

MKT 622 (6220)

Country Manager

Introduction

Computer-based simulations are a highly effective tool for learning and applying business concepts. They allow students to engage with the complexity and realism of making business decision-making within the structured environment of the classroom.

In this course, students will apply their theoretical and conceptual knowledge of marketing strategy and international marketing in a hands-on learning experience. The course centers on *Country Manager*, a computer-assisted management simulation that addresses key challenges that companies face when planning and executing market entry into new countries. Through the simulation, students take on the role of a category manager for a major consumer goods company, allowing them to engage directly with the complexities of international marketing decision-making.

This course is taught as a 1-day seminar on the 15. or 22. October from 8.45 am to approx. 4.30 pm.

General Information



Lecturer	Prof. Dr. Sabine Kuester
Course Format	Computer simulation
Credit Points	2 ECTS
Frequency	1h kick-off session, 1 day seminar
Language	English
Grading	1. Simulation Performance (50%) 2. Strategy Report (25%) 3. Final Report (25%)
Exam Date	No formal exam
Term	Fall semester
Range of Application	M.Sc. MMM, M.Sc. MMBR, M.Sc. Bus. Edu., M.Sc. Bus. Inf., M.A. K&W, M.Sc. Econ., LL.M.

The kick-off session will take place on **15 September 2026, from 13:45 – 15:15 pm**. Attendance at both the kick-off session and the simulation session is mandatory. For the *Country Manager* simulation, students will collaborate in small groups.

Please note: This is a graduate-level marketing course. This course is not suitable for students without prior exposure to marketing. It is strongly recommended that participants have completed at least one course in international marketing and/or marketing strategy.

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Course Registration & Organization

Enrolment in this course is mandatory due to limited capacity. The application process is managed through the student Portal².

After successful enrollment, we will assign students to a simulation team. We will communicate the team allocation during the kick-off session. For organizational reasons, team switching is not possible.

Country Manager Simulation

Played from the perspective of a domestic manufacturer of consumer products determined to expand into Latin American markets, Country Manager encompasses the international dimensions of marketing and business. Students experience market entry and expansion as a category manager for Allstar Brands, a major consumer products company. The U.S. market has matured, and Latin America has been identified as having the best potential for future growth. The brand management team must decide which of six pre-selected Latin-American countries is most attractive for their Allsmile brand and how to expand their presence throughout the region. The team can develop and implement local or regional strategies using customized and/or standardized marketing programs. Countries being considered for expansion include Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela.

The Country Manager simulation will allow students to explore the following topics in an interactive and engaging environment:

- *Market Entry:* Which markets to enter? In what order? At what time? How to determine a country's attractiveness and market potential?
- *Type and Mode of Entry:* Local production versus exporting? distribution through a company sales organization versus indirect wholesales? managing types and modes of entry over time.
- *Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning:* Which segments to target? How to position brands for the chosen segments?
- *Product Management:* Global product, adapted product, or local product? How to choose appropriate products for a market from an existing set?
- *Pricing:* Pricing to meet local market conditions or multi-country pricing consistency? Pricing for profit? Grey market impact of large across-market price differences.
- *Advertising and Promotion:* Using standardized home country ads or developing local campaigns (cost and customer trade-offs)? Allocating budget across advertising and other promotional expenditures. Different advertising and promotional objectives across markets.
- *Distribution:* In addition to the mode of entry issues raised above, decisions will be made about allocating sales force to types of accounts, implying the relative emphasis on channels.

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Your decisions on these issues will be incorporated into a computer-simulated market to reveal how both you and your competition performed. Decisions cover a time span of 7 to 8 simulated years, allowing you to observe both your decisions' short-term and long-term effects.

Reading the provided simulation manual is mandatory to prepare for the simulation. Well-prepared students benefit the most from their simulation experience, and good grades correlate with good preparation.

Performance Assessment

The course has the following grading components:

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|---------------------------|------|
| 1. Simulation Performance | 50%* |
| 2. Strategy Report | 25%* |
| 3. Final Report | 25%* |

*We will conduct a peer rating to minimize team free-riding or to reward students with above-average team effort. For this peer rating, each team member will evaluate the performance of all other team members. Team members with consistently higher/lower group evaluations will receive a higher/lower grade than the rest of the team.

Course Material: For this course, you will need to purchase a reader which contains the simulation manual. Readers will be sent to you digitally after the kick-off. The cost for the reader will be 12 Euros which mostly subsidizes the license fees for the Country Manager simulation.

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1. Simulation Performance

Team performance in the simulation forms the basis for this grade. Evaluation is not based on a single metric but on the overall quality and sustainability of the team's results over the full 7–8 simulated years. We assess both what the team achieved (the core financial and brand outcomes) and how it was achieved (the soundness of the underlying strategy and the company's position at the close of play). Note that short-term gains achieved at the expense of the company's long-term health will lower the grade.

Grading criteria for Simulation Performance:

1. Core performance indicators: Quantitative results across the simulation, measured primarily by brand equity, cumulative contribution, and cumulative sales.
2. Long-term competitiveness & future prosperity: The overall situation and competitiveness of the company at the end of the simulation, judged on whether the team leaves the business in a healthy, defensible position. Sacrificing future viability for last-period results (e.g., reducing the company's assets to inflate revenues) will hurt the grade.
3. Strategic coherence & decision quality: The consistency and logic of decisions across periods, the degree to which they reflect a clear and deliberate strategy, and the quality of the team's responses to evolving market conditions and competitor moves.
4. Teamwork & collaboration during the simulation: The quality of the team's collaboration over the simulation day, including how effectively members divided responsibilities, integrated different perspectives into joint decisions, and worked through disagreements under time pressure. Well-organized teams that leverage all members' input and maintain a structured decision-making process are rewarded over those where effort is uneven or decisions are made ad hoc.

The simulation will take place on either **15 or 22 October, from 8:45 am to approximately 4:30 pm, in Pool-Room 358 (L7, 3–5)**. Your specific date depends on your assigned group.

You will have the opportunity to play practice rounds before the simulation day to familiarize yourself with the simulation interface.

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2. Written Assignment: Strategy Outline

Each group must write a strategy outline representing the road map for the first round of the simulation. Even though we only ask you to submit your **strategy report for Year 1**, we recommend that you make decisions about your international marketing strategy (your strategic thrust) for your entire endeavor in Latin America. **Before working on your strategy outline, it is necessary to read the Country Manager manual.** The goal is to determine which strategy you want to set and how to implement it (i.e., what decisions you will need to make) in order to best explore the opportunities of the Latin American market. This outline must not exceed 2 pages of text and should be 12pt Times New Roman single-spaced. You may add as many exhibits as you like. All exhibits, however, must be referred to in your text.

Organize your strategy outline as follows:

1. Cover Sheet with group number, members' names, country/countries you plan to enter, date, and course name.
2. Problem statement and introduction.
3. Situation analysis (opportunities and threats).
4. Market entry (which country/which countries to enter first).
5. Market segmentation and target marketing strategy (for the country/countries you enter first).
6. Positioning and marketing mix strategies (for the country/countries you plan to enter first).

Grading criteria for Strategy Outline:

1. Situation analysis & use of information: Demonstrates a clear understanding of the company, customers, competitors, and market context.
2. Clarity of strategic objectives & target segments: Defines explicit, realistic objectives (e.g., growth, profitability, positioning) and clearly specifies which segments the team intends to target, and why.
3. Coherence of positioning & marketing strategy: Presents a consistent and well-reasoned positioning and links this positioning to planned marketing mix decisions.
4. Structure, argumentation & writing quality: The outline is logically structured, concise, within the page limit, and easy to follow. Arguments are supported with evidence or clear reasoning.

Please submit the strategy outline by **09 October 2026, before 12:00 pm** (noon) at the latest via ILIAS under the respective task.

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3. Written Assignment: Final Report

Each group has to submit a final presentation describing the team's performance and learning during the simulation. The report must include 3 main slides (+1 slide cover page). You may add as many exhibits as you like. All exhibits, however, must be referred to in your main slides.

Organize your final report as follows:

1. Cover Sheet with group number, members' names, countries you entered, order of entry, date and course name.
2. Slide 1: Description of your group's success in implementing your original strategy and revisions that you made.
3. Slide 2: Performance overview.
4. Slide 3: What you learned about being a country manager for a company expanding internationally.
5. Your appendix should include the following company performance information (last period only): Net income, product contributions (for each product), brand awareness (for each product), market share (manufacturer sales), customer satisfaction, marketing efficiency index, and stock price.

Grading criteria for Final Report:

1. Implementation and adaptation of the strategy: Clearly explains how the original strategy was implemented, which adjustments were made over time, and why. Discusses major decisions, trade-offs, and critical turning points in a structured way.
2. Performance analysis and use of metrics: Provides a concise and insightful overview of performance (e.g., sales, profit, market share, key cost drivers). Interprets the numbers (what they mean and why they evolved as they did), rather than just listing them.
3. Learning outcomes: hard & soft skills: Distinguishes between hard-skill learnings and soft-skill learnings. Reflections are specific, honest, and clearly linked to the simulation experience.
4. Structure, visual clarity & professionalism: Slides are visually clear (not overloaded), logically structured, and easy to read. Exhibits are referenced in the main slides and support the story. The report complies with all formal requirements and submission deadlines.

Please submit this final report and your peer evaluation forms by **November 06, before 12:00 pm** (noon) at the latest via ILIAS under the respective task.

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Course Outline

Dates (Group 1)	Dates (Group 2)	Topic	Assignments
tbd		Exam Registration Deadline	Apply by registering for the “exam” of this course in Portal2. (This is a formal requirement so that the registrar has a record of your enrollment, however, there is no formal exam for this course.)
15 September 2026 13:45 – 15:15 pm Room: O 148		Kick-Off Session The manual sale starts afterward.	Purchase and read the Country Manager manual
09 October 2026 12:00 pm (noon)		Strategy Outline	Submit strategy outline
13 October 2026 9:00 am	20 October 2026 9:00 am	Log-in Data/ Practice Rounds	Receive log-in data, get familiar with the simulation software, and play practice rounds <i>Play practice rounds until 14./21. October 6:00 pm</i>
The practice rounds are closed.			
Please refrain from typing in any decisions, as this can jeopardize your performance.			
15 October 2026 8.45 am – 4.30 pm 358 Pool-Room (L7, 3-5)	22 October 2026 8.45 am – 4.30 pm 358 Pool-Room (L7, 3-5)	Simulation Day	Come prepared by reading the manual; mandatory attendance
06 November 2026 12:00 pm (noon)		Final Report	Submit: Final Report Peer Evaluations

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