Impact Tours

1. **Introduction:**

According to the United Nations World Travel Organization (UNWTO), in 2018 there were more than 370 million youth travelers, spending more than 308 Billion USD. At its best, the travel industry provides critical economic, environmental, and socio-cultural value.

Uninformed travelers are not aware of the unintended negative impacts from their travels or possible positive travel opportunities to select. There is a shortage of authentic travel experiences that connect travelers with local communities. Not knowing, travelers contribute to over-tourism that causes degradation of the environment, diminished travel experience, wear and tear on built heritage, and negative impacts on residents. At its worse, the travel industry destroys local culture, the environment and drives inequality.

For instance, in March 2018, Thai authorities closed for four months the famed Maya Bay in an effort to grapple with over-tourism. Since this secluded cove appeared in the film The Beach, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, 4,000 to 5,000 visitors have been turning up each day. Experts say 77% of Maya Bay's coral is at serious risk, mainly from damage by boat anchors. Beginning in September 2018, Maya Beach is limiting visitors to 2,000 a day and boats will no longer be allowed to cross the shallow reef.

However, today’s young travelers no longer view travel as a holiday that involves gravity-defying excursions and exhilarating recreational activities. In fact, recent data shows that travelers are 45 percent less likely to book that type of vacation, opting instead for cultural immersion opportunities,” writes Rezdy.com. “In 2018, globetrotters are setting out to new destinations in hopes of experiencing the people, the culture and the flavor of a new place, rather than simply stopping by a big attraction for a quick photo opportunity.”

On the other hand, our world today is facing serious threats caused by environmental and social issues such as global warming, extreme poverty and lack of access to clean water, quality education etc… Despite many of these issues being addressed through the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), without the right talent working on the solution, it is almost impossible to achieve these goals. This has led to more governmental and educational organizations focusing on raising awareness & teaching youth the right skills to tackle these issues.

One of the approaches used is social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship teaches the methodology and the design thinking process of how to start an organization that generates money to become sustainable while adopting social impact as its core benefit. Every day, more people are shifting towards social impact careers, with the goal of making the world a better place. The main challenge is many of them lack the practical experience needed & in this emerging industry it is not easy to find learning opportunities as there are not that many social enterprises in many countries and it is not easy to connect with them.

Impact Tours team saw the lack of authentic travel experiences coupled with the increasing demand to learn more about social impact/social entrepreneurship as an opportunity to address. Launched in November 2018, Impact Tours is an experiential learning - sustainable - travelling company; its goal is to help youth travel across the world, sustainably, learning more about different sustainability initiatives, the global Impact movement and social entrepreneurship.

Impact Tours combines education and practical learning experiences with authentic sustainable ways of travelling & adventures, all of its activities are designed to support and give back to the local communities, this lead to fair distribution of wealth and better quality of life for the local communities/tourism operators. Through Impact Tours, local communities preserve their culture, share it with travelers and generate income to sustain their lives. At the same time, many phenomena such as over-tourism, global warming and environmental pollution are tackled.

1. **Company Strategy**

As previously mentioned, Impact Tours provides experiential learning experiences for youth to learn more about sustainability, social entrepreneurship and different impact initiatives. All of this while they are travelling sustainably, exploring new cultures, living authentic experiences, meeting new people and expanding their networks globally.

To start with, 5 different programs in 5 different countries were created, each of these programs was designed to tackle different issues and to deliver a variety of travelling experiences. Moving forward, it was decided to focus on one country, which is Thailand. This decision was made due to many reasons: program quality control, building more experiences in a shorter time, operational costs and building a solid team for operations.

Now, Thailand core team has 7 employees between fulltime and part time, 5 of them are locals. Their roles vary between experiences building, operations and creating an extended network. Then the sales ambassadors are working within different communities, for more details check the sales and marketing section on our website (impacttours.org).

1. **Impact Tours Products**

Impact Tours team had to change their offering multiple times in response to the market dynamics, stakeholders and operational capacity.

Upon launching, Impact Tours offered **7-11 days tour** for participants to learn in depth about one specific theme per tour, collaborating mainly with one partner to be part of the whole experience: Transportation in Kenya; Education in India; Sustainable Tourism in Colombia. Participants learn more about that social enterprise during this period and each group is asked to work on a solution to one of the problems facing them and pitch it by the end of the tour.

Moving forward, some modifications were added to the **7-11 days tour** to cover more general themes such as “Discover Impact in Thailand.” During this program, participants get to explore more about the impact scene in Thailand by meeting different ecosystem players in different categories such as food sustainability NGOs/startups; models of poor/disconnected communities that thrived through sustainable initiatives.

Finally, Impact Tours launched the **Internship Program**, that combines the 2 models above. Over 5-8 weeks, participants get to explore the local impact ecosystem/sustainability initiatives for 7-11 days and following that they work with one startup/NGO/Company on a social impact/sustainability project for the rest of the period, with specific goals to be delivered by the end of the period.

During all of these programs, cultural experiences and different fun activities are also delivered. Normally, all of the activities are sustainable and teach participants how to travel sustainably. Example of an Impact Tours’ program:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Q4btY7l9FvAfp1SJ-qd1__pCjiHLP8KV/view?usp=sharing>

1. **DIY (Do It Yourself) project**

A major part of Impact Tours near future strategy is launching a DIY (Do It Yourself) online platform, where different sustainable experiences - we create - will be available online for travelers to book and enjoy. As one of our main goals is to promote sustainable travelling, making such sustainable experience available is a key factor for this model scalability. Even if there is a demand now, there is no to very limited supply.

It is planned to presume operations in Mexico by October 2020, this is estimated to help increasing the sales within the North American market. In addition, some experiences are already built and a tour was delivered there in 2019.

1. **Sales & Marketing**

Impact Tours sales and marketing strategy changed dramatically over the course of the last 15 months. The first model adopted was direct sales through the networks of the founding team. Starting with referrals model, where 4 different destinations during 4 different timings were offered, using their network different people were offered to support on the sales and in return, they get commission per participant, this model had no geographical limitation & no specific requirement.

At the same time, online paid ads were used promoting the different tours to previously identified target groups from specific markets. Using both models, a target was set to sell the 4 different tours over a period of 4 months. The team struggled to sell & deliver any of them.

On one hand, the number of potential customers at that moment was limited due to many factors that includes lack of commitment and proper motivation for sales ambassadors. On the other hand, whenever participants sign up to travel, they get scattered between the different options available, both destination and timing wise. This has led to hindering the execution of any tour. As each tour needs a minimum number of participants to break even and cover different operational costs & make sense financially.

Eventually, it was decided to limit the number of destinations offered & to promote one date, one destination at a time. In addition, a new sales model was implemented, instead of selling to different customers from various communities. Now, Impact Tours creates & promote a tour per community (University, Company, organization, school etc... and assign a community leader to lead on the community onboarding & sales process. This community leader role is to introduce the concept & answer any of their questions to help them understand more about what is offered.

So far, the community direct sales model has proven to be efficient and helped in selling multiple tours for 3 different communities to Mexico and Thailand in less than 2 months.

1. **Target Consumer Segments**

Impact Tours current customer segments are university students and young working professionals from age group 18-30. The targeted geographical areas are Australia, East Asia, North America and Northern Europe. The focus is establishing communities within universities to create sales leads and a funnel for potential tours.

**PROJECT BRIEF**

**You are hired as a Brand Management Consultant by Impact Tours to advise them on how the company can leverage brand equity to achieve its goals of creating brand awareness and create sustainable demand.**

**Your answers should particularly focus on the following aspects of the Keller’s Consumer Based Brand Equity Model:**

1. **Brand Image**
2. **Brand Salience**
3. **Brand Judgements and**
4. **Brand Resonance**
5. **Propose any other appropriate recommendations on the actions or strategies that the company can undertake to build and grow the brand.**

**ASSIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS**

**Refer to the assignment rubrics on the main assignment page on MyCourses.**

* This assignment is assessed by means of an individual assignment of 2500 to 3000 words
* You are encouraged to conduct external research to substantiate your answers.
* Reference all sources of external information used in your work and any additional information to support your answers can be included in the appendix
* The Report should be submitted and uploaded onto the MyCourses site on 8th May 2020 by 11.59 pm.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

* Demonstrate clear understanding of the relevant theoretical concepts and principles
* Convincing, clear and concise analysis of and in using relevant concepts and principles in the context of the information provided
* Ability to synthesize and to form creative responses
* Evaluation of issues
* Effectiveness of problem solving
* Ability to present the required information in an acceptable format
* To support an argument draw in evidence as well as assertion. Make extensive use of external information sources to support your answers where necessary.
* Refer to the literature. The more references you draw on the better.
* Think about structure.

**WARNING!!!**

Do not be tempted to **plagiarise** which is considered an academic dishonesty. **Plagiarism** includes copying direct from books, journals, websites etc. without acknowledgement and copying from other students' work. (See student Hand Book for details)