**Customer Interface**

1. **Types of customers:**

A MOOC company provides an online platform that serves a market where two types of

customers meet each other: the content providers and the learners. Many MOOCs are offered

either for free or on a freemium basis. As described above MOOC customers can be grouped

according to the categories described in the following Table.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Categories | Sub-categories & Remarks |
| 1. Content providers | There are several types of distinguishable groups, e.g.: HEI, public institutions (research laboratories, museums, libraries), NGOs; but there is no need to differentiate them. The content providers can be treated as one group. |
| 2. Learners | **2a.** Individual learners.  **2b.** Institutions of (higher) learning providing MOOC for their students. For ease of reference, this group of customers will henceforth also be called “institutional customers”. |

Content Providers are the ***first customers***of the MOOC Companies. A MOOC company’s content providers are mostly institutes of higher learning and their faculty members, but other kinds of institutions may also provide their own contents, such as Commonwealth Education Trust, Exploratorium (a self-described learning laboratory), the Museum of Modern Art, National Geographic Society, and UNESCO.

Learners are the ***second customers*** of the MOOC Companies, who consume the content provided by the content providers on MOOC platforms. These learners are mostly individual learners unaffiliated with any institution in enrolling to their MOOCs but can also be universities or other institutions of learning that collaborate with a MOOC company to officially offer MOOC courses as part of the learning experience offered to their students. The individual learners would most likely have the option to start their enrolment in a course for free while having the option to switch to fee paying track for some premium features while the institutions of learning that collaborate with a MOOC company would always be paying customers of the MOOC company.

1. **Services:**

These groups of customers have different needs and for that the MOOC companies offer

different products and services to them. To the content providers, the main offer is the online

platform through which they can reach their audience. The platforms are designed by

integrating pedagogical expertise into it, to make sure the content provided is delivered effectively for the learner’s sake, hence sustaining and probably even enhancing the quality of the content being delivered.

Now let us take a look at the customers’ side of the industry. Platform aside, the greatest

thing MOOC brings to the masses is affordable knowledge. As McHugh (2012) wrote, “Not

many of us can afford to audit ‘A History of the World since 1300’ Princeton University course;

but thanks to the Internet – and Coursera – you can.” Some courses are just too expensive and

the lecturer’s expertise is too narrow to be afforded by many universities, so even when one

can pay for it, not many universities would offer the course. Then add in the other cost factors

one needs to learn: the tuition fee, the textbooks, the time, the energy. MOOC helps bring

expensive courses to one’s living room – or cell phone – at the mere cost of the Internet access.

Once a learner can access the materials, they will have several options in engaging with

the MOOCs. The first is freemium style engagement. Students access all learning materials for

free, but they are also offered to pay a certain amount of money (usually ranging from $50-

$100) for a certificate that bears the logo of the MOOC company and the university that

provides the content. Payments can be done either at the beginning of the course, within first

several weeks, or at the end of the course depending on each course policy.

Building on top of the fee-paying scheme, MOOC companies may also package several

courses into a common offer. This can work either casually or in a formal manner. If casually,

then the MOOC company would simply promote the courses as inter-related ones, but there

are no incentives or benefits to be enrolled in more than one course within the group. Coursera

takes a more formal route of promoting these packaging through their “Specialization” track.

On such a track, students must earn paid certificates on each of the course in the track, upon

which completion they would be entitled to enrol in another fee-paying course, the capstone

project. With regards to the capstone project, Coursera, in a blog, stated that “experts at top

companies like Google and Instagram have joined Coursera to help develop the final projects

– called “Capstones” – for Coursera Specializations” (blog.coursera.org/post/110731449067).

When a learner has successfully completed all the courses, they will receive another certificate,

the “Specialization” certificate. By coupling several courses together in this “Specialization”

track, Coursera would get income from more courses from the learner.

**2.1 Subject-wise Courses:**

Amongst the ten broader subject fields (as classified by Coursera), majority of courses are

offered in Business with 442 courses accounting 25.03 percent of total courses count. Social

Sciences and Computer Sciences followed the list with 305 and 295 courses respectively. As

evident from the following Table, minimum number of courses are offered in Math & Logic, and Language Learning subjects.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Rank | Subject Field | Number of Courses | Percentage |
| 1 | Business | 442 | 25.03 |
| 2 | Social Sciences | 305 | 17.27 |
| 3 | Computer Science | 295 | 16.70 |
| 4 | Physical Science and Engineering | 231 | 13.08 |
| 5 | Life Sciences | 217 | 12.29 |
| 6 | Arts and Humanities | 192 | 10.87 |
| 7 | Data Science | 155 | 8.78 |
| 8 | Personal Development | 100 | 5.66 |
| 9 | Math and Logic | 82 | 4.64 |
| 10 | Language Learning | 39 | 2.21 |

*Cumulative sum of percentage exceeds 100 as some courses are classified in more than one category*

**2.2 On Demand Courses:**

In recent months Coursera had been offering increasing number of asynchronous courses, i.e. they are self-paced courses (also called on-demand) that Courserians can study anytime they want. On-Demand courses offer flexibility to learners to pursue the courses at their own pace without

bothering about predefined deadlines for assignment submissions or completion of courses.

People differ in their respective abilities to learn things, where competent or motivated people need less time to understand, others demand more time to comprehend. Availability of time is

also, one of the important factors that learners have to grill through while taking a course. It is

obvious that professionals working in competitive organizations have less time to enrich their

skills. Instead of time-limited course, on-demand courses best suit their busy schedule. As of

February 24, 2016, 33.24 percent (587) courses are offered in On-Demand mode by Coursera.

**2.3 Financial Aid:**

Coursera has always had an ambition to make world’s best education for free (Koller,

2012; Chen, et al., 2015). The resources necessary to make this happen don’t come cheap,

though. It is therefore necessary for Coursera to provide funding for the people who needs its

service the most so those people can peruse the learning opportunities provided by Coursera

and for Coursera to realize its ambition.

An approach Coursera has employed for multiple years is providing financial aid to

individual learners who are interested in enrolling in its paid course but unable to afford the

fee. The financial aid is very easy to apply. Learners need only to fill a short form before the

application is processed by machine and the learner’s interface for the specific course would

allow for the paid version of the course to be enjoyed by the learner. This has helped interested

learners to make the most out of Coursera’s courses. Testimonials from members of

IDCourserians have shown that applications from these Indonesian learners have always been

approved. It may be due to the fact that the income factor, when converted to US$, would

translate into a small figure and hence the applications are automatically approved.

Another approach that has been mentioned previously is in inviting companies to be

involved into the equation of the course production and delivery as part of Global Skills

Initiative. The companies involved in this initiative would provide funding and case study for

particular courses. The first would support the university as content provider in developing the

course while the latter would be used as a real-life measurement to verify the competency

gained by learners. With this creative solution, Coursera has added an enrichment into the

equation of both content and funding involved in its business process, augmenting the

experience and benefits of all parties involved.

**2.3 Back-office Improvements:**

Meanwhile back at office Coursera has continuously worked on improving the way

Courserians experience learning. It has revamped its website several times; added social

features in the course pages; developed apps for Android’s Google Play, Kindle Fire, and

Apple’s App Store; also enriched the way assessments are done. Various kinds of assessments

now include in-video formative assessment, multiple choice, short answers, essays, and

projects. Courserians can work on certain quizzes several times with questions that rotate with

equal level difficulty. Some assignments are scored using peer-graded assessments. In 2016 Coursera started offering its highest credential: a full degree, i.e. an iMBA in collaboration with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This array of improvements and innovations give us an idea of the workings behind a MOOC.

1. **Coursera Customers**

According to 2016, Coursera had 1.7 million users in India, making it their second largest market, after the US, reports Deccan Herald. According to Coursera’s Chief Business Officer Nikhil Sinha, the company is adding 60,000 users every month from India, while its total global user base of Coursera is at 30 million (as of January 2018). Currently, Coursera claims to offer 2700 courses with 146 partners across 29 countries, making it as the world’s largest MOOC provider.

***It is very interesting indeed to see how Coursera has been working hard to create real world advantage to Courserians in so many ways, both in providing learning materials and in delivering real-world opportunities.***