

Week 1

1. Suppliers and exclusive channel distribution

An exclusive channel distribution agreement is arguably one of the smoothest. It is where Suppliers make agreements with one or a few retailers that designate the latter as the only ones in specified geographic areas to carry certain brands or products. This stimulates both parties to work together to maintain an image, assign shelf space, allot profits and costs and advertise. Requires that retailers limit their brand selection in the specified product lines, decline handling other suppliers' brands. A supplier might opt for exclusive channel distribution with retailers as a means of building a loyal, and mutually beneficial relationship. Furthermore, exclusive channel distribution might be the supplier's preference as supplying a low number of retailers inevitably leads to reduced instances of conflict at the retail level which may help the product sell through more successfully, contributing to a win-win situation. This may also be a strategic decision for the supplier in that they may wish to align themselves with certain retailers that share a similar brand message or are perceived similarly by consumers.

2. Intensive distribution strategies

If a manufacturer wants to sell their products in the maximum number of retail outlets, they are likely pursuing an intensive distribution strategy which is taken to be the most volatile. It is where a supplier sells through as many retailers as possible and therefore, this maximises a suppliers' sales and lets retailers offer many brands and product versions. They may wish to do this as a means of achieving greater brand awareness, exposure and traction. It may also be a strategic decision to ensure their products reach the maximum number of consumers to enhance instances of trial and subsequent loyal customer relationships. This takes into consideration factors such as location and accessibility.

However, this may not always a good idea given there is high levels of conflict and competition that arise when consumers are able to access a product in a number of different retailers. It may also contribute to a convoluted or confused brand message or image and retailers may use tactics that are not as beneficial to individual suppliers, because they are more concerned about their own results. Accordingly, they may assign little space to specific brands, set very high prices on them and not advertise them.

3. Total Retail Experience

The retail, or total retail experience encompasses the combination of all of the elements of a retailer's offerings that impact the overall experience a customer has with that retailer. This may include factors such as additional services provided i.e. gift wrapping or receiving a free gift with purchase, the store ambience and lighting or even the visual merchandising of the store that combine to create the overall retail experience.

OR the total retail experience includes all the elements in a retail offering that encourage or inhibit consumers during their contact or journey with the retailers. Many elements such as the number of

salespeople, displays, prices, brand names, mobile app or web page design, accurate product and pricing information and inventory on hand are controllable by a retailer. Others such as adequacy of parking, the speed of a consumers' internet connection and sales taxes are not.

Week 2

1. Controllable and uncontrollable variables - Amazon

Controllable elements are those that can directly affect, and uncontrollable elements are those to which the retailer must adapt. Controllable elements include factors such as store location, management style, merchandise management and pricing and communication activities through promotion. For Amazon, they can choose their pricing, choose where they deliver to, choose the location of their warehouses, choose their preferred modes of communication and choose the way the stock is laid out on their website. Contrastingly, uncontrollable variables include consumers themselves, the competition or competitive nature of the industry, technological advancements and changes, economic conditions, seasonality, legal restrictions and other macro factors. For Amazon, the uncontrollable variables that may influence their success are the consumers themselves as they cannot be influenced to purchase anything as they have free will. Furthermore, for the most part, Amazon cannot influence the competitive landscape in which they operate, nor can they influence border control, seasonality changes that impact consumer behaviour and preferences, technological advancements requiring adaptations or any legal restrictions that are formally in place

2. Strategic planning's benefits

A strategic plan is a framework of action that guides a retailer. The strategic plan includes a situation analysis, objectives, identification of consumers, an outline of a firm's overall strategy and specific activities and a discussion surrounding contingency planning, evaluation and adjustment. Strategic planning is attractive as it provides a thorough analysis of the requirements for doing business for different retailers alongside helping a firm to finetune their goals and mission. Furthermore, it allows retailers to determine how to best differentiate themselves from competitors, as well as developing offerings that appeal to target consumers. Additionally, strategic planning is attractive or beneficial as it offers an analysis of the legal, economic and competitive environment and forces retailers to think about the uncontrollable variables that they need to adapt to and control for. Lastly, it provides for the coordination of a firm's total efforts, including its preferred allocation of resources and encourages anticipation and contingency planning in anticipation for potential crises that may arise.

3. Using SWOT

Opportunities are marketplace openings that exist because other retailers have not yet capitalised on them, whilst threats are environmental and marketplace factors that can adversely affect retailers if they do not react to them. One of the tools that a retailer can use in identifying and quantifying or ranking the