PhD Course Syllabus
Marketing in the Circular Economy and Digitalization Era (7.5 ECTS)

October 2026, at Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

Stockholm University, Sweden, offers this PhD (3rd Cycle) Course in collaboration with the University of Vaasa, Finland, the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland, Södertörn University, Sweden, Polytechnic of Leiria, Portugal, and Uppsala University, Sweden.

Course dates

5-9 October 2026 (5 full days)

Venues

Three face-to-face on-site participation at a venue organized at Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden, and two online sessions.

Course Description

This interdisciplinary PhD course explores the evolving role of marketing in the context of the circular economy and digitalization. It integrates perspectives from marketing, strategy, innovation management, servitization, dynamic capabilities, circular business models, digitalization, and internationalization. The course aims to equip PhD candidates with both the traditional theoretical foundations of marketing and a comprehensive understanding of its evolution, through various academic perspectives, in response to sustainability transitions and digital transformation.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, PhD candidates will be able to:

1. Critically analyze and synthesize key marketing theories in the context of the circular economy and digitalization era.

2. Develop interdisciplinary insights linking marketing with innovation management, servitization, and dynamic capabilities in circular business contexts.

3. Apply theoretical and empirical knowledge to design, evaluate, and communicate sustainable and digital marketing strategies in an international business environment.

Learning Material

The learning material will consist of academic research articles, book chapters, and real-world cases. All course literature will be distributed four weeks before the start of the course.

Learning Activities and Teaching Methods

The course will combine lectures, seminars, discussions, and case studies. Participants are expected to actively engage in discussions and present selected papers and cases.

Course Structure

The course will consist of five sessions: three on-campus sessions and two online sessions. The detailed schedule and session topics will be announced prior to the start of the course.

Course Content

1. Foundations of Marketing and Strategic Management in the Circular Economy
2. Digitalization, Data-Driven Marketing, and Sustainable Value Creation
3. Marketing Strategies Considering Innovation and Internationalization in the Circular Economy
4. Marketing Strategies Considering Servitization and Dynamic Capabilities in the Circular Economy

Assessment

The course assessment will be based on the following components:

- Active participations during lectures and seminars (Assessing learning outcomes 2 and 3)
- Final Paper (Assessing learning outcomes 1, 2, and 3)

PhD candidates' performance will be evaluated in relation to the course learning objectives according to **a pass/fail** grading system. In order to pass the course, the students must have participated in 4 out of 5 sessions and passed all assignments.

Course Location and Schedule

The course is offered with three face-to-face on-site sessions at Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden, and two online sessions. The specific venue and address at Stockholm University, as well as the reading list, will be announced along with the admittance announcement after the course registration finishes. The content composition is as follows during these five days:

Day I (face-to-face): Foundations of Marketing

This lecture explores the conceptual, theoretical, and historical foundations of marketing through the seminal works of Shelby D. Hunt and key contributions by Eric H. Shaw. We begin by examining Hunt's (1976) influential article "The Nature and Scope of Marketing", which reframed marketing as a social and economic process concerned with the creation and facilitation of exchange relationships. This foundational perspective set the stage for subsequent debates on marketing's purpose and domain. Building on this, Hunt's (1992) "Marketing is..." articulates marketing as an organizational function and a societal process, emphasizing its dual role in value creation and exchange across multiple contexts.

The lecture then situates Hunt's later works—particularly "On the Intersection of Marketing History and Marketing Theory" (2011) and "Advancing Marketing Strategy..." (2018)—within the broader evolution of marketing thought. These pieces highlight the cyclical nature of marketing's intellectual development, from promise to fragmentation and potential renewal, underscoring the importance of theoretical coherence and disciplinary integration.

Further, Hunt, Arnett, and Madhavaram's (2006) work on relationship marketing provides an epistemological foundation for understanding marketing as a system of interorganizational and relational exchanges, supported by resource-advantage theory. Complementing these perspectives, Shaw's (2009) reflections on marketing history trace how paradigmatic shifts—from distributive to managerial to relational and strategic eras—have shaped the field's identity.

Through critical discussion, students will engage with the philosophical and methodological underpinnings of marketing thought, evaluate its theoretical progress, and consider how historical insight informs the discipline's future trajectory.

Responsible institute: Stockholm University.
Course kick-off dinner for all participants

Day II (face-to-face): Marketing in the digitalization era

This session explores how digitalization reshapes marketing theory and practice, emphasizing data-driven strategies and sustainable value creation. As technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), and big data analytics become integral to organizational strategy, marketing scholars and practitioners must revisit fundamental assumptions about value, exchange, and innovation.

Building on Zott and Amit's (2010) activity system perspective, we conceptualize business models as dynamic configurations of interdependent activities that generate value through digital connectivity and customer interaction. Mostaghel et al. (2022) extend this logic to the retail sector, showing how digitalization drives business model innovation by reconfiguring value propositions, customer interfaces, and revenue mechanisms. Their work highlights a transition from transaction-based marketing to continuous, data-enabled relationships that sustain competitive advantage.

Costa-Climent and Haftor (2021) introduce an evolutionary perspective on business model themes, demonstrating that value creation in digital contexts emerges from iterative adaptation and co-evolution between technology, markets, and organizations. Subsequent research by Costa Climent, Haftor, and Eriksson Lundström (2022) advances this understanding through the concept of data network effects, where machine learning enhances value as data accumulates across connected systems. This perspective positions data not merely as an asset but as an evolving source of learning, innovation, and strategic differentiation.

The latest contribution by Costa-Climent and Haftor (2025) situates these developments within the emerging regulatory landscape of the EU Artificial Intelligence Act, highlighting the strategic implications of ethical and sustainable AI use for business model design. This session thus integrates the technological, strategic, and ethical dimensions of marketing in the digital era — guiding participants to critically assess how data-driven innovation can align with long-term sustainability goals and societal value creation.

We will provide a case study in advance to allow students to prepare thoroughly, relate its content to the lecture, and engage in informed group discussion.

Responsible institutes: Uppsala University and Stockholm University

Day III (online): Marketing in the Circular Economy

This lecture investigates how marketing theory and practice are being reshaped by the transition toward the circular economy (CE), where value creation depends on regeneration, reuse, and long-term stakeholder collaboration rather than linear consumption. Drawing from Mostaghel, Oghazi, and Lisboa (2023), the discussion begins with the transformative impact of the circular economy on marketing theory, emphasizing how circular logics redefine customer relationships, market exchanges, and value propositions. The shift from transactional to regenerative marketing requires integrating sustainability, digitalization, and innovation as core strategic drivers.

Mostaghel and Chirumalla (2021) highlight the role of customers in circular business models, showing how trust, co-creation, and behavioral engagement underpin successful circular ecosystems. Oghazi and Mostaghel (2018) complement this view by discussing the industrial challenges of circular models, including resource recovery, system complexity, and market

adaptation. The consumer dimension is further deepened by Oghazi et al. (2018), who demonstrate how trust and return policies influence purchasing behavior and product recirculation.

From a strategic perspective, Lisboa, Skarmeas, and Lages (2011) apply the resource-based view to link entrepreneurial orientation and dynamic capabilities with sustainable competitiveness, while Silva et al. (2023) explore sustainable export marketing strategies that extend circular principles internationally. Maignan, Ferrell, and Hult (1999) provide the ethical foundation by framing corporate citizenship as a cultural and normative enabler of responsible marketing.

Finally, insights from Palmié et al. (2021, 2022) demonstrate how digitalization, startups, and meta-ecosystems accelerate green transformation and circular innovation. Collectively, the lecture positions marketing as a catalyst for systemic sustainability, strategic renewal, and value co-creation in circular economies.

Responsible institutes: University of St. Gallen, Polytechnic of Leiria, and Stockholm University.

Day IV (online): Energy, Innovation, and Internationalization

This lecture explores the intersection of energy transition, technological innovation, and firm internationalization through the lens of digital servitization and collaborative innovation. Drawing on the works of Kohtamäki, Parida, and colleagues, we analyze how industrial firms leverage digitalization, artificial intelligence (AI), and service-based models to compete and expand globally in dynamic energy ecosystems.

Kohtamäki et al. (2019) introduce digital servitization business models in ecosystems, offering a theory of the firm that explains how companies co-create value with partners to address sustainability and energy efficiency challenges. Building on this, Kohtamäki et al. (2020) emphasize the financial potential of digitalization, showing that servitization mediates the path between technological investment and economic performance—an essential mechanism for international competitiveness in energy-intensive industries.

Further, Kohtamäki et al. (2013) demonstrate the non-linear relationship between service offerings and growth, highlighting the moderating role of network capabilities in managing complex innovation ecosystems across borders. Najafi-Tavani et al. (2018) extend this perspective by examining how collaborative innovation networks and firms' absorptive capacity enhance product and process innovation performance, crucial for energy technology advancement and global market entry.

Sjödin and colleagues (2021, 2023) bring an emergent focus on AI-enabled business model innovation, showing how AI capacities and dynamic capabilities drive circularity, scalability, and sustainable competitiveness.

Overall, this lecture positions innovation in energy-focused industries as a multidimensional process—where digital transformation, servitization, and global collaboration converge to shape the future of sustainable industrial internationalization.

Responsible institutes: University of Vaasa, Södertörn University, and Stockholm University

Day V (face-to-face): Idea presentations for the paper

As part of the course requirements, students are expected to develop and write an academic paper that demonstrates their ability to apply and critically engage with the theories and concepts discussed throughout the course. During the designated seminar session, each student will present their initial paper idea to the group for feedback and scholarly discussion. The paper should be explicitly grounded in the theoretical frameworks and conceptual perspectives explored in the course, illustrating how these can advance understanding within the field of marketing and the circular economy.

Students may choose to write either a literature review or a conceptual paper; however, empirical studies are also welcome, provided that the scope of data collection and analysis can reasonably be completed within the course timeline. The emphasis should be on academic rigor, theoretical contribution, and relevance to current debates in marketing and sustainability.

We strongly encourage all participants to further develop their course papers for submission to an academic conference or doctoral colloquium following the course, thereby extending their scholarly engagement and contributing to the broader research community.

Responsible institutes: Uppsala University, Södertörn University, and Stockholm University

Course faculty

Responsible faculty from Stockholm University:

Course director and examiner:

- Rana Mostaghel, Associate Professor, Department of Marketing, Stockholm University (rana.mostaghel@sbs.su.se).

Course coordinator:

- Helene Olofsson, coordinator of the doctoral programs, Stockholm University (Helene.olofsson@sbs.su.se).

Lecturers in the course:

- Maximilian Palmié, Professor, St. Gallen University, Switzerland.
- Marko Kohtamäki, Professor, University of Vaasa, Finland.
- Darek Haftor, Professor, Uppsala University, Sweden.
- Pejvak Oghazi, Professor, Södertörn University, Sweden
- Ana Lisboa, Associate Professor, Polytechnic of Leiria, Portugal.

Enrolment guideline & course timeline

- Call for PhD course enrollment: Opening in **mid-May 2026**
- Last day to register: **30 June 2026**
- PhD Course duration: 5 full days
- Course dates: **5-9 October 2026**
- Final course assignment submission deadline: **09 November 2026, 23: 59.**
- Grading completed: **02 December 2026** (four weeks after course assignment submission)

Application

The course is free of charge and is designed for 20 PhD candidates in total (NFF member universities are prioritized). Travel costs should be covered by the PhD candidates themselves.

The course participants will be selected based on a motivation statement outlining their interest in the subject, previous knowledge, and their merits (e.g., educational certificates).

IT Solutions

The Stockholm Business School at Stockholm University will provide fully equipped classrooms designed to facilitate group discussions, featuring multiple screens and video projectors. For online sessions, the course will utilize Zoom to ensure interactive and seamless participation.

Market the course

The six lecturers representing different universities will promote the course through LinkedIn profiles and academic networks to ensure broad visibility and engagement among prospective participants. In addition, we will promote on the specific platforms.

In Sweden
The course will be announced on officially recognized platforms for PhD candidates, such as SNABS, FEKIS, and MIT.

Outside of Sweden:
The course information will be announced through the official LinkedIn account of the partner universities. In addition, details will be shared via email with PhD candidates from these universities. A webinar may also be organized to present the course and answer any questions.

Preliminary Course Reading List

Climent, R. C., & Haftor, D. M. (2021). Value creation through the evolution of business model themes. *Journal of Business Research*, *122*, 353-361.

Costa Climent, R., Haftor, D., & Eriksson Lundström, J. (2022). Value Creation through Machine Learning Using Data Network Effects. In *Academy of Management Proceedings* (Vol. 2022, No. 1, p. 12085). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.

Costa-Climent, R., & Haftor, D. M. (2025). Harnessing Artificial Intelligence for Value Creation and Capture: Strategic Implications of the EU Artificial Intelligence Act within Business Model Theory. *JOINETECH (International Journal of Economic and Technological Studies)*, *1*(01), 55-65.

Hollander, S. C., Rassuli, K. M., Jones, D. B., & Dix, L. F. (2005). Periodization in marketing history. *Journal of Macromarketing*, *25*(1), 32-41.

Hunt, S. D. (1976). The nature and scope of marketing. *Journal of marketing*, *40*(3), 17-28.

Hunt, S. D. (1992). Marketing is... *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *20*(4), 301-311.

Hunt, S. D. (2011). On the intersection of marketing history and marketing theory. *Marketing Theory*, *11*(4), 483-489.

Hunt, S. D. (2018). Advancing marketing strategy in the marketing discipline and beyond: From promise, to neglect, to prominence, to fragment (to promise?). *Journal of Marketing Management*, *34*(1-2), 16-51.

Hunt, S. D., Arnett, D. B., & Madhavaram, S. (2006). The explanatory foundations of relationship marketing theory. *Journal of business & industrial marketing*, *21*(2), 72-87.

Kohtamäki, M., Parida, V., Oghazi, P., Gebauer, H., & Baines, T. (2019). Digital servitization business models in ecosystems: A theory of the firm. *Journal of business research*, *104*, 380-392.

Kohtamäki, M., Parida, V., Patel, P. C., & Gebauer, H. (2020). The relationship between digitalization and servitization: The role of servitization in capturing the financial potential of digitalization. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, *151*, 119804.

Kohtamäki, M., Partanen, J., Parida, V., & Wincent, J. (2013). Non-linear relationship between industrial service offering and sales growth: The moderating role of network capabilities. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *42*(8), 1374-1385.

Lisboa, A., Skarmeas, D., & Lages, C. (2011). Entrepreneurial orientation, exploitative and explorative capabilities, and performance outcomes in export markets: A resource-based approach. *Industrial marketing management*, *40*(8), 1274-1284.

Maignan, I., Ferrell, O. C., & Hult, G. T. M. (1999). Corporate citizenship: Cultural antecedents and business benefits. *Journal of the Academy of marketing science*, *27*(4), 455-469.

Mostaghel, R., & Chirumalla, K. (2021). Role of customers in circular business models. *Journal of Business Research*, 127, 35-44.

Mostaghel, R., Oghazi, P., & Lisboa, A. (2023), The transformative impact of the circular economy on marketing theory, *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Volume 195, 122780

Mostaghel, R., Oghazi, P., Parida, V., and Soharbpour, V. (2022) Digitalization driven retail business model innovation: Evaluation of past and avenues for future research trends. *Journal of Business Research*, 16, 134-145.

Najafi-Tavani, S., Najafi-Tavani, Z., Naudé, P., Oghazi, P., & Zeynaloo, E. (2018). How collaborative innovation networks affect new product performance: Product innovation capability, process innovation capability, and absorptive capacity. *Industrial marketing management*, *73*, 193-205.

Oghazi, P., Mostaghel, R., & Hultman, M. (2024). International industrial manufacturers: Mastering the era of digital innovation and circular economy. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 201, 123160.

Oghazi, P., & Mostaghel, R. (2018). Circular business model challenges and lessons learned—An industrial perspective. *Sustainability*, 10(3), 739

Oghazi, P., Karlsson, S., Hellström, D., & Hjort, K. (2018). Online purchase return policy leniency and purchase decision: Mediating role of consumer trust. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *41*, 190-200.

Palmié, M., Boehm, J., Friedrich, J., Parida, V., Wincent, J., Kahlert, J., ... & Sjödin, D. (2021). Startups versus incumbents in 'green'industry transformations: A comparative study of business model archetypes in the electrical power sector. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *96*, 35-49.

Palmié, M., Miehé, L., Oghazi, P., Parida, V., & Wincent, J. (2022). The evolution of the digital service ecosystem and digital business model innovation in retail: The emergence of meta-ecosystems and the value of physical interactions. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, *177*, 121496.

Shaw, E. H. (2009). Reflections on the history of marketing thought. *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, *1*(2), 330-345.

Silva, G. M., Dias, Á. L., Lisboa, A. C., & Silva, F. P. (2023). Drivers and outcomes of sustainable export marketing strategies in international environments. *Review of International Business and Strategy*, *33*(4), 627-648.

Sjödin, D., Parida, V., & Kohtamäki, M. (2023). Artificial intelligence enabling circular business model innovation in digital servitization: Conceptualizing dynamic capabilities, AI capacities, business models and effects. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, *197*, 122903.

Sjödin, D., Parida, V., Palmié, M., & Wincent, J. (2021). How AI capabilities enable business model innovation: Scaling AI through co-evolutionary processes and feedback loops. *Journal of Business Research*, *134*, 574-587.

Skarmeas, D., Lisboa, A., & Saridakis, C. (2016). Export performance as a function of market learning capabilities and intrapreneurship: SEM and FsQCA findings. *Journal of Business Research*, *69*(11), 5342-5347.

Teece, D. J. (2010). Business models, business strategy and innovation. *Long range planning*, *43*(2-3), 172-194.

Zott, C., & Amit, R. (2010). Business model design: An activity system perspective. *Long range planning*, *43*(2-3), 216-226.