



College of Business

Master of Business Administration Program

Master of Human Resource Management Program

MGT523 Strategic Management in a Global Environment

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GROUP PROJECT (GP) DESCRIPTION



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1. Overview

The Group Project (GP)¹ involves students making operational and strategic decisions. Students will act as a team of top managers when making these decisions. The strategy project is an integral part of a strategic management course that is offered in Summer Term to the postgraduate students as part of their studies.

This project has proved to be one of the best experiential learning experiences for the CoB students, where they should develop strategic management skills. During the project, students should carry out a rigorous analysis of a real-life company.

The GP is the final deliverable of the MGT523 Strategic Management in a Global Environment Course and allows you to immediately apply everything you have learned in the classroom. It is a comprehensive and demanding exercise that is carried out over the summer term. The goal of the project is to address and analyse an issue of particular strategic importance of a company from an executive management viewpoint.

2. Learning Objectives

The most important learning objectives of the group project are as follows:

- To give students an opportunity to apply concepts and theories of strategic management in “real world”.
- To introduce students to practical matters of strategy formulation and implementation.
- To give students an opportunity to establish concrete relationships between the concepts and methods studied during the program and current real-life strategic and managerial issues.
- To expose students to the complexity, serendipity and artistic side of strategic management and competition.
- To help students to analyze, evaluate and create strategies (including green strategies).
- To help students to develop both written and oral skills when presenting the results of their work.

¹ A Capstone Project is an assignment designed specifically to apply and showcase the skills you learned in the course.

3. Proposed Assignment Strategy

PHASE 1: CHOOSE ONE CASE COMPANY

1. **Choose one company of the list below:** The list below presents the 2019 Star Award Winners in accordance with “**Forbes Travel Guide**”. Forbes Travel Guide (https://www.forbestravelguide.com/award-winners#cmpid=forbes_HN) is the only independent, global rating system for luxury hotels, restaurants and spas. Their inspectors visit every property they rate and evaluation is based on up to 900 objective criteria. Their hotel stays span a minimum of two nights and they pay their own way. No one can buy a rating; all ratings are earned through Forbes Travel Guide objective inspection process. Forbes Travel Guide global team of inspectors are anonymous at all times, so they have the same experience as a typical guest. Forbes Travel Guide created the original Five-Star rating system in 1958.

Each group must analyse and present a different Hotel. Based on that, you need to email the name of the Hotel to me – do some information research before you select your Hotel. Sometimes spending 30 minutes doing research will save you a degree. **Companies** are available on a **first-come, first-served** basis with **NO** repeats!

	Property	Forbes Travel's Rating	Destination
1	Anantara The Palm Dubai Resort	4-Star	Dubai
2	Armani Hotel Dubai	4-Star	Dubai
3	Burj Al Arab Jumeirah	5-Star	Dubai
4	Emirates Palace	5-Star	Abu Dhabi
5	Fairmont Bab Al Bahr	4-Star	Abu Dhabi
6	Fairmont The Palm	4-Star	Dubai
7	Four Seasons Hotel Abu Dhabi at Al Maryah Island	5-Star	Abu Dhabi
8	Four Seasons Hotel Dubai International Financial Centre	5-Star	Dubai
9	Four Seasons Resort Dubai at Jumeirah Beach	5-Star	Dubai
10	Jumeirah Al Naseem	4-Star	Dubai
11	Jumeirah Al Qasr	4-Star	Dubai
12	Jumeirah at Etihad Towers	4-Star	Abu Dhabi
13	Jumeirah Mina A'Salam	4-Star	Dubai
14	JW Marriott Marquis Hotel Dubai	5-Star	Dubai
15	The Oberoi, Dubai	4-Star	Dubai
16	One&Only Royal Mirage, Dubai	4-Star	Dubai
17	One&Only The Palm	4-Star	Dubai
18	Palazzo Versace Dubai	4-Star	Dubai
19	Park Hyatt Abu Dhabi Hotel and Villas	4-Star	Abu Dhabi



20	Park Hyatt Dubai	5-Star	Dubai
21	The Ritz-Carlton Abu Dhabi, Grand Canal	5-Star	Abu Dhabi
22	The Ritz-Carlton, Dubai International Financial Centre	4-Star	Dubai
23	The Ritz-Carlton, Dubai	4-Star	Dubai
24	Rosewood Abu Dhabi	4-Star	Abu Dhabi
25	Shangri-La Hotel, Dubai	5-Star	Dubai
26	Shangri-La Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri, Abu Dhabi	4-Star	Abu Dhabi
27	Sheraton Grand Hotel, Dubai	5-Star	Dubai
28	The St. Regis Abu Dhabi / The St. Regis Saadiyat Island Resort, Abu Dhabi	4-Star	Abu Dhabi
29	The St. Regis Saadiyat Island Resort, Abu Dhabi	4-Star	Abu Dhabi
30	Taj Dubai	4-Star	Dubai
31	Waldorf Astoria Dubai Palm Jumeirah	4-Star	Dubai

2. **After selecting your company, you should visit its web site** to get market reports of this company. Secondly, go to article databases such as Infotrac, Emerald, Proquest and etc to find articles on the company. Vast majority of articles will not be usually academic, but practical. Lastly, do some Google search, BBC news and, of course, visit the company's web site.

Useful Tips:

- i. Try to find the “Guest Experience Index” for your hotel and your competitors (<https://olery.com/guest-experience-index/>)
 - ii. See: Abu Dhabi Hotel Classification Manual – Department of Culture and Tourism <https://tcaabudhabi.ae/DataFolder/Files/Hotel-Classification-System-Manual.pdf> (File is provided by the instructor on BB)
3. When writing a company-based report you would usually be expected to concentrate on practical side rather than on theory. **Good solution may be for you to give practical analysis – but refer to the theory on the appendix.**
 4. Also, please remember, that each company has its history, therefore when, for example, suggesting a new strategy for the company – always firstly analyse previous strategies on that organisation, because it is possible, that whatever you suggest may have already been used by the company.

PHASE 2: ANALYZING FIRM'S PAST PERFORMANCE AND ISSUES

Firm and Industry Performance: Analyze focal firm's performance against industry average and its key competitors. Has the company done well? Has it done better than industry average? Has it done better than the key competitors?

External Analysis: Analyze external environment of the firm over a period covered in the case. How did the industry and its attractiveness evolve? Why so? Identify key external challenges/factors that industry faced over time. How did they affect industry? What has been the nature of rivalry?

Internal Analysis: Analyze firm's internal environment. Identify key challenges facing firm in the past. Why are these key challenges? How did they affect Firm? What are the firm's key resources/activities/functional expertise? How have these resources/activities/functional expertise affected firm's relative performance?

Critical assessment of Strategy: Critically analyze firm's strategy and competitive advantage? What has it been? Has it enjoyed competitive advantage? Suffered from disadvantage? Has it been sustainable? Why so? Has it planned strategy implementation well? Has it been doing a good job of evaluation and control?

Key lessons learnt from the past: What are the key sources of competitive advantage in this industry? What are the key factors likely to affect industry and firm's performance in future?

PHASE 3: ANALYZING FIRM'S CURRENT PERFORMANCE AND ISSUES

What are the main strategic issues company is likely to face going forward? The problem statement should be a clear, concise statement of exactly what needs to be addressed. This is not easy to write! Asking your team the following questions may help:

What appears to be the problem(s) here?

How do I know that this is a problem? Note that by asking this question, you will be helping to differentiate the symptoms of the problem from the problem itself. **Example:** while declining sales or unhappy employees are a **problem** to most companies, they are in fact, **symptoms** of underlying problems which need to address.



What are the immediate issues that need to be addressed? This helps to differentiate between issues that can be resolved within the context of the case, and those that are bigger issues that needed to be addressed at another time (preferably by someone else!).

Differentiate between importance and urgency for the issues identified. Some issues may appear to be urgent, but upon closer examination are relatively unimportant, while others may be far more important (relative to solving our problem) than urgent. You want to deal with important issues in order of urgency to keep focused on your objective. Important issues are those that have a **significant** effect on:

1. Profitability,
2. Strategic direction of the company,
3. Source of core/distinctive competencies
4. Critical success factors
5. Source of competitive advantage,
6. Morale of the company's employees, and/or
7. Customer satisfaction.

The problem statement may be framed as a question, e.g.: What should Mr. Adel do? or How can Mr. Kamal improve market share? Usually the problem statement has to be re-written several times during the analysis of a case, as you peel back the layers of symptoms or causation.

In analyzing the hotel data, you are trying to answer the following:

1. **Why or how did these issues arise?** You are trying to determine cause and effect for the problems identified. You cannot solve a problem that you cannot determine the cause of! It may be helpful to think of the organization in question as consisting of the following components:
 - a. **resources**, such as materials, equipment, or supplies, and
 - b. **people** who transform these resources using
 - c. **processes**, which creates something of greater value.

Now, where are the problems being caused within this framework, and why?

2. **Who is affected most by these issues?** You are trying to identify who are the relevant stakeholders to the situation, and who will be affected by the decisions to be made.
3. **What are the constraints and opportunities** implicit to this situation? It is very rare that resources are not a constraint, and allocations must be made on the assumption that not enough will be available to please everyone.

4. **What do the numbers tell you?** You need to take a look at the numbers given in the case study and make a judgment as to their relevance to the problem identified. Not all numbers will be immediately useful or relevant, but you need to be careful not to overlook anything. When deciding to analyze numbers, keep in mind why you are doing it, and what you intend to do with the result. Use common sense and comparisons to industry standards when making judgments as to the meaning of your answers to avoid jumping to conclusions.

PHASE 4: IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF STRATEGIES

This section deals with different strategies in which the problem(s)-issue(s) can be resolved. Typically, there are many strategies (e.g., minimizing cost, differentiation, integration, diversification, green-CSR strategies). Being creative at this stage helps. Things to remember at this stage are:

1. **Make suitable strategies:** Managers often work with incomplete information by making assumptions about future. Assumptions relate to key external and internal factors. These assumptions are based on historical data and do not represent blanket wishful thinking, however. When you make assumptions, explicitly state them and offer rationale as to why these assumptions make sense.
2. **Be realistic!** While you might be able to pursue many strategies, keep in mind that they should be realistic and fit within the constraints of the situation.
3. The strategies should be specific, that is, they cannot be general (i.e., company must develop a new service...).
4. **Not making a decision pending further investigation** is not an acceptable decision for any company that you will analyze. A manager can always delay making a decision to gather more information, which is not managing at all! The whole point to this exercise is to learn how to make good decisions, and having imperfect information is normal for most business decisions, not the exception.
5. **Doing nothing** as in not changing your strategy can be a viable alternative, provided it is the best alternative. You will need to defend this like any other recommendation, based on the facts.
6. Avoid the **meat sandwich** method of providing a clearly undesirable strategy to make one reasonable strategy look better by comparison. This will be painfully obvious to the reader, and just shows laziness on your part in not being able to come up with more than one decent strategy.

7. Keep in mind that any strategy chosen will need to be implemented at some point, and if serious obstacles exist to successfully doing this, then you are the one who will look bad for suggesting it.

Once the strategy(ies) have been identified, a method of evaluating them and selecting the most appropriate one needs to be used to arrive at a decision.

PHASE 5: ALIGN YOUR RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES WITH BALANCED-SCORECARD (BSC) DIMENSIONS

This is the most important part of your GP!!! You have to measure the performance (evaluate) of your recommended strategies through the four dimensions of the BSC

- i. Customer perspective
- ii. Internal perspective
- iii. Innovation and learning perspective
- iv. Financial perspective

To create a BSC for your GP, you have to follow only the first three out of six stages proposed by Chytas, Glykas, & Valiris, (2011):

Stage 1: Establishing the mission, vision, strategic objectives, perspectives and CSF

In this stage the focus is on understanding the organisation's strategy, culture and capabilities in order to specify the strategic objectives (which state the specific goals/directions the organisation aims to achieve), perspectives and Critical Success Factors (things the organisation must do well to achieve its strategic objectives/CSFs are the limited number of areas which secure successful competitive performance (Leidecker & Brune, 1984).

Stage 2: Identify key performance indicators (KPI)

In the second stage, all possible measures narrow down into the shortest one that provides KPIs. A KPI is a major criterion which can measure a particular part of the project (Lester, 2014).

Stage 3: Establish targets

Measurement alone is not good enough. We must drive behavioral changes within the organization if we expect to execute strategy. This requires establishing a target for each KPI within the balanced scorecard. Targets are designed to drive and push the organization as to meet its strategic objectives. Targets need to be realistic so that people feel comfortable about trying to execute on the target.

It is necessary to mention that each destination and organization might have its specific vision, mission and strategic objectives that must be found from the interview, internal organization data and literature review.

Important Articles for Reading (articles are available on BB):

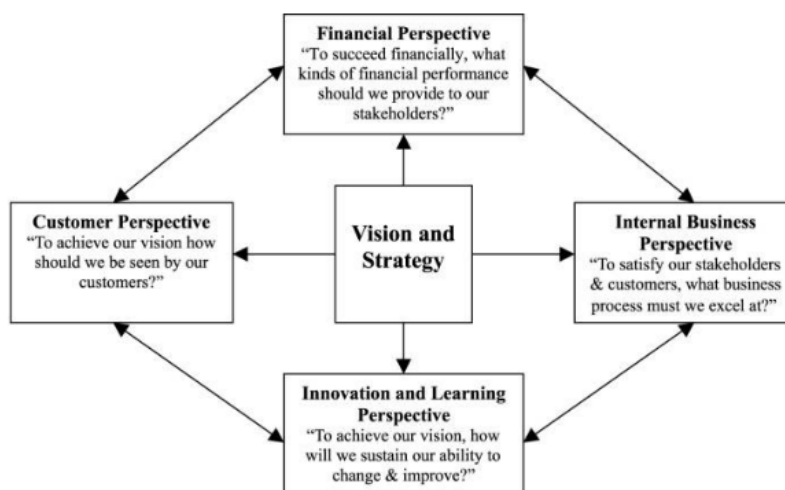
Chytas, P., Glykas, M., & Valiris, G. (2011). A proactive balanced scorecard. *International Journal of Information Management*, 31(5), 460–468. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2010.12.007>

Kang, J.-S., Chiang, C.-F., Huangthanapan, K., & Downing, S. (2015). Corporate social responsibility and sustainability balanced scorecard: The case study of family-owned hotels. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 48, 124–134. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2015.05.001>

Kaplan, R. S. (2009). Conceptual Foundations of the Balanced Scorecard. In Harvard Business School Working Paper Number: 10-074 (pp. 1253–1269). [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1751-3243\(07\)03003-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1751-3243(07)03003-9)

Mohammadi, A., Moharrer, M., & Babakhanifard, M. S. (2018). The business model and balanced scorecard in creative tourism: the ultimate strategy boosters. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 0(0), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2018.1437714>

Figure 1. The elements of BSC



Source: Adapted from Kaplan and Norton (1996, p. 76)

PHASE 6: CONCLUSION & MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

You must explain how your research findings and recommended strategies will be useful for your hotel in real-life situations. In plain words, you must make **practical** suggestions (What recommendations do you have for implementation) such as a new training program, or the purchase of new/additional software or how your hotel could improve its current supply chain processes by doing this or doing that. You may like to add what the benefits are likely to be if your hotel adopts the improvements/changes your research is suggesting.

PHASE 7: REFERENCES & APPENDICES

References: You should cite all external sources in your text by using APA format. It is a good idea to start your references section at the beginning of the writing process and add to it as you go along. It will be a tedious and time-consuming task if left until you have completed the main body of the text. If you do leave it until the end, the time spent on compiling the reference section is time that would have been better spent on checking and amending your report.

Important Note: You have to create a fully **automatic bibliography list**. **ONLY a fully automatic bibliography list is acceptable.** **The references should be in APA!**

Appendices - *Supplementary material at the end of a book, article, document, or other text, usually of an explanatory, statistical, or bibliographic nature.* In general, **appendices** should be kept to the minimum. If they are so important that your reader's understanding of the points you are making in the text makes their inclusion in the report necessary, then they should be in the main body of the text. If, on the other hand, the material is 'interesting to know' rather than 'essential to know' then it should be in the appendices.

PHASE 8: WRITING MECHANICS, GRAMMAR, SPELLING & ASSIGNMENT FORMAT

Always remember that you will be judged by the quality of your work, which includes your written work such as case study reports. Sloppy, dis-organized, poor quality work will say more about you than you probably want said! To ensure the quality of your written work, keep the following in mind when writing your report:

1. **Proof-read your work!!!** Have someone else read it too! (particularly if English is not your first language) This second pair of eyes will give you an objective opinion of how well your report holds together. ALL works MUST be TYPED and hard copy MUST be professionally presented – NO exceptions.
2. Use **spell checker** to eliminate spelling errors

3. Use **grammar checking** to avoid common grammatical errors such as run on sentences.
4. Note that restating of case facts is not included in the format of the case report, nor is it considered part of analysis. Anyone reading your report will be familiar with the case, and you need only to mention facts that are relevant to (and support) your analysis or recommendation as you need them.
5. You are **highly encouraged to use tools, framework and theories** covered in this course to conduct analysis and synthesis and develop arguments. Clearly identifying and correctly matching theoretical basis while building arguments will help in securing good grades.
6. If you are going to include **appendices** (particularly numbers) in your report, you will need to **refer to them within the body of your report**, not just tack them on at the end! This reference should be in the form of supporting conclusions that you are making in your analysis. The reader should not have to guess why particular exhibits have been included, nor what they mean. If you do not plan to refer to them, then leave them out.
7. Write in a **formal manner suitable for scholarly work**, rather than a letter to a friend.
8. **Common sense and logical thinking** can do wonders for your evaluation!
9. You should expect that the computer lab's printer will not be functioning in the twelve hours prior to your deadline for submission. Plan for it!

4. Proposed Structure of the Written Report

1. Title page
 - 1.1. Company name
 - 1.2. Class code and class name
 - 1.3. Full names and student ids of group members
 - 1.4. Instructor name
 - 1.5. Semester and year
2. Automatic table of contents
3. Executive summary
 - 3.1. Summarize your entire report in one page or less
4. Analyzing firm's past performance and issues
 - 4.1. Firm and industry performance
 - 4.2. External analysis
 - 4.3. Internal analysis
 - 4.4. Critical assessment of strategy
 - 4.5. Key lessons learnt from the past
5. Analyzing firm's current performance and issues
 - 5.1. Defining the current issue(s) and problem statement

- 5.2. Analyzing information
6. Implementation and Evaluation of Strategies
 - 6.1 Create strategies
 - 6.2 Align your Recommended Strategies with Balanced-Scorecard (BSC) Dimensions
7. Conclusion and Managerial Implications
8. References-Appendices

5. My Grading Criteria

There's no such thing as "the correct answer" to a case study question. Several answers. Generally, the instructors' use the following criteria when assigning a grade to a response:

1. The overall quality of a response's content
 - a. Does your response actually address an issue/question/problem?
 - b. How effective is your solution?
 - c. How original is your response?
 - d. Does your response contain sufficient details (e.g., peer-reviewed articles from ABDC/SCOPUS/ABS Journals)?
2. The degree to which a response shows understanding of concepts, frameworks and theories covered in the course
 - a. Does your response actually use a concept, framework, or theory covered in this class?
 - b. Does your response get into specifics of a concept, framework, or theory?
3. The degree to which a response is logically coherent
 - a. Is there a line of thought that flows through your response?
 - b. Are your claims supported/illustrated with facts, examples, or illustrations?
 - c. Is your response well-structured?