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Marketing 14-003

November 24, 2016

Marketing Strategy for British Airways Student Deal

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Executive Summary

British Airways is a multinational airline company with headquarters in Waterside, Harmondsworth, England. It is the largest airline in Great Britain based on the fleet size. Currently, British Airways is using 268 airplanes. The company is offering service within Great Britain, Europe and to all six continents. Together with American Airlines, Cathay Pacific, Qantas and

Canadian Airlines, British Airways is a founding member of OneWorld airline alliance (British Airways). OneWorld is the third largest alliance, behind SkyTeam and Star Alliance. British Airways has an almost 100 year history with commercial flights. During this time the company went through changes and mergers, to be where it is now. Even though, they are one of the biggest and best known airlines worldwide, there are opportunities that haven't been exploited yet.

This opportunity includes British students studying in America. Currently, over 9,000 British students study in the US, trending to only grow more in the future (The Complete University Guide). It's common knowledge that students are always on a tight budget and plane-tickets to America are not always cheap. Especially if everything for one year has to fit into one 23 Kg/50 Lbs suitcase. Many students have to spend a lot of money for the ticket itself. In addition, they need to buy a lot of things for college that they couldn't fit in the suitcase anymore. At the moment, British Airways' price for a roundtrip from London to New York and back is around \$690, outside of any season. The price will raise when it is getting closer to the start of a new semester or around the holidays. Many students are not loyal to a specific airline. They book the cheapest and most convenient flight for them. British Airways seldom is under these categories. That way it is very hard for them to attract younger flyers and get them as customers.

British Airways can implement a new Student Offer for British Students flying to the US for college. Included in this offer are two 23 Kg/50 Lbs suitcases and a seat with extra legroom. This offer is about \$100-\$200 cheaper than a normal flight. This will not only help the students but also British Airways. That way, students can already earn miles and points and become loyal to British Airways. The students might stick to the company for a long period of time and therefore can increase their customer share.

Market Analysis:

The airline industry is a very competitive market. It connects almost every part of the world with each other. This market is one major part of the establishment of the global economy and its connectedness (Global Airline Industry Program). The airline market can be distinguished into four different markets: International, National, Regional, and Cargo.

Many airlines serve at least regional and national wide. Only bigger airlines, such as British Airways, Lufthansa, United, or Singapore Airlines fly to international destinations. All international flying airlines have usually an annual revenue of over \$1 Billion.

One strength British Airways relies on, is its large global presence. According to MarketLine British Airways is “one of the world’s leading global premium airlines” (MarketLine). This global presence plus its strong brand image helps British Airways attract customer around the globe.

In addition, strategic partnerships with other airlines promise the British Airways customer service almost worldwide. British Airways partnered up with American Airlines, after its merger with US Airways, to give its customers more access to the US. A total of 70 flights per day between the US and UK were offered due to this new partnership. Customers could book direct flights from London or Manchester to Charlotte, from Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh to Philadelphia, and Madrid or Barcelona to Philadelphia and Charlotte. British Airways customer have a great variety of direct flights into America, only because of strategically planned partnerships (MarketLine).

Although British Airways has many strengths, it does have some weaknesses. The most important one is the overdependence on the UK. Almost 50% of the revenue comes from the United Kingdom (MarketLine). Even though this means that British Airways has established itself

in the United Kingdom, this also means that if for some reason flights have to get cancelled, such as the volcano eruption of the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajökull, it will suffer an enormous loss. For the given example, British Airways said the loss they incurred, was up to £20 Million per day (Wearden). This shows how vulnerable British Airways is, by being very concentrated on one market.

Another major weakness for British Airways is its significantly non-current liabilities.’’ At the moment, British Airways has total long-term borrowings of \$6,789.8 million. This means an increase of 19% from the previous fiscal year 2013. In addition, the company has non-current liabilities of \$9,595.6 million in the fiscal year 2014. If the lenders of either liability proclaim their amounts payable, British Airways could get into a delicate situation and become cash restricted. Furthermore, this could lead to a limitation of financial and operating activities for British Airways. If this would become public, it would be extremely difficult for the company to withstand competitive pressure of other companies (MarketLine).

Despite the weaknesses, British Airways has also opportunities to benefit from. Expansions around the world makes the airline more attractive to customers. British Airways is adding new routes to its market on a regular basis. New destinations are for example the Greek Islands of Mykonos and Santorini, as well as the fast-growing air hub Chengdu in China`s Sichuan Province (MarketLine), as well as many other destinations on almost every continent.

The introduction of newer or more modernized aircrafts is another opportunity for British Airways. The company bought eight Airbus A380s and eight Boeing 787s by the end of fiscal year 2014. With this purchase the company made sure they will stay competitive for the longer intercontinental routes. In total, British Airways added 25 new aircrafts to their fleet by the end of the fiscal year 2014 (MarketLine).

With globalization, the emergence of developing economies and growing demand of travel infrastructure, raising foreign tourism, connections and increasing international business, the opportunities for British Airways are significant. The United Nations World Tourism Organization researched that international tourists reached 1,138 million in 2014. That is 51 million more tourists than in 2013. Especially the American and Asia Pacific regions showed an increase by 7% and 5%. For British Airways, this means a big potential growth, if they can attract more customers (MarketLine).

Even though there are a lot of opportunities, there are also a few threats against British Airways. The very first one is the most obvious one for airlines. There are some competitors, especially in Europe, that have a lower airfare price than British Airways. Companies, such as Ryanair or EasyJet. Those two companies have a very low price for short Europe flights. That makes it harder for BA to stay competitive in this region. They would need to lower their prices as well to stay competitive. Some of the budget Airlines have a lower cost structure than British Airways, thus BA can only lower their prices so low. Which in this case would still probably not be enough. This is a great factor for flights inside Europe, as continental flights usually are not covered by cheaper airlines (MarketLine).

Governmental regulations is another threat to not only British Airways but the whole Airline industry. This industry is tightly regulated and almost every year the regulations and laws change for airlines. British Airways has to make sure they are able to implement all of them and is able to cover the costs that precede those changes (MarketLine).

Moreover, there has been an increase in new alternative types of travelling. Trains are still an alternative to travel by plane, or travel-busses, such as National Express, which offers trips around Great Britain with deals of £5 Funfares (Welcome To Great Britain). This changes how

people travel, if the customer isn't in a rush, it is a cheap and convenient alternative to flying, and a quick way to become a major threat to British Airways (MarketLine).

Market Segmentation:

The market for British Airways can be divided into four different segments: Geographics, Demographics, Behavioral and Psychographic. The next level of segmentation is the target, which refers to the segment of the market that is being targeted. This means for British Airways the four different levels of service: Economy, Premium Economy, Executive (Business) and First Class (Dudovski).

The first segment is regional Geographic. The economy class is used for all regions. Economy is the most used class for Domestic trips, flights into Europe or internationally. It is the cheapest class, which makes it the most affordable for many people. Premium Economy is mostly chosen for international flights, as it is a little more comfort and people are willing to pay a little bit more, but only if the trip is long enough to make it worth it. Executive and First class are also mostly used in international flights.

The second segment that can be studied is Demographics. Age is a very important sub-segment here. Each target segment can be assigned an age-group. Economy class is generally the only class that has all ages present. It ranges from Children to Old-Aged customers. Premium Economy is a little different, mostly teenagers or Middle-Aged people (30-50) travel in this class. This can be explained by the fact that some teenagers travel alone and their parents want them to have a little extra comfort. The second age group is also very plausible as they want extra comfort but maybe are not able to afford the Executive class. Hence, they settle for Premium Economy. Executive and First Class are both selected by Middle- to Old- Aged customers. They want the extra service and comfort, and are able to pay for it.

As mentioned before, the income also plays a role in this. Passengers in Economy Class have a lower to averaged income, while Premium Economy passengers are on the higher end of the average income. Executive and First class have the highest income of all customer classes.

This goes hand in hand with the education of the passengers. The most common educational degree of economy passengers is a high school or Bachelor`s degree. Customers in Premium Economy have a Bachelor`s degree while Passengers in Executive and First class averagely have a Business master`s degree.

The next segment is Behavioral. This segment has three sub-segments. Occasions, Attitude and Benefits sought. Economy passengers normally use the plane for travel. This means if the customer travels a lot it costs a lot of money. Therefore, the customer tries to keep that cost at a minimum. People who book premium economy normally don`t travel as regularly. They select it because it is something special to them and they want a little extra comfort, like vacations. Business trips are the majority of reasons why people are seated in Executive or First class. Although, in First Class, Honeymoons are also a regular seen occasion.

Attitude towards the plane-ride is a very important segment as well. Indifferent people normally travel in Economy Class. They are fine with the service they get and just want to get to their destination. The flight is just a way to get there. Premium Economy customers are positively indifferent. Although, they, as well, only want to get to their destination. They also want to enjoy the travel and want some extra service.

Enthusiastic are the people sitting in Executive and First Class. Both groups want to enjoy the time while traveling. Either they have to do work and need to be comfortable or they just want to enjoy the extra service that comes with being in either of these classes.

The last sub-segment of this group is Benefits Sought. Economy class customer mostly want their flight to be affordable. That is their main objective. Premium Economy passengers seek the value, they want to know that they are paying a little bit more than regular passengers, so they also expect a higher service than in Economy class. Executive and First Class passengers seek the Luxury within the flight. They want to have excellent service and enjoy the Luxury that comes with flying in these classes.

The last segment variable to discuss is the psychographic part. This segment can be divided into two sub-segments. The first one is the Lifestyle. People who fly Economy or Premium Economy are normally moderate -oriented. This means, they are mostly satisfied with what they have. They have everything in moderation. While Passengers in Executive and First Class are mostly Achievement-oriented. They always strive higher.

The second sub-segment in Psychographics is the Personality aspect. Passengers who fly in Economy or Premium Economy can be described as easy-going. They take everything the way it comes and make the best out of it. Customers of the Executive class are more determined. They know what they want and they strive for it. They won't let anything stop them. Passenger, who fly First class are normally described as being ambitious. They desire success and power. (Dudovski)

Consumer Problem/Opportunity:

Many students come from Great Britain to America to study and live here for the school year. Usually, Airlines give travelers one checked bag included in the price of the flight-ticket. For students, who try to pack their whole life into this one suitcase, this could become a little problematic. They need to fit everything into 23 Kg (50 Pounds), which is not easy. Another problem opens for students studying in the US. They are on a tight budget all the time, especially when going to an American University where the tuition is normally higher than in any British

University. Thus, they might not be able to pay another £100 on an extra bag. However, that means they can't bring everything and will need to buy these products later. Both scenarios will affect the budget.

Sometimes passengers try to pack the things that didn't fit in the suitcase anymore into the carry-on suitcase. The problem with this though, the overhead departments are filled very quickly, and passengers have to put it somewhere else on the plane. That means they can't keep focus on this and might feel uneasy about it.

Market Opportunity:

Students are a growing market that doesn't get enough attention from airlines. If British Airways introduces a student offer, including two checked bags and a seat with extra legroom, they can get ahead of competitors and also earn Loyalty of some of those students. This opens up a new opportunity for them to win people over and make them loyal British Airways customer in the future. By giving students an extra checked bag, they will save money, but it might also empty out the overhead departments. If students can pack more things in their suitcases, they might don't feel the need to bring a carry-on suitcase, which benefits other passenger segments as well, such as business man/women.

Cultural Differences:

Although both countries speak English as their first language, they are different in many aspects. British people, or Europeans in general, have a different perspective of distance. 100 Kilometers is already considered far away for most people in the United Kingdom. Meanwhile, it is quite near in America. This is due to the higher populations in areas and the size of Europe. Everything is smaller in Europe, there are many countries next to each other and it makes travelling much easier. Likewise, it is quite common for British people to travel abroad. It only takes a four

hour drive or a one hour plane ride to get to another country. British children are used to traveling to other countries from a young age on. Because of that, it is much more common for British students to study abroad and move to America. That is one of the reasons, why the student offer originates in Great Britain towards the United States. British students are more open to studying abroad (Eupedia).

While there are differences between them, there is also the similarity of language. British Students are more open to studying in America because the language is the same, they don't have to worry about not being able to understand everything or not getting good grades because of the language barrier.

Target Segment

The above-mentioned similarities and differences are one of the reasons why British students are a good target for the introduction of a new airline segment. Not only are they open to studying abroad, they also have the advantage of the exchange rate. British students get \$1.24 for £1 (X-Rates). That makes it very cheap for them to study here. Even with the `Brexit` out of the European Union and the exchange rate declining, it still is a lot cheaper for them.

Initial Basic Idea:

The demand of flights to the United States from London is steadily on the raise. At the moment there are no student offers for flights. This is a great opportunity for any airline that introduces it. Thus, the proposition is to offer special student deals from British Airways with an extra checked bag and a seat with more legroom. This is a niche that hasn't been used yet and can earn British Airways more customer and also more revenue.

Further Information about Target Segment:

Every year 12,000 new British students come to America to study and earn a degree. Even the most prestigious schools see an increase of British students. The British part at Harvard University increased by 46% in the last 3 years. At Yale the number of British students even doubled over the last five years. This shows that the demand for international flights from the UK to America will not decline but rather increase (The Telegraph). Also the demand for cheaper flights for students will be present. Especially over the holidays, where the prices raise exponentially. Most of British students are Christians, that means they will be flying back home for Christmas. Both aspects will increase the demand for flights, thus a newly introduced international student offer will be accepted and can improve the reputation of British Airways. At the moment, their reputation is crumbling through strikes, delays due to weather, bad service (Millward). By introducing this new deal, they will show that they are willing to work and improve their services.

Marketing Mix:

Product:

The product we're proposing is a completely new idea for an airline company. As mentioned above, British Airways will introduce an exclusive deal for international students who study in the United States. Students get offers to for a roundtrip, from London Heathrow to any major city in the US and back, for an especially low price. In addition, they will get a second 23 Kg suitcase to make the adjustment of moving to America as convenient as possible. As a special on top of that, the seats will have extra legroom, so the students can enjoy their flight a little bit more and be as rested as possible for the start of their new adventure in the US. To validate their enrollment in an American college, the student would need to send any proof of such when booking the ticket. This could be, for example their I-20.

We chose this product as there is no competition from any other major airline company in this market segment. No airline offers any special student deals from Europe to America. Although Scandinavian Airlines, short SAS, has a Youth Ticket, this is only available for flights around Scandinavia and Europe (SAS). There is a website called “StudentUniverse.com” but it only searches for flights through regular websites that compare flights, such as Expedia.com or Hotels.com. “StudentUniverse.com” doesn’t give any special offers only for students.

Another reason we chose this product, it can help British Airways’ problem with customer loyalty (UKEssays). By introducing this service, many students will always choose British Airways, because they will be cheaper than competitors, with extra features included. That way the students can earn miles on their flights and redeem them later on. That way they will be hooked to BA. In addition, when they always fly with the same company and are happy with the service they are more hesitant to switch to a different airline after some time. The dissatisfaction of British Airlines has to be big enough to make the switching cost worth it. Otherwise, the students will get older and become loyal to British Airways and, thus solving the problem of not having enough loyal customers.

Place:

In order to be successful with this, it is essential that British students and their parents become aware of this new service. Because of that, the best place to introduce is obviously Great Britain, especially the London ‘hub’. The main distribution channels would be the Internet, particular the British Airways homepage, and e-mail notifications to already existing subscribers around 8-14 weeks before classes start. As those are generally the dates when international flights are booked (Geekyexplorer).

Furthermore, British Airways could start a partnership with organizations that help British students study in the US, such as Education USA. That way, when a student works with them, the organization can immediately tell them about this deal. This also helps the student because then he or she doesn't need to search through all the websites to find the cheapest flight. The organization sends British Airways the dates, when the student wants to fly, and British Airways will give them a variety of flights to choose from.

Lastly, British Airways can collaborate with websites, such as Expedia.com, so that they will put an extra button "Student deals" on their website. Thus, students searching for offers for them could immediately see that there are deals specially made for them.

Price:

To make this new product financially attractive to students and their parents, the price needs to be significantly lower than competitors. For this reason, the flight ticket will be between \$400 and \$600, depending on the season and time of booking. Although, this might be only be \$100 to \$200 below a normal flight ticket (Expedia), the extra suitcase and seat with more legroom are already included in that. On normal international flights an upgrade to a seat with more legroom costs \$75 (British Airways). In addition, an extra suitcase costs between \$70 and \$75 (British Airways). All together that makes an extra \$150 to \$155. That means that British Airways is about \$200 to \$355 cheaper than competitors, which should make it a great deal and very attractive to students.

Although this is a great deal for students, British Airways needs to make sure that they don't incur a loss because of that. Hence, the offer will be limited to three students per flight. That way, there are enough other passengers who pay the full price for their seats.

The price differs around \$200, because of seasons and time of booking. The closer the date is to the departure date, the more expensive the flight, if the offer is still open. Another reason, flights are getting more expensive around holidays, especially Christmas. Not to lose money, flights around those times will be more on the upper limit, around \$600, which is still cheaper than British Airways` competitors.

Promotion:

As already mentioned a little bit in `Place`, a lot of Promotion would be by using the Internet as a main distribution channel, especially the British Airways Homepage. But to make consumer aware of this new offer, British Airways would also use Pop-ups or general ads. These pop-ups and ads would work like any other online advertisement, too. As soon as a potential customer searched for a flight to America, an ad or pop-up will come up on their internet sites.

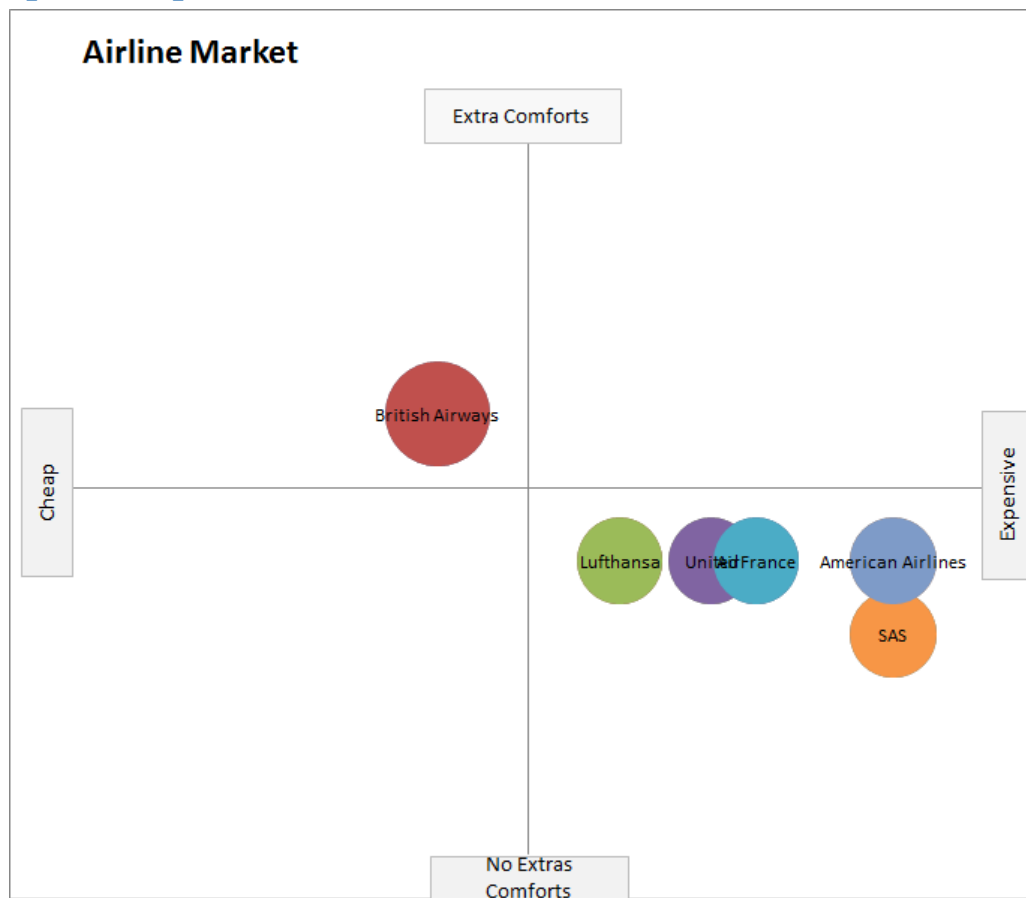
Secondly, e-Mail notifications about the introduction of the new Student Deal will be sent to every British Airways subscriber. That way, even if they don`t have children going to school in America, they will know of this, and through Word-Of-Mouth it could spread to their friends, when the topic of flights to America comes up. These notifications would be sent out around June and July, September and October, and January February. These are the months that are around 8-12 weeks before school semester start or end.

Thirdly, commercials in TV are still a way to reach people. The normal Briton watches 15+ hours TV a week (Alice Kay). Through the mixture of online and TV advertising, it will become more prominent (Garland). British Airways wouldn`t place a commercial on every channel all times, but more around Primetime on ITV. ITV reaches 54.2 million people in Great Britain. With this, ITV is the second most viewed TV Channel (Statista). Although BBC 1 reaches more

Britons, BBC doesn't show any commercials. By posting only on one channel, it doesn't get too expensive and British Airways can make sure that the message still comes across the nation.

Lastly, British Airways could promote their new deals with insertions in Newspaper. Even though it's very uncommon to still read actual newspaper in America, in the United Kingdom, this is a little bit different. Almost everyone still reads paper Newspaper at breakfast (Murphy). Hence, by placing an advertisement it is very possible that parents of students will become aware of the new student deal.

Perceptual Map:



By making the product cheaper than the competitors with specials included, the second suitcase and a seat upgrade, British Airways is placed in the upper left quadrant. This is a very

good place for British Airways, because it shows that they are cheaper than all their competitors and there are no competitors in this segment yet.

Implementation Strategy:

The way to implement this new product would happen mainly through mass media usage, such as TV, the Internet, and Newspaper. The advertisements would be made for British viewers. Therefore, it would include more subtle messages and be politer. A story would be included in the commercial, as well as some humor to be entertaining. Britons advertisements are very different from Americans. They have less forwardness in them and are more subtle in what they are trying to say.

Conclusion

In essence, the introduction of the student deal will show that British Airways is willing to work and change their image of being only a premium airline to adapt to a new audience. It shows that they want to help students and don't mind maybe losing a little bit of revenue for that. Even though, they have a second agenda to hopefully make these students loyal in the future.

Furthermore, it will bring the company ahead of their competitors. More students will choose British Airways more frequently and increase the revenue and market share. All in all, this deal will benefit British Airways in more ways than one.

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