5:   Optimizing supply chain and omni-channel
Demonstrate how advances in inventory management and technology drive connectivity across channels, increase speed-to-market, and deliver higher service levels and productivity.

Required Assignment: Visit a website and a brick & mortar location of the same retailer to identify the touchpoints for sharing of inventory across channels

In-class Quiz: 30-minute critical thinking prompt + short answer questions

Class 6:   Forecasting the future of retailing
Dive into innovation in the retail space and consider what will become the store of the future, including new store formats, connectivity with customers, unique services, and increased efficiencies.

Required Reading & Assignment: TBD Harvard Business Case + 3 questions for discussion

Guest Speaker TBD (45-minute discussion about innovation)

Class 7:   Final Presentations
Each group to present their strategic analysis and recommended growth opportunities to be to a panel of experts.

Required Assignment: Final presentation PPT Slides, including notes, due 24 hours before class

Guest Panelists TBD