

1. Here is an article titled 'Amazon – a SWOT analysis'. It has six parts: Introduction, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Conclusion, which are not in order. First, reorder the parts. Then, fill in the blanks with suitable linking expressions.

A. _____

Being the world's leading online retailer, Amazon derives its strengths primarily from a three-pronged strategic thrust on cost leadership, differentiation, and focus. This strategy has resulted in the company reaping the gains from this course of action and has helped its shareholders derive value from the company. A key strength of Amazon is that it enjoys top of the mind recall from consumers globally.¹, Amazon has been able to enter new markets, which were hitherto out of bounds for many e-Commerce companies.

Amazon primarily derives its competitive advantage from leveraging IT (Information Technology) and its use of e-Commerce as a scalable and an easy to ramp up platform that ensures that the company is well ahead of its competitors. Using superior logistics and distribution systems, the company has been able to actualize better customer fulfillment and this has resulted in Amazon deriving competitive advantage over its rivals.

B. _____

Amazon is the world's leading online retailer and its success has spurred other physical, brick, and mortar retailers to have an online presence. It is often referred to as the online equivalent of Wal-Mart because of its reach and global footprint as well as its aggressive pricing strategies. Amazon can leverage on several opportunities in the emerging markets and can ensure that its global supply chain of networked warehouses deliver substantial value for itself and its stakeholders.², Amazon has to rethink its business model of operating at close to zero margins and the fact that the company has not returned a decent profit in the last five years gives it much room for improvement.

C. _____

In recent years, Amazon, as part of its diversification strategy, has been "spreading itself too thin", meaning that it has allowed its focus to waver from its core competence of retailing books online and allowed itself to venture into newer focus areas.³ this might be a good strategy from the risk diversification perspective, Amazon has to be cognizant of losing its strategic advantage as it moves away from its core competence.⁴, Amazon offers free shipping to its customers, which could result in the company losing its margins and⁵, might not be able to optimize on costs because of this strategy.⁶, Amazon's single-minded focus on online retailing might "come in the way" of its expansion plans, particularly in emerging markets.

One of the biggest weaknesses and something that has been oft commented upon by analysts and industry experts is that Amazon operates in near zero margin business models that have severely dented its profitability.⁷ the company has high volumes and huge revenues, this has not translated into meaningful profits for the company.

D. _____

By rolling out its online payment system, Amazon has the opportunity to scale up considerably considering the fact that concerns over online shopping as far as security and privacy are concerned are among the topmost issues on the minds of consumers.⁸, this would improve the company's margins, as it lets it reap the advantages of using its own payment gateway.

.....⁹ opportunity Amazon can capitalize on relates to it rolling out more products under its own brand instead of being a forwarding site for third party products.¹⁰, it can increase the number of products under its own brand, instead of merely selling and stocking products made by its partners.

Amazon can¹¹ increase the portfolio of its offerings, wherein it stocks more products than the current norm, which can translate into higher revenue.

The¹² opportunity, which Amazon has, is in terms of expanding its global footprint and open more sites in the emerging markets, which would certainly give it an edge in the uber-competitive online retailing market.

E. _____

Amazon has its task cut out as far as its future strategies are concerned and this SWOT Analysis can provide a guide and a roadmap that the company can implement in going forward. The key take away from this SWOT Analysis is that Amazon has to focus on profitability and not volumes alone if it has to be competitive in the future, where volumes and market leadership are not alone to add value to its stock.

F. _____

One of the biggest threats to Amazon's success is the increasing concern over online shopping, because of identity theft and hacking, which leaves its consumer data exposed.¹³, Amazon has to move quickly to allay consumer concerns over its site and ensure that online privacy and security are guaranteed.

.....¹⁴, the company has had to face lawsuits from publishers and rivals in the retailing industry because of its aggressive pricing strategies. The obsessive focus on cost leadership that Amazon follows has¹⁵ become a source of trouble for the company, resulting in competitors taking away business.

.....¹⁶, Amazon faces significant competition from local online retailers, who are more agile and nimble, when compared to its behemoth type of strategy. This means that the company cannot lose sight of its local market conditions in the pursuit of its global strategy.

2. Analyse the following answer to an assignment question. How effective is the answer?

Question

Discuss why assignment essays are common assessment tasks in undergraduate tertiary coursework, and evaluate the effectiveness of assignments as an avenue for learning. (*Word limit 500 words - 10% leeway*) Please note that the APA referencing style is used in this sample essay.

Introduction

Assignment essays are developed from set questions that give students a period of time to research a topic and produce their answer with references to their sources of information. While there are some disadvantages with using assignment essays as an assessment tool, there are sound educational purposes underpinning this practice.

Body paragraph 1

Assignment essay tasks are set to assist students to enhance understanding of and master their study subjects. Yang and Baker (2005) reason that "to master your learning materials and extend your understandings, you need to write about the meanings you gain from your research" (p. 1). In addition, research (Jinx, 2004; Zapper, 2006) clearly demonstrates that students learn the writing conventions of a subject area while they are researching, reading and writing in their discipline. This activity helps them to "crack the code" of the discipline (Bloggs, 2003, p. 44). Thus, students are learning the subject matter and how to write in that area by researching and writing assignment essays.

Body paragraph 2

Course related assignment essays, moreover, support student learning better than traditional examinations, since they lessen the stress created by end of semester examinations:

If we insist that all students write about everything they have learned in their study courses at the same time and in the same place (e.g. in examinations), we are not giving all of our students equal opportunities. Some students are not daunted by the exam experience while others suffer 'exam nerves' and perform at the lowest level of their capabilities. (Wonderland University, 2006, p. 4)

Additionally, Jones et al. (2004, pp. 36-37) propose that assignment essays can be used to assess students' learning mid-course and provide them with helpful feedback before they are subjected to the examination experience. Examinations only provide students with a mark rather than specific feedback on their progress. Therefore, setting assignment essays for a substantial part of student assessment is a better approach than one-off examination testing.

Body paragraph 3

As an assessment tool, assignment essays have some disadvantages for lecturers and students. It has been found that assignment essays consume a great deal of staff time and money to mark and student time to prepare (Sankey & Liger, 2005, p. 192). A consequence of this is that feedback to students is

frequently delayed, and this is much less useful to students than rapid feedback (p. 294). It is partly because of these disadvantages of time and expense that other assessments such as multiple-choice tests and short answer questions have an enduring place in the tertiary learning environment.

Conclusion

To conclude, it seems that assignment essays continue to have a prominent role in tertiary education as an assessment tool. This is mainly because they are very effective in developing knowledge and writing skills for subject areas. Also, assignment essays can be less stressful than examinations as they allow students to show their understanding of content in less pressured circumstances. On the other hand, the time consuming nature of writing and marking essays points to some disadvantages that also need to be considered. The weight of evidence, however, supports the writing of assignment essays for student assessment because this approach has such positive and proven effects for improved student learning.

References

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3. Summarise the following passage.

...there is indeed considerable overlap between ethics and law. In fact, the law is essentially an institutionalisation or codification of ethics into specific social rules, regulations, and proscriptions. Nevertheless, the two are not equivalent. ... The law might be said to be a definition of the minimum acceptable standards of behaviour. However, many morally contestable issues, whether in business or elsewhere, are not explicitly covered by the law. ... In one sense then, business ethics can be said to begin where the law ends. Business ethics is primarily concerned with those issues not covered by the law, or where there is no definite consensus on whether something is right or wrong. (Extract from Crane, A. and Matten, D. (2007) *Business Ethics*. pp 5, 7)