

Chapter 2

The Coursera Case as the Prefiguration of the Ongoing Changes on the MOOC Platforms

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to suggest a new conceptual framework by presenting a view of the main disruptive strategic trajectory implemented by a particular model of training platforms. It aims to participate in the understanding of the dynamics of training platforms strategy through the analysis of the Coursera case. The iterations of this platform with a market under construction can be read as a strategy to bring out new proposals and value networks. Finally, the authors discuss the “drivers” of future changes in the MOOC market.

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INTRODUCTION

The analysis of evolution of Coursera strategy allows understanding the different sequences of strategic decision of this type of platform. This analysis case allows us to make assumptions about the dynamic form of its strategy (Teece, 2010). It also presents the interest of enriching our reflection on a kind of “intentionality” of strategic groping: through the analysis of internal and external contingencies and constraints to which this platform is subject. Finally, the case of Coursera allows us to question the “drivers” of upcoming changes in the online training market.

The authors base their analysis on the “disruption” concept (Christensen, 1997). This conceptual approach covers several types of innovation producing differentiated effects in different markets (Markides, 2006). Platforms are symbols and catalysts of diverse forms of disruption. Authors are mobilizing the different notions induced by “disruption” concept to distinguish a particular platform case, through a review of the main disruptive strategy observed.

COORDINATION PLATFORMS: A STRATEGY BASED ON THE DISRUPTION OF THE CREATION VALUE MODEL

The levers of this disruptive strategy are based on the creation of a new value proposition by mobilizing under exploited assets (house, cars etc.). Because they are valued in a new way, these assets create and coordinate a market by building a new demand (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005). This strategic platform approach consists in changing the rules of the competitive game of a sector (Lehmann-Ortega & Roy, 2009). This disruption of value creation modes occurs by allowing asset owners to take advantage of their “property” in a new way. The platform is then a vector of new modes of consumption through an unprecedented form of intermediation. Coordination platforms reinvent business models by changing the way users consume and the type of service / good they consume.

Coursera platform illustrates this phenomenon becoming the disruption emblem of traditional way of educational training. Coursera, which offers free intermediation between individuals and academic institutions, is now platform number one worldwide.

One of the main ambitions of the coordination platforms lies in their ability to create new value networks (Caron-Fasan & Chanal, 2008): amplify and change the scope of the platform by exploiting new assets, support the development dynamics of this type of platform.

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