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Master's Degree in Engineering and Management



Master's Degree Thesis

Business Models Innovation on Student Communities

Supervisor

Prof. PAOLO LANDONI

Candidate

MOHAMADKAMMOUH

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Preface

This Master's thesis was conducted between Nov 2021 – Feb 2022. It was the final part of my Master of Science degree in Engineering and Management at Politecnico Di Torino.

I want to thank my supervisor, Prof. PAOLO LANDONI, for the opportunity to do my thesis about my new startup that is regarding the improvement of student communities; I also wish to thank all the respondents, without whose cooperation I would not have been able to conduct this analysis and stay motivated to keep going until I make it happens ASAP.

In addition, the experience I had regarding student communities has helped and made all that I am planning now, so I would like to thank all workers and partners who worked very hard.

I hope you enjoy your reading.

Turin – Italy 2022

MOHAMAD KAMMOUH

Abstract

The global movement of students who travel every year around 6-8 million for study aims is continuous due to its importance and annual growth rate of 10%; this step in a student's life is critical since it is a career decision.

Starting a new life in a new cultural environment might sound attractive; students usually lose interest halfway through. This often happens when the magic of enthusiasm vanishes, and questions start to rise in their minds: How can I handle the paperwork? How can I find a house quickly? How will I deal with foreigners speaking a different language? Are there hidden opportunities? And the thoughts go on and on. The large number of questions generated in the student's heads makes them hesitate whether they are fit for such a journey, and this is when most of the students decide to quit.

From previous experience in the educational consultancy industry, students cannot make the journey independently. It is not a coincidence that most international students know someone abroad or sign a contract with an agency. Indeed, having someone to help is the primary motivation for anyone to consider this opportunity. This brings another question: what about students who would like to study somewhere abroad but don't know someone or don't have what it takes to do everything on their own? Or cannot afford what agencies ask for? Unfair opportunities will occur.

Some existing models try to solve students' problems for their journey, but there are many defects. These models couldn't solve the problem because of limited resources and high-priced services; instead, they made more problems arise.

Since a group of students who lack knowledge is losing the opportunity to travel and achieve their dreams, the research objective is to give fair chances to everyone by removing all obstacles that stand in front of a student's dreams and creating an innovative model for student communities that solve the mainstream problems and the problems that the existing services couldn't solve.

This research aims to create a peer-to-peer platform that links students willing to travel with another student who made the same journey living in the destination city to help during their admission and enrollment procedure, adding to post-travel services. The job is to ensure a concrete

platform with perfect management and logistics to let both peers interact smoothly, safely, trusty, and be scalable to contain the worldwide market.

Data from the previous experience “Ready4study” were promising; 50+ students got complete services packages. In contrast, 700+ students were interested and contacted by the agency for a free orientation which indicates the demand. Still, instead of having an agency with limited resources, we propose a new model that eliminates the limitation of resources and allows people with a low budget to study abroad and excellent scalable service.

The analysis of the competitors gave a sign that a peer-to-peer platform as the model proposed by this research is not yet provided in the market, which is an advantage. In contrast, the creation of the platform, with all implementation and strategies discussed in the research, will assure a successful innovative method to solve the problem of this research perfectly.

The research results answer the study’s question. They suggest that potential investors will take this start-up seriously to make it real, considering that a serious execution will be operated to reach success.

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1. Introduction

This research study is related to student communities globally and the facilitation that could be offered for their study travel treated in a new innovative model. It merges the society and lets students provide services related to the study travel for each other.

The continuous global movement that is seen due to studying reasons as Study Abroad Student Statistics Show¹ will always exist, people are willing to change their country to look, but also, they take this step for many other reasons such as learning new languages, to be merged in new cultures, experiencing new lifestyle and improve Cross-cultural competencies.

The journey of a student who is traveling to study is not simple, and a lot of difficulties may happen, so these noticed problems can be solved by making an innovative method regarding student communities the world; this method can be scaled up to contain all the markets in the world, which will surely make a positive global impact regarding the education movement and the student communities, This method can also agitate societies and encourage new students to start thinking about studying abroad due to the facilitation that has been provided.

As noticed that existing models are not always perfect and optimized for the benefit of the student, and can't cover all the market demand, then a need for further research is born to know if it is possible to apply a new innovative method that can fill the gaps.

In this research, we will focus on the problem and the service to solve it, covering the existing services and our new method, to see if it is compatible with the proceeding and making this new method a future start-up to let it solve this global problem that faces students while traveling for study aims.

This research will answer the question: Will this new method be a good choice for students? Will they switch from other competitors? Will the service works? Is it scalable? Could it be standardized? Will it fill the gaps that exist in the industry nowadays or not?

As a starting point and due to previous experience and the business plan, we notice that the new method will be successful due to the seen demand and need to be proven in this research.

2. Problem and Solution

Due to globalization, the demand to study abroad will remain, as seen in the Learning mobility statistics². Still, it is constrained due to some difficulties that face students like fear of change, bureaucracy, lack of knowledge, and logistic challenges, these difficulties make unfair chances for a lot of students first, and in case they are not capable of having a big budget to solve this problem they will give up on their dreams. In addition, there is no easy way to reach a person who has already made the same journey to take guidance based on previous experience, and even if this person is found, there is no reason to waste time to help a stranger.

Literature review about studying abroad

Studying abroad is a need for students in the world, heading for a world-class education, but not just for this reason, however, a lot of reasons are an excuse to fly to a far-off country, such as good looking on a CV as experienced living internationally goes well with employers showing that there is a capability for dealing with people from different cultures and a high level of adaptability, new language skills since learning a new language is hard to be done just by taking classes traveling will surely add this feature and let a person know a new language perfectly, adding to seeing the world which is for sure an aim for a young student that will achieve it in parallel with the studying plan, career opportunities is also a goal for students since they chose a destination that has potential to reach success in their career, in addition to finding new interest while merged in a new culture and facing unique experience. A lot of personal skills will be gained by this step, such as self-reliance, independence, learning more about the self, becoming an adult by taking more responsibilities and having a global and open mindset.

However, students see the study abroad experience as an investment for their personal, professional, economic, social, cultural, and linguistic development. They also expect socialization and cultural integration to have faster learning outcomes in the host environment.

Some statistics facts from The Institute for International Education of Students survey to explore the long-term impact of study abroad on students' personal, professional, and academic lives.

- 95% of the surveyed students admitted that studying abroad catalyzed increased maturity, 96% reported increased self-confidence, and 95% said it had a lasting impact on their worldview.
- 98% of the students stated that studying abroad helped them better understand their cultural values and biases, and 82% said it helped them develop a more sophisticated way of looking at the world.
- Three-quarters of the respondents said they acquired skill sets that influenced their future career paths. Companies are willing to hire students with a recommendation letter from foreign universities

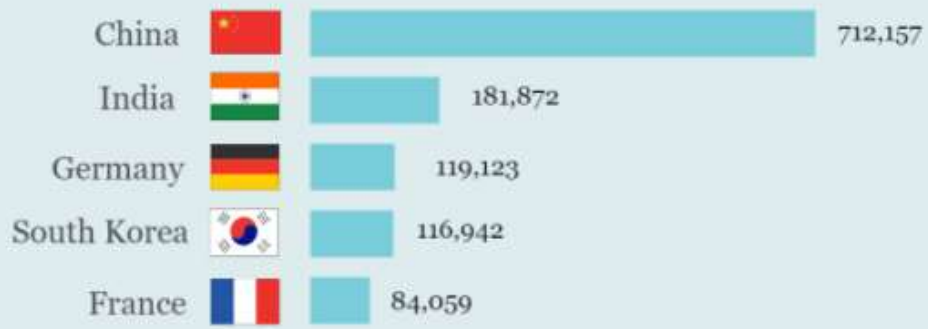
While the Erasmus impact study (2013) found that:

- More than 85% of Erasmus students study abroad to enhance their employability abroad.
- The statistics show that studying abroad increases the chances of successful employment. After graduation, 74% of college students reported starting a professional career.
- 64% of employers think that an international experience is essential for recruitment.
- More than 1 in 3 Erasmus students who completed a job placement abroad were hired or offered a position by their host company.
- 64% of surveyed employers said that graduates with an international background are more often given greater professional responsibility.

Regarding the global trends of studying abroad²²:

- According to Mark in Style, *“Worldwide, nearly five million students are enrolled in higher education institutions outside their country.”*
- And according to OECD²³, *“The global number of students who study abroad continues to rise with an annual increase of 10%. There were almost **5 million** international students in 2014. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has projected that, with demographic changes, the international student population is likely to reach **8 million** by 2025.”*
- The countries with the most students studying abroad are China and India. According to UNESCO, 712,157 Chinese students were studying abroad in 2013.

Top 5 countries of origin of mobile students, 2013



Source: <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-student-flow-viz.aspx>

Figure 1 International student flow

- According to the Ministero dell'Università e Della Ricerca the student population is as follows²⁰



Popolazione studentesca				
Studenti	Totali	di cui donne	di cui stranieri	Anno di riferimento
Immatricolati	330.898	184.040	17.712	2020/2021
Iscritti	1.793.210	1.009.109	101.091	2020/2021
Laureati	344.850	196.384	15.648	2020

Il totale degli iscritti comprende gli immatricolati. Gli immatricolati totali si riferiscono agli studenti dei corsi di laurea triennale e a ciclo unico

Figure 2 International students flow to Italy

in which almost **101K** international students study in Italy for the 2020/2021 academic year, 17.7K of those students are new enrolled international students.

People believe that studying abroad is a must regarding the importance of studying abroad. The statistics below from Statista show “*Share of individuals who think that young people have to move abroad to advance their careers in Italy in 2016, by age.*”

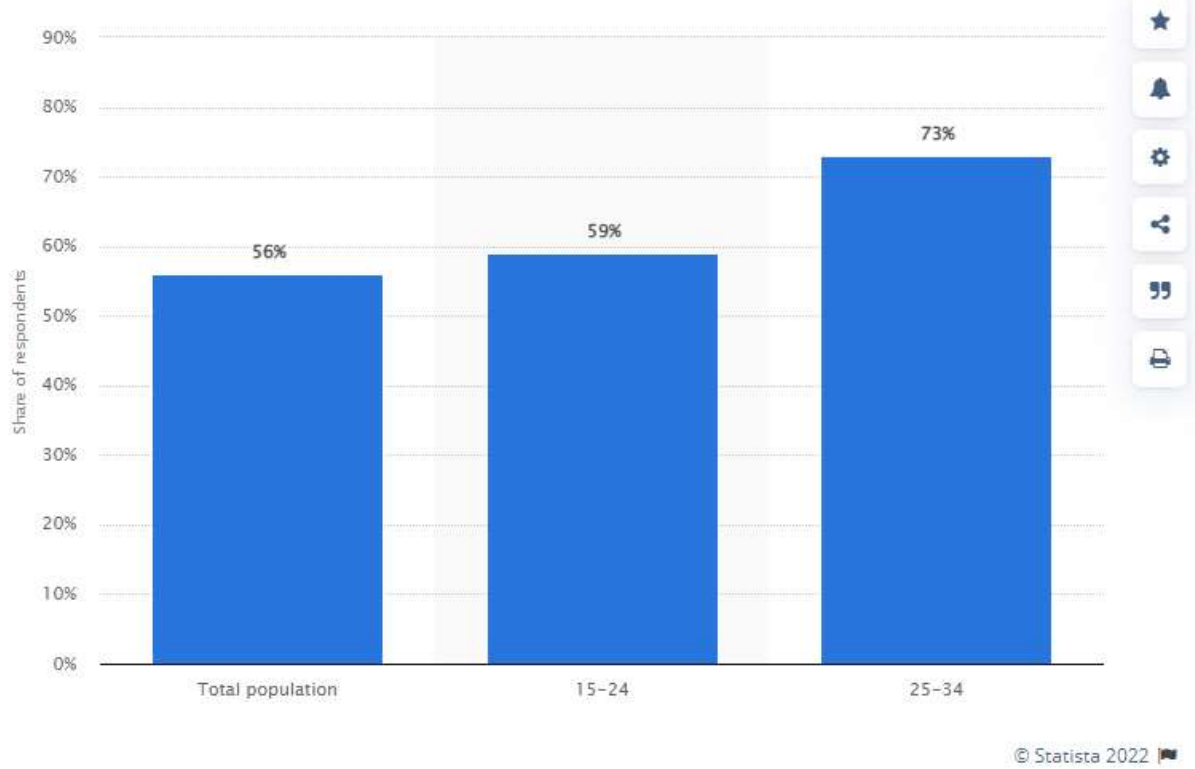


Figure 3 Share of individuals who think that young people have to move abroad to advance their careers in Italy in 2016, by age.

Mainstream Problems

As we know, such a decision of starting a new life culture environment will indeed have problems and difficulties; we will introduce two types of issues; the first one is mainstream problems that face students, some agencies and organizations have already solved this type of problems while the other kind of problems is the aim of this study which are the issues and gaps of these already existing models and methods.

The decision to travel for the study aim and other reasons mentioned above coincide with difficulties and problems that face many students, either it lets them quit and give up, or it lets them reach their aim, not in the perfect way.

These problems that face the student emerge from cultural, social, economic, and educational perspectives.

Students at the beginning fear getting out of their comfort zone in their countries with their families. They also fear the cultural differences and standards adding to the language barriers.

Language barriers are one of the most common challenges of studying abroad; even if a person has learned the language, they always feel the difficulties at the beginning.

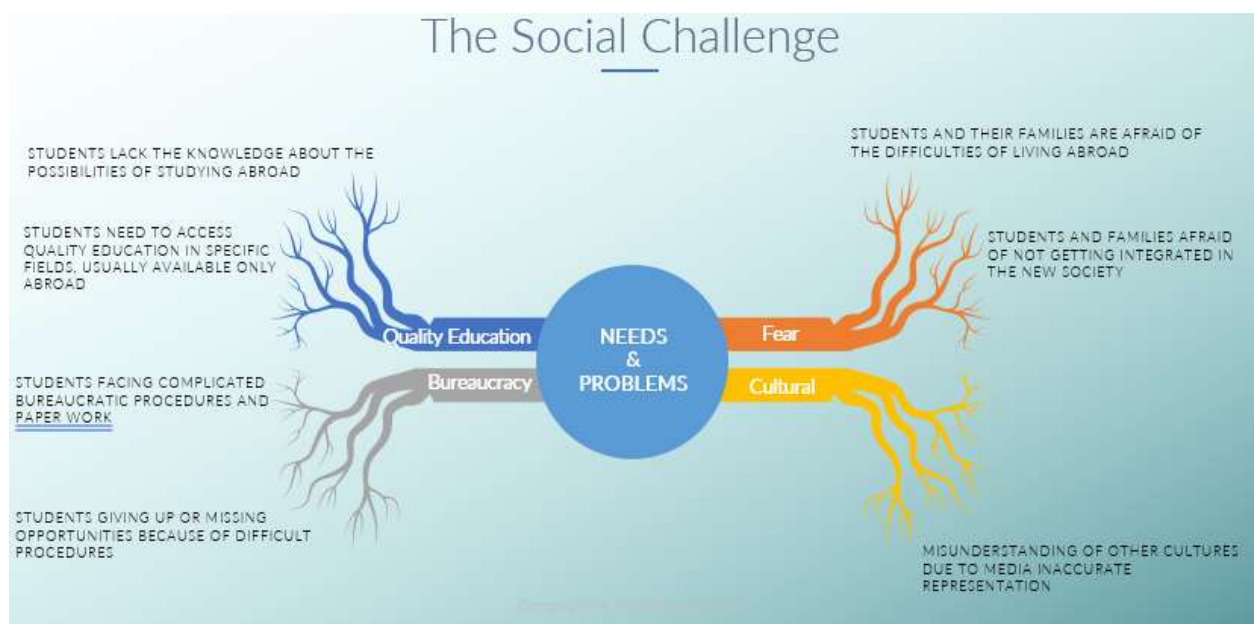


Figure 4 Social challenges

Adding to these initial difficulties, other questions arise in their mind regarding the know-how, questions such as “is it even possible for me to travel and study in this country? is it affordable for me to travel? Could I handle all expenses? How much does it cost? Isn’t it scary to go alone to another country? Where will I live? How can I find a house? Do I know all the info, or are many opportunities lost because I don’t know? How can I manage the paperwork?”

These questions are typical to emerge in a student’s head; a person who did these steps knows that it is not impossible, but from a new student’s perspective, the existence of tons of questions and doubts makes an illusion. All the enthusiasm will disappear, and a student will stop proceeding through this step and start to find a substitution for his journey.

The graph below, “Difficulties perceived during or after an ERASMUS+ scholarship by Romanian students in 2019.”

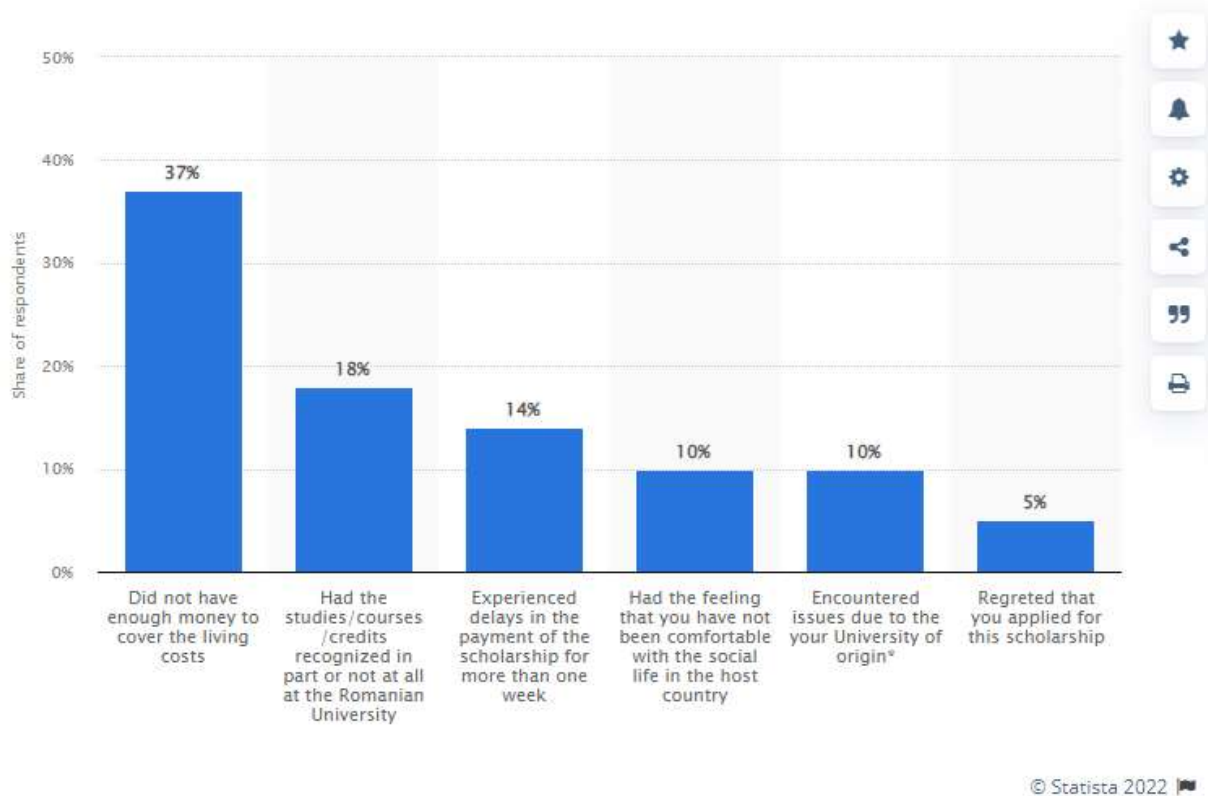


Figure 5 Difficulties perceived during or after an ERASMUS+ scholarship by Romanian students in 2019.”

As noticed, most students regret this step because of various problems that occur suddenly with them; however, some existing solutions cannot even solve these problems.

We will interpret in our proposed solution how it could help reduce some of these problems that faced the Erasmus students.

Existing Solution

Regarding the Mainstream problems mentioned above, we will introduce the existing solution as the current models and methods to solve these problems.

These models in the market are agencies as educational consultants that offer students various solutions for their travel study and facilitate their journey by providing a high-priced service.

We will list some of the competitors inside and outside Italy; then, we will list the leading competitors and analyze this model.

Competitors inside Italy

- ³Education First: Founded in 1965, it focuses on language and schools, cultural exchange, educational travel, and real estate holdings; they also have an opportunity to work with them as a teacher, mainly expensive for an average of 15K euro for a year for language learning. They help entirely students from A-Z.
- ⁴Studenti: Italian association that helps students during their academic life with diverse knowledge and offers excellent guidance and information about scholarships in Europe and worldwide.
- ⁵WEP: they help students transfer them to a partner private university and language programs outside Italy, mainly expensive.
- ⁶Educational Consultants: they help students during their journey (university application UCAS, language requirements) for UK, USA, and Netherlands.
- ⁷University Network: the most significant community that connects students in Italy, collaborates with universities in Italy and guides students in general in their careers.
- ⁸You abroad: Italian community that help students to travel while they are still in high school by making a family host them or for their university career by assisting them through the procedure of application, excellent and professional community

- ⁹Portale Dei Giovani: guide and access point for all students to get information to travel or to study or to work, there are partnerships with entities such as Erasmus+, euro desk, yes4europe.
- ¹⁰Comune di Torino -Torino Giovane-: information guideline regarding scholarships offered by embassies of other countries in Italy, help for work opportunities, etc.....
- ¹¹Scambi Europei: an association that guides students regarding the vast opportunities to study in Europe and its good diversity .

Abroad

- ¹²Study abroad: this private corporation is owned by education dynamics based in the USA; they help students to travel and study abroad either for high school or for university studies; it is professional but costly.
- Studies abroad: Since 1987, International Studies Abroad (ISA) has provided college students in the United States and Canada the opportunity to explore the world.
- Erasmus+: Erasmus+ is a platform for international students who want to study abroad without worrying about anything other than experiencing the experience.
- ¹³Uniagent: based in India and powered by global reach which is market leaders, the best community saw regarding helping students for their studies abroad, they have their CRM regarding this aim and also a mobile application for the steps of the student and most important is that it includes searching for agents in your region, it also has massive relations as integrated regarding helping students to find accommodation by redirecting them to a partner, not just students can work, but rather institutions or consultants and a lot of their consultants are Italians

- Goabroad: in 1997, GoAbroad first set out to fill the information gap between students with a desire to travel abroad and companies offering international programs.
- Aifsabroad: AIFS is a leading provider of study abroad programs. Since 1964, over 1.5 million students have traveled abroad with AIFS. With more than 50 years of experience.
- ¹⁴Global reach: based in India, market leaders and they do a complete service for students to study abroad mainly in Australian Universities
- ¹⁵Go overseas: Redirect students to various agents regarding their search result and the region (Peveto, J.,2021)
- ²¹Travel2study: Spanish company, best company website seen in showing and demonstrating student consultancy services, they have a great community, the did as any consultancy agency that helps a student individually by essential services and VIP services that can cost too much.
- Ready4study: Italian society 2017-2021, as educational consultants that helps students from Arabic countries study abroad. They help students through university applications, visa procedures, and post-arrival services.

The business models for some of the existing solutions

GOABROAD:

Services Offered:

- Study Abroad
- Volunteer Abroad
- High School
- Language School
- Jobs Abroad
- Teach Abroad
- Internship Abroad
- TEFL Courses

Application process:

- Online application

Customer Service:

- Online advisor
- Insurance
- Embassies help
- Scholarships
- Study Abroad Loan

STUDIESABROAD:**Services Offered:**

- CP Manager dedicated to your program
- Airport transportation
- Student accommodations
- Health and liability insurance
- On-site orientation and city tour
- Cultural activities in the host city
- Day or overnight excursions
- Organized group meals
- Reserved classroom space
- Access to on-site ISA offices
- 24-hour ISA resident staff support
- Re-entry resources
- Student and faculty program evaluation

Application process:

- Online application or printed one

Customer service:

- they offer an internship.
- Services-learning.
- High school.
- Scholarships
- Housing
- Cultural Activities.
- Airport Reception
- Visa Support

STUDYABROAD:**Service offered:**

- Search engine:
 - Search by program level
 - Search by program type
 - Search Programs by Country
- Resources and Essential Info for Study abroad
- Student Stories & Reviews
- Comprehensive Program Directory (including summer study abroad, internship, service learning and volunteer abroad programs, high school study abroad, intensive language programs)

Customer service:

StudyAbroad website is accessible to the user. They hope to encourage students to use their system to research study abroad opportunities. They, provide

- The most comprehensive and up-to-date listing of over 150,000+ study abroad programs.
- Information on over 100 study abroad scholarships
- Free access to the Study Abroad Student Guide

- Nearly 150 relevant articles to help students before, during, and after studying abroad
- Student study abroad blogs – written for students, by students

Other information:

Their revenue comes from Ads; they don't directly help students as our company does; they give them only access to information and programs providers (free).

Their business model is far from ours (they can be considered as indirect competitors rather than direct ones)

Using their service:

Random selection of programs (not inclusive). I search programs in Italy I found very few similarities. I used their service and sent it to the University of Torino and Siena for two applications. They were now waiting (not sure if the applications will be forwarded to the university or the website guys will handle my requests).

ERASMUSU:

Service offered:

It's a social network focused on Erasmus and international students of all kinds. Accessing their platform, a student can:

- Comment on any city or university in the world, share their experiences, and read the reviews of other users.
- Get information about any city or university (the weather, photos, forum, people in the city, reviews, other users' experiences, etc.)
- Meet people who were, are and will be in any city or university.
- Find their friends through a system that searches by university, city, mobility program, age, gender, etc...
- View ranking of the best cities and universities ordered by party, people, art, health, etc.

- Do all kinds of things you already know from another social network (writing on the board, private messages, uploading, tagging photos, changing your status, and much more).

Application process:

As a student, you can look for accommodation or roommates. Choose university/city, then select your move-in date and your move-out date, and you can access many announcements shared by other students.

Customer Service:

So simple, you search an accommodation in a particular city and search through the announcements you find, choose the one you like and book it.

The diversity of competitors makes us realize that most of them focus on offering a consultancy service for students who are willing to study abroad. They all have similar business models, which is good. Still, as seen and contacted with some of them, we can notice that:

There is an apparent defect in their services, and ambiguity regarding the prices and services leaves students searching on their website with doubts and unclear vision.

They enrich their websites with additional information regarding the student's journey, and then they provide the student with the option to contact them and have personal consultancy throughout their journey.

In the table below, a competitor matrix regarding some features between the competitors that offer the existing solution for students to study abroad.

Competitors Matrix										
Company	Web	Mobile app	Ad-free streaming	Free services	Map search	Local agent	Agent ranking	agent location	Different language support	Hiring local agents
Study abroad	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X
Studies Abroad	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
erasmusu	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X
Go abroad	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Aifs abroad	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
ready4study	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 6 Competitor's matrix

The APPENDICES below are the contact and further information for some contacted competitors.

The Gap (Main problem)

After mentioning the mainstream problems and the existing models that solve them, we can say that a new main issue has been raised after analyzing all current models.

The outcome is that the main problem is not entirely solved since these models have limited resources, high prices services, limited services, unclear services, which don't cover the worldwide demand and couldn't facilitate the journey for everyone. The existing services do NOT solve the problem we are trying to solve.

After analyzing the competitor's services that offer the existing solution, there is still a GAP in their mode; There are a lot of problems (listed below) that were born in this industry.

- High prices: while they may offer valuable and luxurious services, one potential disadvantage to consider is the cost, in which comprehensive package fees range between 850\$ - 10,000\$ according to data from the Independent Educational Consultants Association, while The average IECA member charged \$6,700 to work with international families, and the 2019 figure is estimated to have risen to \$7,500 for a comprehensive package, according to Sarah Brachman, director of communications for the association.
- Influenced decisions: Agents and consultants may recommend certain schools over others based on their opinions or biases since all agents manage a business for profit, and some might not have students' interests in mind.
- Reliance on others: while a student is taking a step mainly to start an independent career, one can see that charging an agency to handle everything will let a student miss out on taking the first step of his independent journey.
- Limited resources: after mentioning the number of students that study abroad, almost 5 million students, an agency can't handle this demand due to limited resources and services.
- Centralization: an agency has a centralized system that makes a more complex operation and execution, no standardization of the service, unstable quality of the service, complicated management in the agency, all this make them not able to reduce costs.

- Unscalable: Liability is challenging due to limited resources and the centralization problem.
- Unrepeatable: services due to individual connection between an agent and a student requiring different communication and behavior make the system unrepeatable, leaving the prices high and the organizational system complicated.
- Unfriendly: the system between agencies and a student is unfriendly since the agency is based on profit, and the aim is not focused on the student but on the benefit that comes from the student.
- Follow up: the agency doesn't relate personally with the student but instead in a professional manner, so they may strip their contractual agreement strictly and leave, which is a disadvantage since this service cannot be completed directly, but it may need some continuous follow-up.

The service and the possible new solution

Since sharing economy continues to experience rapid expansion, a lot of companies like Airbnb, Freelancer.com, Uber, etc....., have taken advantage of technological innovation and created platforms that connect people to transact business with each other either human or physical resources services and when scaling up numbers have shown that it is a booming trend.

However, the main idea of our model to solve the problems mentioned above is to offer a similar service to merge and link (Customer Students) that are willing to travel to study abroad with (Users_ Resident Students) who exist in that area, in which they are experts to help the upcoming students and fulfill their needs since they already experienced the same journey.

This service offered by a student could be like the service provided by any agency but for a low price instead.

This platform can let students offer a service or ask for a service and stay in touch after the services are done.

The service is going to be standardized as fixed procedures for users to join, Customers to ask for favors, peer-to-peer communication through concrete and maintained platform with safety and security regarding the personal data and the payments, and this will allow making this business has a potential to be scalable worldwide, in which will assure an unlimited resource since decentralized system occurs.

From a psychological point of view, communication between a student asking for services from another same-age student who already did and succeeded and is already living the dream will make the relationship trusty and friendly.

This system will let the student start the independent career by taking responsibility for the journey without relying entirely on others but rather to have help for the trip from an experienced person.

The wrong part of the influenced decision will be eliminated since the student chooses the other student for help after deciding the destination.

The most crucial advantage in this model is that the price is lower than the lowest services prices by 50% at least, in which a student can have the same services at affordable prices.

The table below will show a competitor matrix between the competitors regarding the features mentioned above and us:

Competitors Matrix										
Company	Web	Mobile app	Ad-free streaming	Free services	Map search	Local agent	Agent ranking	agent location	Different language support	Hiring local agents
Study abroad	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X
Studies Abroad	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
erasmusu	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X
Go abroad	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Aifs abroad	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
ready4study	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
US	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 7 Competitor’s matrix comparing to Us 1

Competitors Matrix									
Company	high prices	Bad influence on decisions	Reliance completely on others	Limited resources	Centralized System	Scalable	Repeatable	Friendly	Follow up
Study abroad	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
Studies Abroad	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
erasmusu	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X
Go abroad	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X
Aifs abroad	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
ready4study	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓
US	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 8 Competitor’s matrix comparing to Us 2

Below we will see a positioning map between us and some other competitors:



Figure 9 Positioning map

Our solution is a platform concrete and stable that connects people, besides:

- excellent maintenance of the platform
- Customer relationship management
- Customer care services and assistance
- Safe connection and secure money transactions
- Fair policies for customer and supplier
- Link User & Customer, tracking and controlling (User to Customer)
- Shows complete profile for users truthfully
- Provide certified users that offer help
- Ensure the payment acquirement for the user that worked

Services offered between the two peers will be mentioned in the MVP chapter.

As mentioned before, our service offers help from the User towards the student/customer in the pre-and post-arrival. It will be defined and detailed later on.

After surfing the internet, we found plenty of communities that help students study abroad, but we did not find a service that exactly offers the linkage between the two parties as peer-to-peer.

Then, we can focus on our unique idea, which is the linkage between people, and we can be the first movers.

What is seen from this market research is that we have an advantage since our idea is not yet elaborated; as we know from other experiences, the trend is to be a peer-to-peer platform and to link customers to help another customer as seen by Airbnb, Uber...

Industry analysis

PEST Analysis:

Political: Taxation policies towards us, and maybe for students or residents if they exceed some specific income, and it depends on which country we are going to create the company.

Economic: Students who need a small income will get benefits, or resident families will have extra income for this service; in general, it is a new part-time job opportunity.

Social: it creates and merges a new community between students themselves or their families, creating more social relations.

Technological: after the pandemic, most people are familiar with online meetings. They can easily communicate with each other. The link between the user and customer will be using a platform, so a specific CRM should be configured and used regarding our prototype.

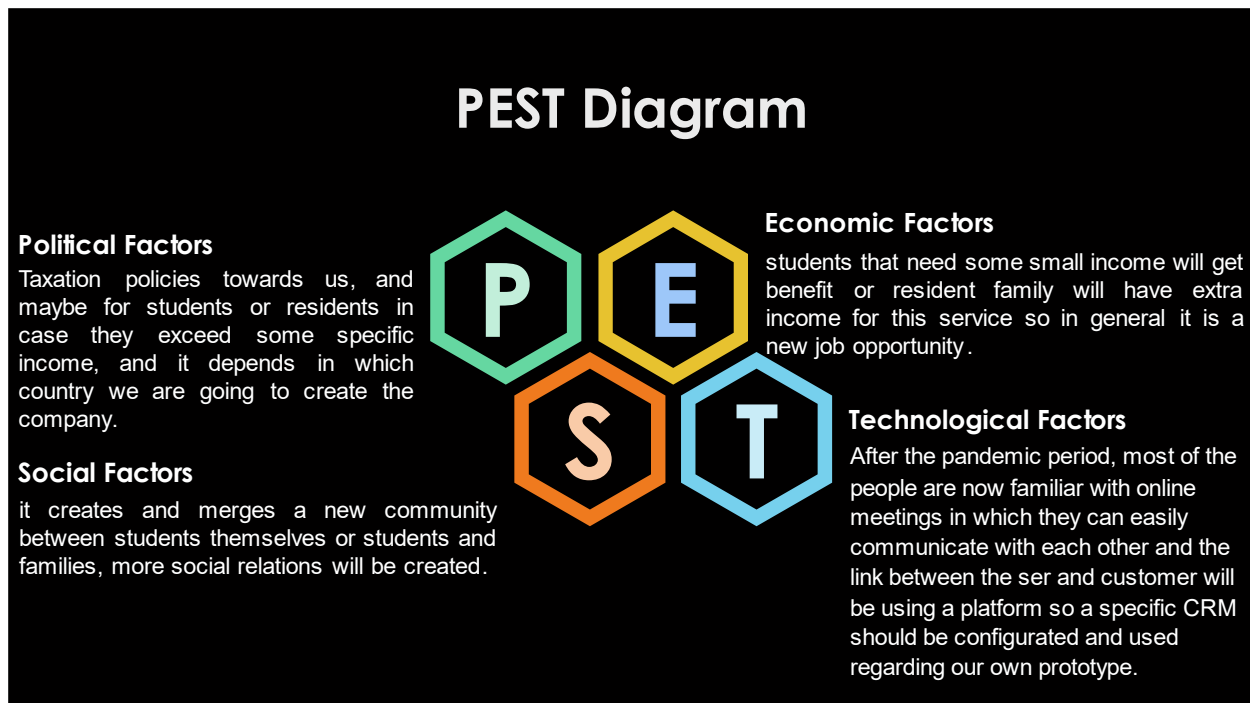


Figure 10 PEST Analysis

PORTER'S FIVE FORCES

1. **SUPPLIERS:** Resident students, Residents

BARGAINING POWER OF SUPPLIERS is low

The reason for the low bargaining power of suppliers is that suppliers are plenty (e.g., addressing a university we would have many international students that already did all steps, so they can guide since they did it, the switching cost will be 0 and depends on the rating and review of each supplier. Also, many resident people can offer this service since they know their city and have more facilities to host a new student coming to the town.

2. **INDUSTRY COMPETITORS:** Education First, You abroad, Educational Consultants, Study abroad, Uniagent, Global reach.

INDUSTRY RIVALRY Low

The rivalry between established competitors is considered low because:

- The market concentration is high. Hence the number of firms in the market worldwide is low
- The diversity of competitors is low; all competitors deliver almost the same service, and none of them are providing our leading service
- The industry is not growing much

3. **BUYERS:** Students

BARGAINING POWER OF BUYERS: low

Since we are the only offerors of this service and the people who are buying are not the students themselves but their families who are for sure able to pay since they already decided to let their son/daughter travel, and since we are offering an essential service that allowed the parents to be less stressed for sure they are going to pay.

Instead, there will be high bargaining power to our suppliers since, in the application, customers can change without switching costs and quickly since the price and rating of each supplier can be shown for every customer.

4. **SUBSTITUTES:** Friends, Relatives, Existing agencies copying the idea

THREATS OF SUBSTITUTES are low.

The customers have a low propensity to substitute our service with others since they should from the beginning not to consider us since they have relatives in the destined city, and this is a low percentage or another agent to copy our service. Still, they will have the disadvantage of late entry and not being the first movers.

5. **POTENTIAL ENTRANTS:** the probability that new entrants will join the industry is low

THREATS OF NEW ENTRANTS is low

The main reasons not driving potential entrants are:

- brand loyalty since they are not first movers, they need time to create brand loyalty.

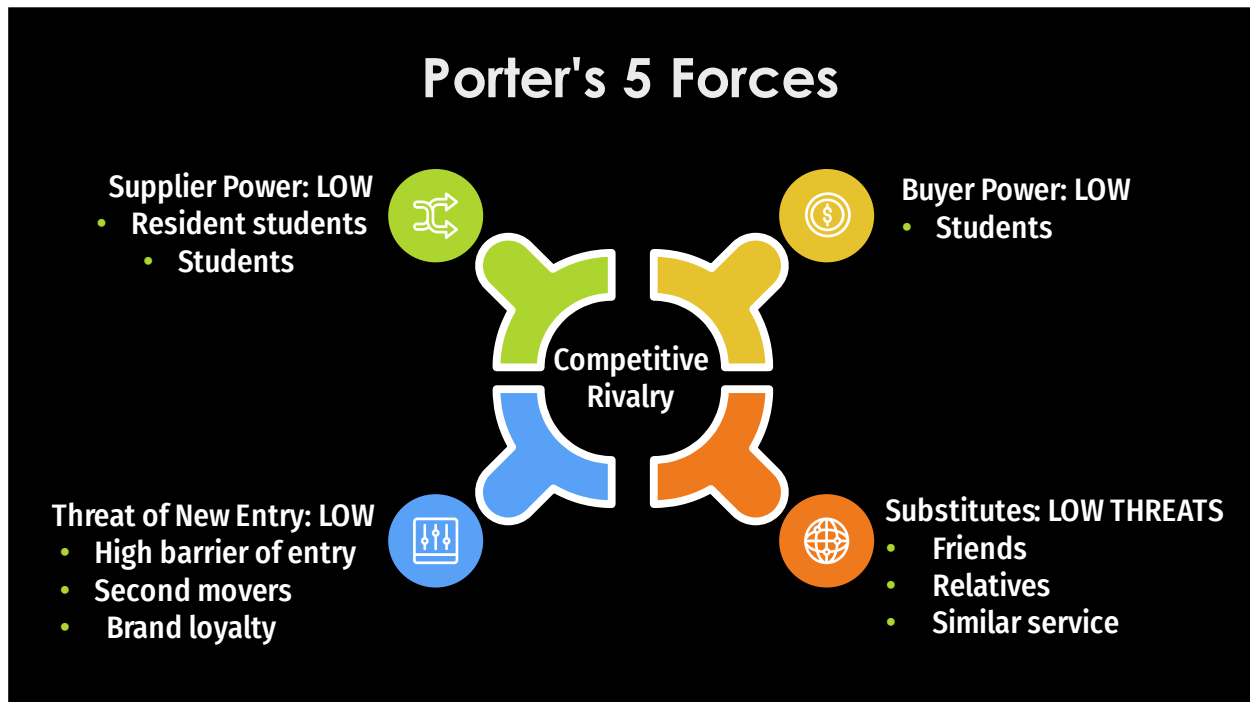


Figure 11 Porter's Five forces Analysis

SWOT

Strengths: Our leading service is unique. We are in a *blue ocean*, and no one has offered it before; besides the logistics will also be unique, our market will be directed worldwide, we also don't have ongoing cost since what we are selling is a service provided by users to customers, or we are selling a service due to our partnerships with universities.

Weaknesses: to be diversified in all the world it would need some time to make some significant relations, a unique logistics criterion should be built otherwise it may be a weakness to scale up, beside a critical point will be the marketing plan in which it may decide whether we may succeed or fail.

Opportunity: having partnerships with the universities will give customers loyalty and trust. Besides, the massive demand for studying abroad will guarantee a significant return.

Threats: a new pandemic on earth will be a massive threat and legal problems regarding taxation policies etc.....

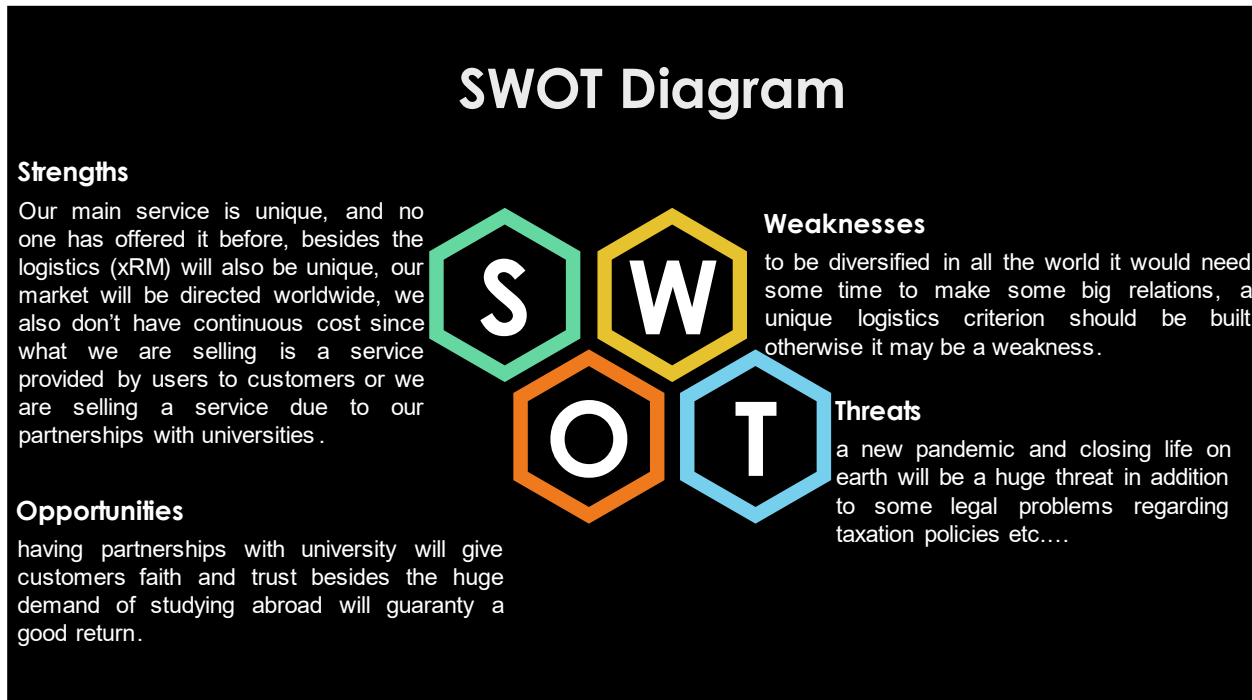


Figure 12 SWOT Analysis

Business Model Canvas

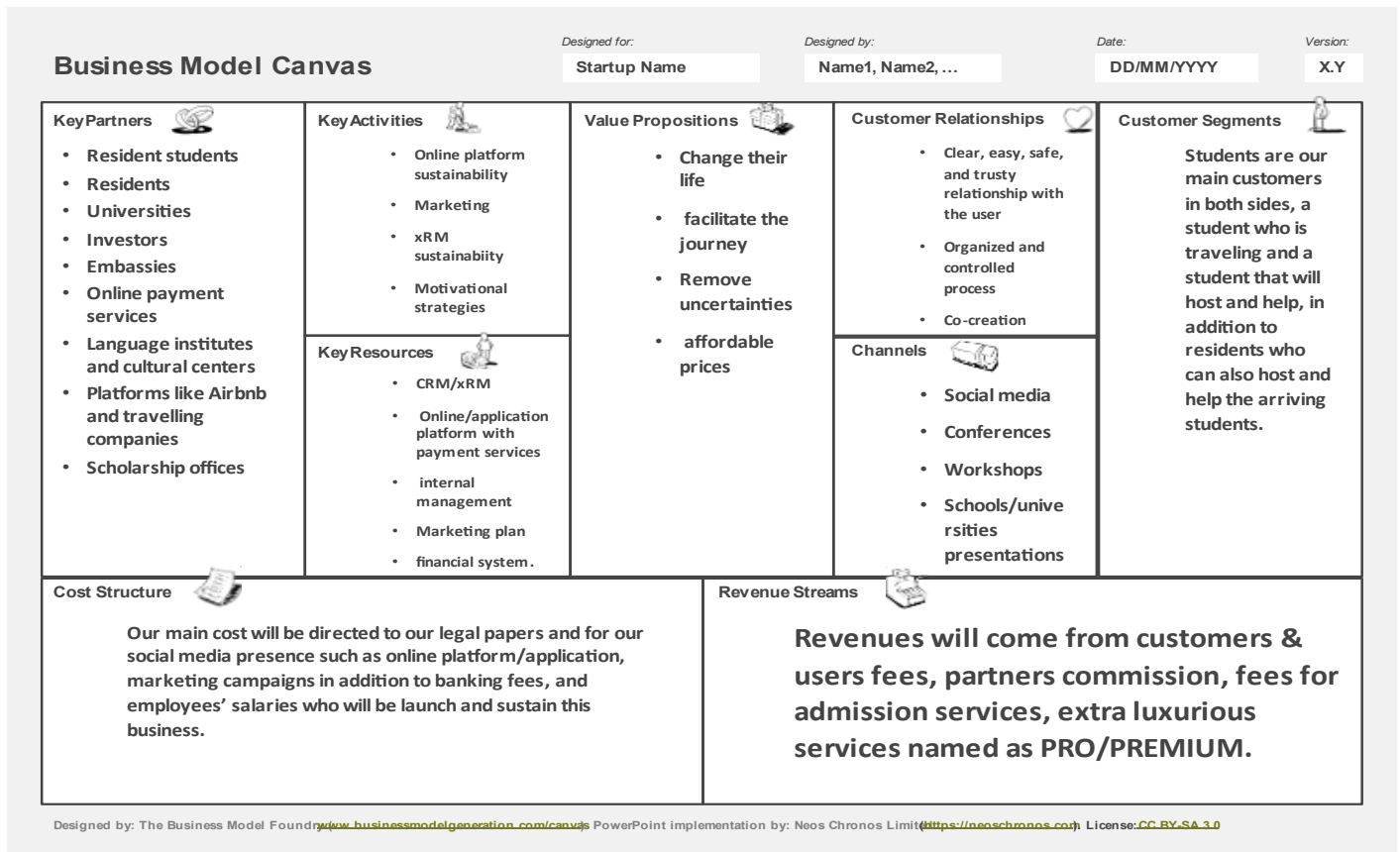


Figure 13 BMC Analysis

- Key Partnership

Resident students, residents, Universities, Schools, Investors, Embassies, online payment services, accommodation agencies, language institutes, travel agencies, teaching platforms, scholarship offices

Resident students & residents are the suppliers that will offer the service to the customer.

Universities & scholarship offices will be partners that they will recommend to us.

Investors will believe and boost the idea.

Embassies will recommend us for students who are applying to travel.

Online payment services will be partners since we need a robust and easy payment system on our platform.

Platforms' accommodation (Airbnb), language, travel, and teaching agencies will be partners in which they can promote us since they will be a bottleneck for a traveler student.

- Key Activities

Online platform sustainability, marketing, CRM, network, motivational strategies

To successfully achieve our proposed values, we need a concrete and robust online platform that link people together with updates continuously adding to a huge marketing plan; otherwise, it is going to be useless, and a perfect customer relationship management configured regarding our need to maintain all processes controlled and managed, with also a vast network to make adding values from our partnerships to be fully trusted and known, adding to motivational strategies from old customers that will provide past experiences for new customers, helping and motivating them.

- Value proposition

Change their life, facilitate the journey, remove uncertainties, affordable prices.

Since every year, millions of students are traveling for study aims; we are offering a service to facilitate their journey pre and post-travel by linking them to other resident people that will help them pre-post travel in which their uncertainty and hardship will become negligible.

- Customer relationship

The relationship a customer expects from us is a clear, easy, safe, and trusty relationship with the user

The organized and controlled process from our part to maintain the stability of his journey

Co-creation will be implemented since a customer will update and make a future change regarding feedback that will affect the future processes

- Customer segment

Students, residents

Students are our main customers on both sides, a student who is traveling and a student who will host and help, and residents who can also host and support the arriving students.

- Key resources

Our primary vital resources that will make our idea work are concrete and robust CRM software, an online/application platform with payment services, internal management, relations/network, a financial system, perfect marketing plan.

- Distribution channel

Social media, conferences, workshops, universities presentations

Nowadays, social media strategies and marketing are working the best and will not cost us much. A physical presence will also be an added value by presenting services and offers for institutions.

- Cost structure

Our main cost will be our legal papers and our social media presence, such as online platform/application, marketing campaigns, banking fees, and employees' salaries to launch and sustain this business.

- Revenue stream

Revenues will come from customers & users' fees, partners' commission, fees for admission services, extra luxurious services named as PRO/PREMIUM.

Customers will pay services fees for users, and a percentage from that will be for us, adding other revenue strategies that can be demonstrated later.

3. Previous Experience & Data

Story of the previous experience

Back in time to October 2016, the author, as 19 years old POLITO student that has just changed his country for study purposes, talked to his friend and convinced him to stop his university career in his country and come to study in Italy ... it took 11 mins to convince him and then. An idea started that in the last year of his life is lost due to lack of knowledge for travel procedure, why don't we assist people who intend to travel and study abroad ...?

And then, a small plan started to assist friends and relatives in all their journey until they reach Italy and start their new career.

2016-2017: a case study year to see if it is possible or not, but as a result, we could've helped 5 five students to come and study in Italy, and now they are almost finishing their master's degree.

2017-2018: after a success of the last year, the author and his brother met friends from different countries and were interested in making a startup as an agency "Ready4Study", same idea and standardized procedure and each will be responsible for his country market, but now the aim is to help people to come not just to Torino but to all Italy.

A business plan has been created, a website and social media appearance, and the job has been started with more than 15 people involved in the team.

Results were more than 25 students have been helped by this agency and did come and started their new careers.

2018-2019: The agency team has decreased by numbers. Some problems occurred while the author's market proceeded as before typically and did help more than six students and assisted them through their journey until they reached Italy to study.

2019-2020: Ready4Study completely crashed, the author made a meeting and took the position of CEO for the Lebanese market, the author did a restructuring for the company, different strategic, marketing, operational plans.

This year was challenging due to the pandemic; in March 2020, Italy was one of the most registered positive cases in covid; it was almost impossible to convince parents to let their children come and travel to study in Italy. But the shocking news is that this year was the best because of the students helped by us. The author did just from the Lebanese market around 16 students heading to Torino, Milano, Siena.

2020-2021: The same strategy in the previous year was done, but due to economic problems and inflation in Lebanon, people were not capable anymore of paying in foreign currencies to study abroad; the author did some market analysis and decided to stop marketing in March 2021 since it was just cost and continued with the already registered students who were five students that we helped.

In September 2021, the author decided to stop leading this agency and officially stop executing in this service after some market analysis was done.

Adding information that the number of students mentioned was officially helped as consultancy contracts, but a lot more were helped as regular helping for free consultancy.

2022: the author stopped leading this agency but didn't give up on his mission and goal six years ago regarding helping people who have capabilities to enroll in high-quality universities and make a significant new career and make their dreams come true by facilitating their journey and procedure, and a new idea could be revolutionary in this industry since it is not saturated yet. The existing agencies are not possible for everyone.

Takeaways from 5 years' experience and difficulties, the author said:

1. The aim of the previous experience was oriented around convincing people to study abroad. At the same time, this is not the aim anymore; the service will be directed for the market of people traveling study with a scale that may contain all the world rather than an agency with a limited capability.
2. The market analysis was divided into two parts, first is people who already decided to travel, this percentage was around 99% accepting the offer of consultancy if there weren't economic problems. In contrast, the second part was people who didn't know about the story of studying abroad, and we were trying to explain to them everything, and then they decided, around 25% success rate from this kind of people. So, this new idea of the peer-

to-peer platform will have almost an entire market of people traveling every year as statistics show worldwide + 25% of people who didn't think about the idea of traveling to study abroad and now they have the facility by our platform.

3. I am not having an idea in the air and think that it may work; I KNOW that this will work since I experienced the industry and the demand from people, this platform is just an innovation of a previous working idea, and an innovative thing for already working idea will indeed work considering a marvelous job has done perfectly.
4. The main difficulty was the lack of resources to satisfy a more significant demand. In contrast, in a peer-to-peer platform, the availability of resources with knowledge will fill this gap.

Gathering some data

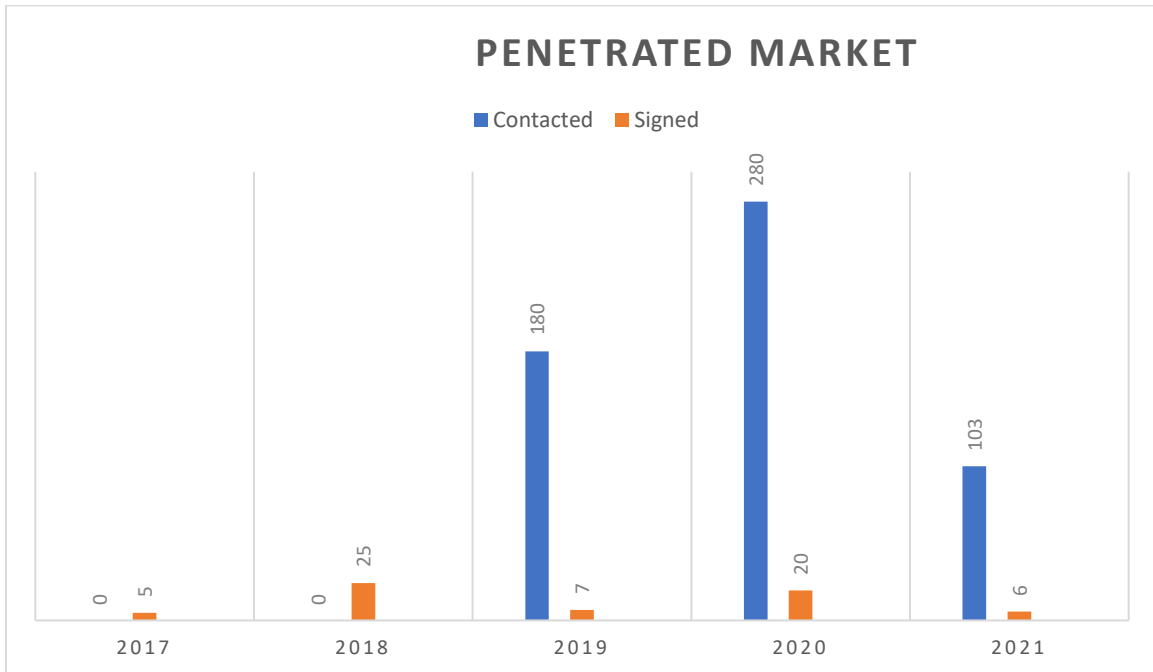


Figure 14 Data of people contacted and people who took the service.

The average percentage shown is the percentage regarding people who are convinced to study abroad, which was between **5%-10%**, and this is not something that may make us afraid regarding our new solution since this percentage will be added to the targeted market, which is people who are already deciding to travel.

From those data, we can know that our target market has a 99% success since by all those five years all people who decided to travel were interested in having services that we are offering in our new solution.

Then, our new platform will have a high percentage of available market penetrated from traveling people + 5%-10% **additional market**.

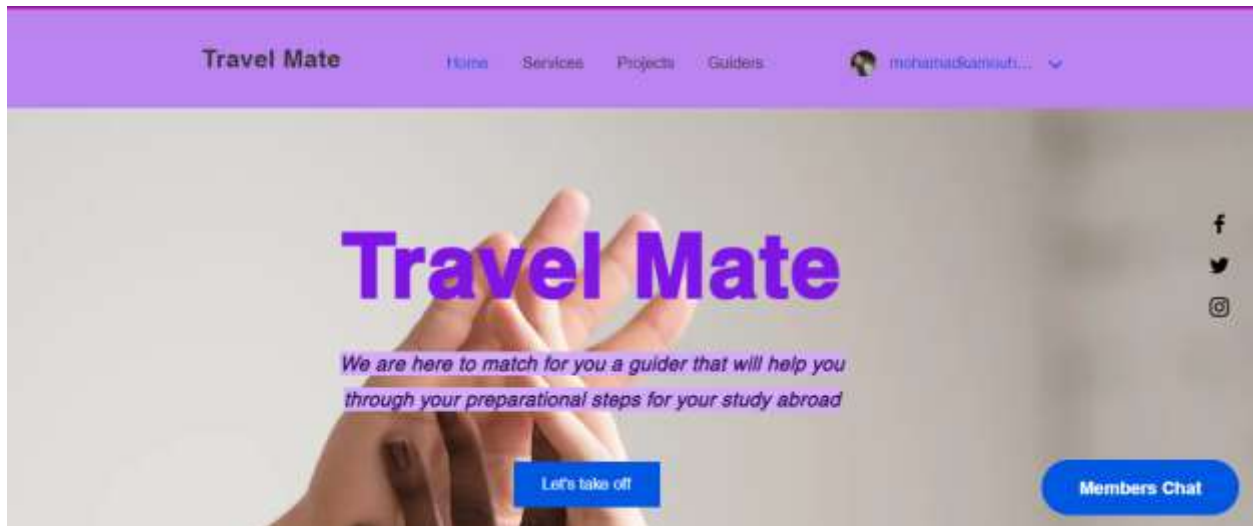
The Ready4Study group has surveyed after the 2018 season:



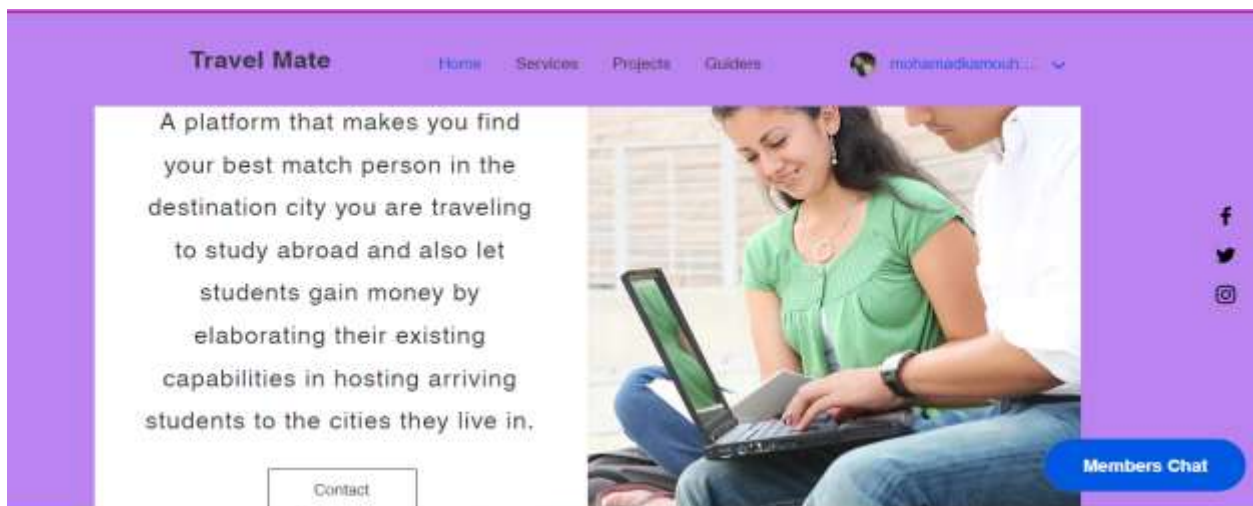
Figure 15 Survey Results

4. MVP

Practicalities of the platform



The About anchor quickly explains the aim of this platform.

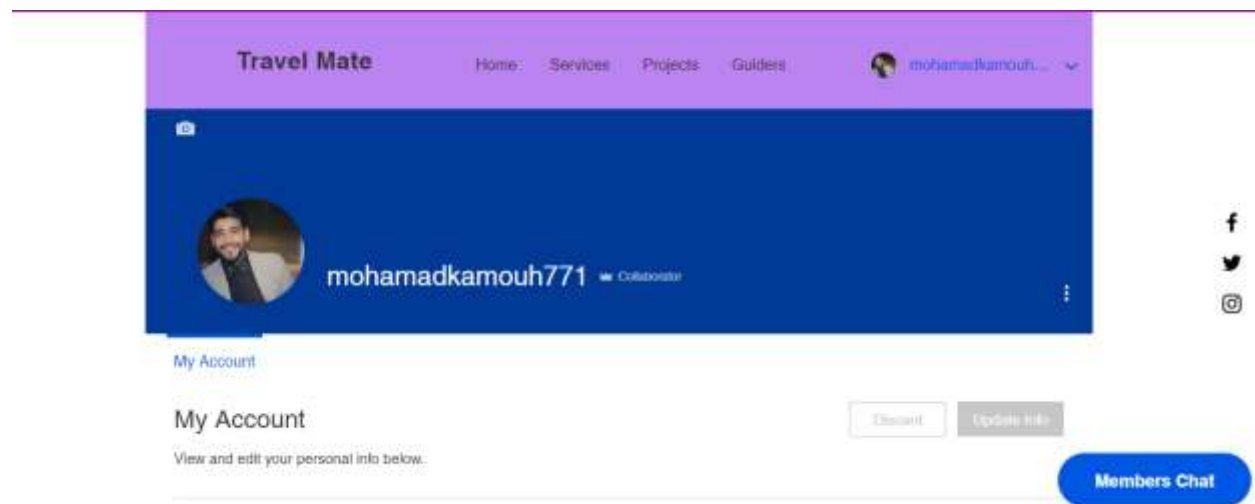


Our main page of the platform is temporarily named “Travel Mate.”

Which consists of a home page, services list, Projects page, and Guider’s page.

On the website, a person can sign up or log in to his profile and then decide whether to be a guide and work with us to get paid by helping others or be a customer that posts a project and gets matched to a guide get help.

The profile registration will consist of many parts and information regarding payments also etc.. some of those are the following:



Customer registration

- Sign up
- Profile completion: Name, date & place of birth, lives in, date of membership, profession, Name of the university enrolled in or was enrolled in, history, video presentation (optional), or resume
- Verification: ID, Payment deposit, Email, Social media connection.
- Projects: the services needed in a specific city in a particular university

Guide Registration

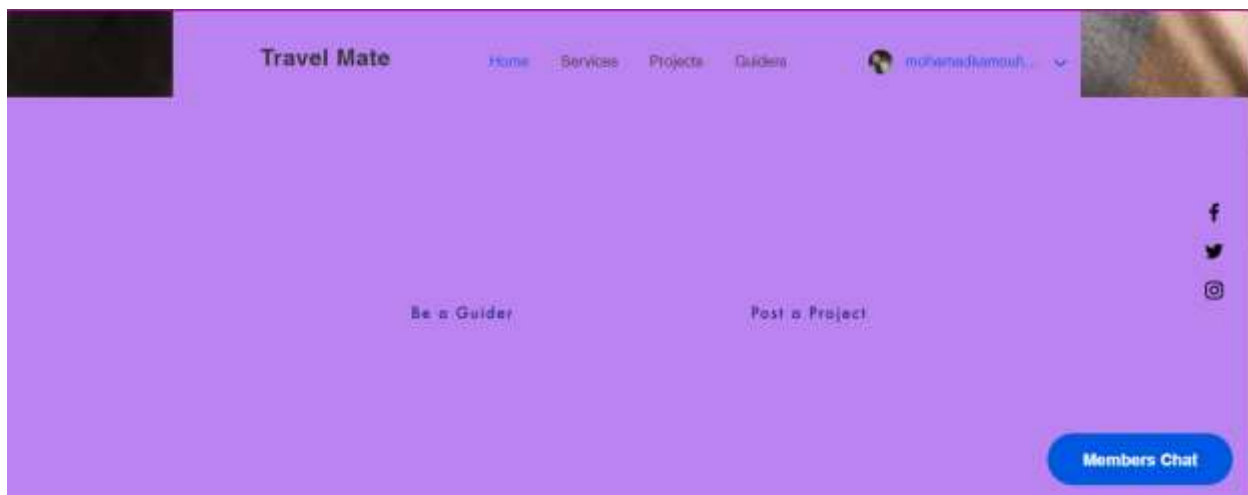
- Sign up
- Profile completion: Name, date & place of birth, lives in, date of membership, profession, Name of the university enrolled in or was enrolled in, history, video presentation (optional), or resume
- Verification: ID, Payment deposit, Email, Social media connection.
- Portfolio: Motivational actions about previous experience, proposed services in a specific location.
- Passing tests for each service to ensure the KNOW-HOW by writing practicalities, to make sure they can do the required services

The platform will evaluate the users who offer help due to their existence in the same city and university. They indeed already did the same steps a customer needs and their ability to help by providing the platform an explanation of how to solve and do the services.

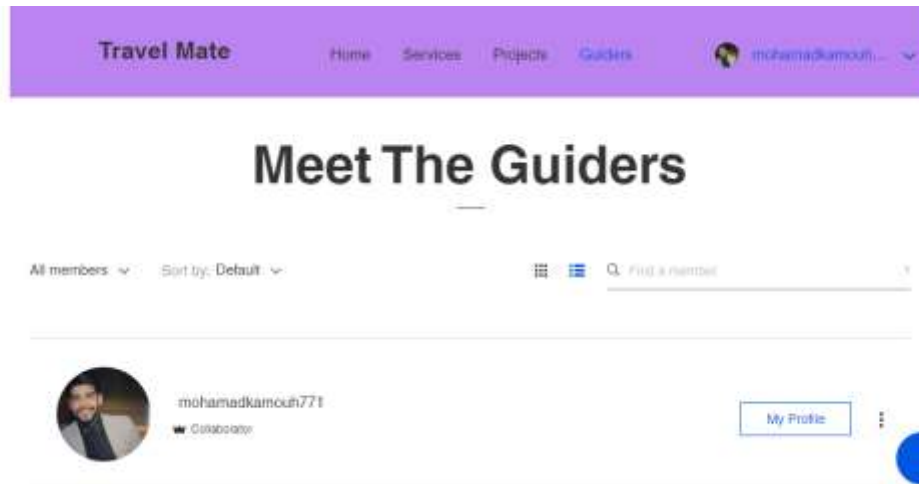
So, the platform makes the best procedure to ensure that the user is trusty and will provide the services correctly for the customer.

When bidding for services, the customer will pay directly, ensuring that the user will get paid after finishing the job. The helping user will receive the money after the confirmation from the customer that the job is completed correctly.

And to start this step, a visitor can press “Let’s take off,” so will be directed to an anchor down to click “be a Guide” or “Post a Project.”



Clicking on “be a guide” will open the page of guiders.



On this page after registering as a Guide, the profile will be published here so by applying the filter of the city or university, a customer can search for the best match and check the profile; after seeing the reviews and ratings, can start contacting the guide using the platform to share interest than to make the bid of proposing services and get acceptance from the directory.

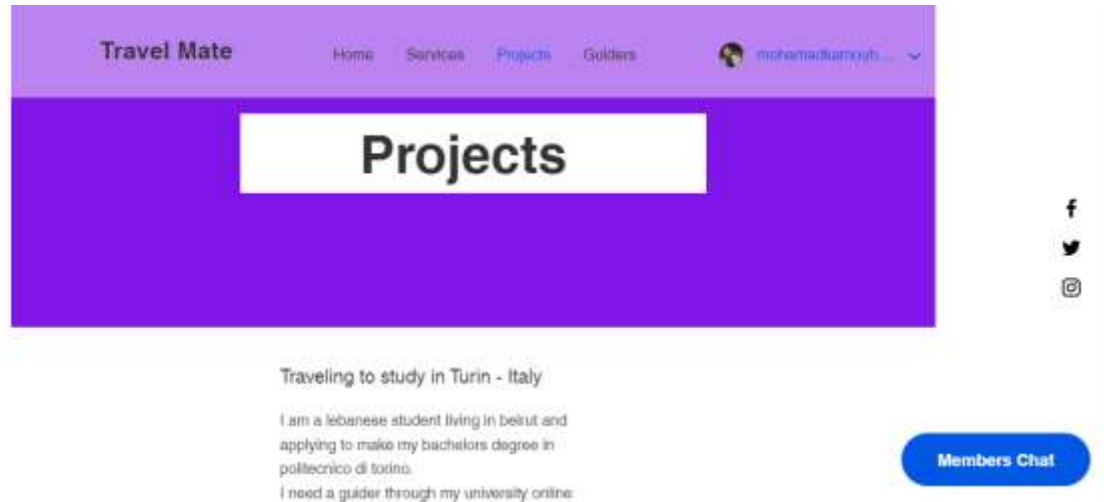
To attract students to offer help on our platform, a marketing plan is needed to attract students; we contact the universities' communities to allow students to draw them from different nationalities.

Showing previous experiences to show the critical value to help a student to study abroad and the social impact as an enterprise to the individual and the society, adding to that a gain of money for a student as an average of 1200 EUR working less than a part-time job through the year would be suitable for a student at the end of the year to enjoy the summer.

As explained before, the service will not be time-consuming or difficult since the steps were already done; the student will be using the capabilities and knowledge that exist since they already did the same steps and these capabilities are sleeping and not being used. By our solution, these capabilities are elaborated and helping the individual gain money using them, in case some services would be time-consuming then they cost more since they are luxurious services.

The rating and the review are the essential important features for the guide to increase the possibility of more people requesting services.

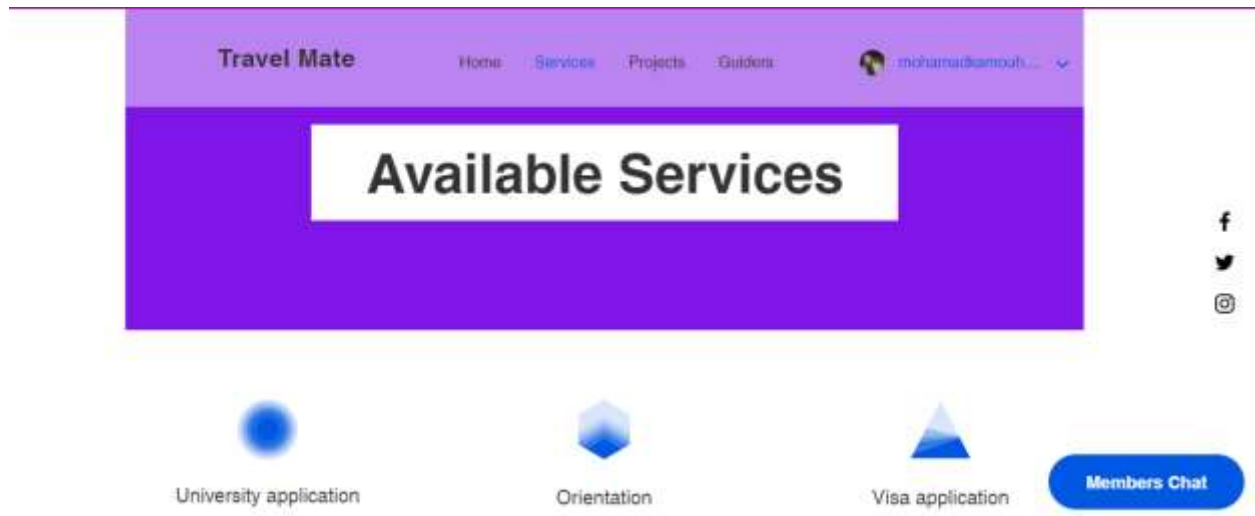
However, by clicking on “Post a project.”



A person can post a project that will be seen on this page, so a guide can make a filter regarding the city and nationality and contact the customer and offer to do the services asked after checking the profile. The contact will be on the platform typing or by video or phone calls; then after agreeing, the bid can be made from the window of the assigned project in which the customer can choose his guide and give the services agreed on and the price of every service in the case, they decided to make a fixed price or service-oriented.

When both parties are bidding, in our policies, they should accept the contract term between each other, which clarifies the role and responsibility of each party.

The services that a guide can associate with can be found on Services.



These services will be shown in the bid window when a customer and a guide are bidding with the prices; however, on this page, the services with a short description and average price add to an important feature that anyone can propose new services that a person think that is needed for the travel journey. It will be considered by our team and added to the list.

Mainly, the customer will be paying for:

Consultancy and orientation for your study abroad such as:

- University application
- Visa application (if they share the same nationality)
- Scholarships and financial aids (if existed)
- Hosting in the destination city
- Airport pick-up
- City guide
- Arrival legal paperwork
- House rental help
- Etc....

And They will receive help as consultancy and orientation regarding the service they bid on

e.g., orientation about studying in the city: information about the life in the town, expenses, the university, educational quality, legal terms, society, language, etc.....

University application: requirements for the online application, and applying for it together, and when the application is made correctly, the mission will be done.

After bidding for the service, the student will pay, but the other student will not receive money until the job is done and confirmed that it is done with review and rating. Meanwhile, the money is held by us to transfer to the guide or turn it back to the customer; t, the first party should work correctly to receive the money and have a good review and ratings.

If not, the first party will be reported to us; we will investigate, then the money will not be sent to the first party, a bad review, a low rating from the customer will negatively affect their career on our platform.

The service time will depend on the services asked; if a university application, it will be 1-2 meetings + research about the requirements.

If post-travel services like airport pick up or legal paperwork, it may be from 2-3 days (5 hours a day), but this would be a luxurious service that costs more.

A solid platform is needed with complete security for our visitors regarding their data and payment methods.

Adding to an excellent logistics to know if the customer has a good help otherwise can complain directly so our team can investigate the occasion to make the right decision

Scenario (1):

- Profile completed and verified
- Guide searching on the projects page
- Found a project
- Contacted the customer
- Discuss the services needed or proposed from the Guide by video meetings and agree on a deal
- Go for bidding window (bid for university application help and hosting after arrival)
- The guide will Propose the procedure of doing the work
- The customer will confirm the procedure
- Start working as agreed

- Finish the work
- A customer satisfaction approval
- Get paid when the job is done and approved by both parties

Scenario (2):

- A customer enters to search for people in a specific location
- Contact the guider directly and ask for services
- Discuss the services needed or proposed from the user by video meetings and agree on a deal
- Go for bidding window (e.g., bid for Visa application help and hosting after arrival)
- The guide will Propose the procedure of doing the work
- The customer will confirm the procedure
- Go for bidding window
- Start working
- A customer satisfaction approval
- Get paid when the job is done and approved by both parties

And many other scenarios can be done.

The customer will see the history, profile, rating, reviews

The customer will make video meetings to hear and understand what will receive and how.

The customer is not obliged to work with a specific guide but will choose freely, believing from what was heard in the meeting that the focus would do the job. Based on the verification of our platform, this guide was already in the same university and city. Since it is verified on our forum, the guide provided the KNOW-HOW.

After all this, there is still the possibility that the guide doesn't do the service for any reason,

Then, the responsibility is not on the platform since the customer freely chose to deal with this guide, but surely the money paid will turn back, and this guide will be punished by bad reviews, low ratings, or exclusion.

-If the guide did the job correctly, we will surely get the money from us after the approval from the customer, since the customer already paid before starting the career.

What if the customer did not approve the job for payment acquisition?

The customer and the guide need to provide proof; there would be some hard copy proofs or photos since the job can be paperwork.

And after the investigation, every party will take what it merits.

Also, perfect customer service is available to support visitors and continuously follow them by sending messages, observing their traffic, and making an AI system to stay in touch with them depending on their behavior on the platform.

Talking more about the service, it will be as follows:

List of services

Pre-travel

- Orientation regarding the city and main requirements
 - A called meeting or texting that will make the guider give the information required for a customer about the town and the leading financial, social needs adding to the university main requirements and courses available in which it will make an overview for a customer regarding his journey if can make it or not.
- University application including requirements orientation
 - Providing the requirements needed for the online application and deadlines
 - Orientation about the language test required
 - Online application is done and submitted together
- Visa application procedure
 - Providing the requirements needed for the Visa application and deadlines
 - Orientation, tips, and facilitations about the requirements procedure
- Entrance exam orientation/lessons
 - Materials and explanation for the entrance exam preparation
- Flight ticket orientation

- Help regarding which the best way to travel by and which travel agency optimized choice
- Accommodation orientation
 - How to book a place to arrive and have a temporary place to stay
- Scholarship application (if available)
 - Online application and all requirements that should be prepared to apply on the arrival

Post-travel (physical contribution)

- Accommodation (Contract not temporarily)
 - Keep searching and contacting people to find the proper house with a year contract for the arrival person
- Hosting in the proper house temporarily
 - Possibly let the customer be hosted in the place of guider "the customer's decision will let him have all responsibility."
- Airport Pickup by bus / or by the guider car
- Resident permit application
 - All requirements needed adding to a physical accompanying
- Fiscal code admission
 - All requirements needed adding to a physical accompanying
- City guide
 - Show him the leading places in the city and the university etc..... and give the essential tips used in the city
- University enrollment
 - Accompanying to the university to make the enrollment
- Bank account
 - Accompanying to the Bank to open an account
- Sim card
 - Accompanying to buy a sim card and what is needed to let the person connected
- Scholarship application

- Accompanying to the scholarship office to provide all requirements needed to complete the application successfully
- Health insurance
 - Accompanying or online application to apply for health insurance successfully

Policy

- It should be clear to the customer that everyone can do those services alone. Based on our experience, we noticed that a person and the family far away are worried even if some tasks may seem easy or there is no significant contribution from the guide as a game-changer. Still, the existence of the guide with and around the new arrival person in a new country is the valuable service promoted that make feel relaxed, adding to a language proficiency facilitation which is one of the most valuable benefits in case the new arrival person still doesn't speak the language fluently.
- Also, when a customer confirms to a guider, his responsibility will be the execution of everything; it is just a consultation from an experienced person, and no huge responsibility on the guider while the big responsibility will be on the customer himself.
- Adding that the list of services listed above is to clarify the duty and description; however, the implementation on the platform will include strategic packages that will benefit the sales situation and the revenue stream.
- Acceptance protocol: An implementation could be added to the platform to give Users the capability to be Certified and be seen to customers as Certified Users by our platform or be implemented as a mandatory step for every user.
- This can be done as additional membership fees and some verification steps, in which the demand for the certified Guider will become higher than a standard Guider.
- Verification steps: Submission for a detailed task description for the services that will be offered and, our duty, to check the report of the tasks and approve it to give the user certified services.
- We can also implement in our additional platform features such as providing the material that benefits the customers and doing training for the users that can give them extra points that elevate their rating.

- Since our marketing expansion is essential, we can make a feature for additional points that let the rating of the individual increase, for every post as blog, story, video ... that talks about the journey in which it will let people know and see our community.

A proposed package of services

This package can cost 350-450 \$ while summing each service alone may make a higher cost.

- Orientation and consultancy about the university, the city, the travel, etc.....
- University application (requirements needed and full help)
- Visa requirements consultancy (if both are from the same country)
- Traveling services (help to choose the ticket and the temporary accommodation as Airbnb for instance, airport or bus pickup, university visit for enrollment and paperwork needed, city guide, consultancy how to rent a house)

Contribution for this package of services from the guide. Those number of hours below will be in the time frame of 6-7 months, but not continuously working.

- 1-2 hrs. meetings for the orientation and explanation
- 4-6 hours for the university application
- Consultancy through the period of the visa application, which is almost two months by directing and helping how to prepare the documents, 4-6 hours
- Traveling services may be between 2-3 days, 6 hours a day accompanying and hosting the student.

From experience, a student can do this kind of service through the year calmly aside from the studies for 2-3 students.

An important feature is to make our procedure standardized and repeatable to improve the quality and simplify the company's management, leading to scalability.

i.e., For the students that they offer help for others: they would have specific steps to join until they bid for a package of services, then there would be a checklist for each service that should be checked from both to confirm that the service was done correctly, and the student can get paid.

This would be repeatable and easy.

Each service will have a checklist decided by us and an advised routine for the helper to follow to complete the job correctly.

They could make the meeting and chat throughout the platform or the web application.

Testing the platform

We have created a survey defining the service and asking students from age 18 – 26 if they are in the same situation, would they use our proposed service on the platform?

MVP Platform Test

This survey aims at verifying the need for a peer-to-peer platform that provides logistics service for students wanting to study abroad.

Description of the service offered in the platform:

The platform allows matching students who want to travel abroad for study purposes with local guides in the same country/city the students will travel to. The student may request a number of services from the guide.

The services that the guide may provide includes but not limited to:

Consultancy and orientation for your study abroad such as:

- University application
- Visa application (if they share the same nationality)
- Scholarships and financial aids (if existed)
- Hosting in the destination city
- Airport pick-up
- City guide
- Arrival legal paperwork
- House rental help
- Etc....

Click on the link below to see a sample of the platform:

<https://mohamadkamouh771.wixsite.com/my-site>

Email *

Your email address _____

Full name

Your answer _____

Suppose you are in such a situation, Would you use this platform to find a person from your destination university to get help in your process by paying an average of 300\$ instead of paying 1k-10k\$ for an agency? *

Yes

No

Figure 16 Platform Survey

Results of test

47 responses on the question below, 93% of the reactions were Yes while the rest were No

Suppose you are in such a situation, Would you use this platform to find a person from your destination university to get help in your process ...e of 300\$ instead of paying 1k-10k\$ for an agency?

47 responses

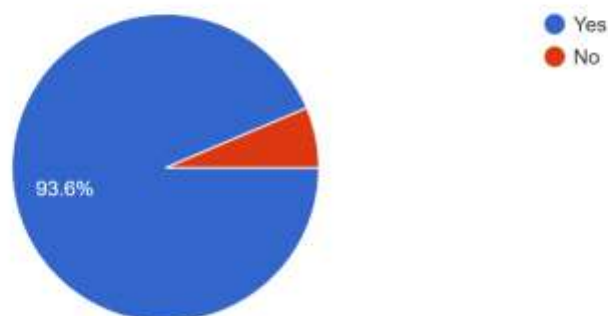


Figure 17 Survey Results

We can assume that the service will work and will be used by people needing such a service.

5. Conclusion

This research aimed to make a study about an innovative model for the student communities in the world instead of following the existing solutions.

The study aimed at doing a literature review about the phenomenon of studying abroad and its trends, then the difficulties that face students while doing this step.

Research about the existing solutions and methods that solve this kind of difficulty, however, these current models are still not complete, and some problems should be solved.

The aim is to propose a new model that solves the entire problem in this industry, as shown, by creating an innovative method that removes all the existing gaps.

A minimum viable product was done to test this new model, and a business plan for this method was made.

Looking at the test results and the business plan analysis, we can say that this new method will reach success as was discussed, but with the condition of a perfect implementation and execution.

This research made a clear vision regarding the problem, the proposed solution, and the results from the Business plan and the test will be used to raise funds to establish a company that solves this problem.

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Appendices

A. Competitors contact

GOABROAD:

Services Offered:

- Study Abroad
- Volunteer Abroad
- High School
- Language School
- Jobs Abroad
- Teach Abroad
- Internship Abroad
- TEFL Courses

Application process:

- Online application

Customer Service:

- Online advisor
- Insurance
- Embassies help
- Scholarships
- Study Abroad Loan

Contact:

Email reply:

1-What services do you offer? Is it the application procedure only, or do you also handle tasks related to the after-arrival of the student?

GoAbroad.com does not offer the programs on our website directly and has no control over the application process or requirements of the program. But if you already have a program you

are interested in; the application process is usually indicated on the program page. Most of the organizations listed on our website offer in-country assistance.

2-what is the price of each service you offer? Could you please provide me with everything we have to pay so we can arrange our financial status? (We would appreciate it if you could make the fees list as detailed as possible)

I'm sorry if I cannot give you the detailed information. It's different for each company or organization, so it is best to check each report on the program pages and decide which ones would fit best for your needs. And then contact the organization or company directly if you're interested.

3-Do you have any local agent we can refer to in the middle east or Europe, or do you operate online only? Because it would be better for our parents to see you in person, but it shouldn't be a problem anyway. Do you offer unique services in countries with a local physical agent (i.e., visa procedure)?

GoAbroad.com is a comprehensive online directory, and we do not offer the programs on our website. But upon choosing a program, you may visit their website or inquire if they have any agents near your location.

4-Is the acceptance usually guaranteed, or will our application be assessed regularly? There is one guy who has a relatively low GPA!

Acceptance to a program is usually assessed first before guaranteed. Further details on the qualifications needed for a program are typically included on our program page, but if not, please get in touch with the program provider directly.

5-what are the requirements (English language, recommendation letters, etc.) for bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D.? Do we need to have a minimum GPA, or doesn't it matter?

I'm sorry I cannot give you the detailed information. It's different for each company or organization, so checking each report on the program pages is best.

6-What are the countries that we could study in? Because some of the guys prefer USA and Japan while the others prefer to study in Europe. Could you please provide me a link to the courses and universities you deal with?

For further options, you can make use of our filters such as "CHOOSE A COUNTRY", "CHOOSE A TERM", "CHOOSE A SUBJECT" on our Study Abroad page and Degrees Abroad page. Upon clicking a program, you will see a list of their available courses written on the page.

7 & 12 -Our relationship with the universities will be through you? Because we would like to avoid all the hassle of contacting the universities. Our relationship with the university will eventually be director will remain through you?

Some programs are provided by universities directly, but some are offered by third-party organizations where they will be the ones to tell you the requirements and qualifications that are needed for the program. Further clarifications may only be done by asking the organizations themselves about the inclusions and services.

8-Should we pay you right after our agreement? What happens in case of rejection? Do we get any refund? What if the visa has been rejected?

I'm sorry I cannot give you the detailed information. It's different for each company or organization, so checking each report on the program pages is best.

9-Visa is the responsibility of the student?

Some program providers offer visa assistance, but it's different for each company or organization, so checking each information on the program pages is best.

10- Do you help the student get a scholarship if available? Are there real opportunities for scholarships, financial aid, part-time job, etc.?

We have our Travel Scholarships & Financial Resources page, where you can browse through various opportunities for scholarships. Upon clicking a program, it will redirect you to the organization that offers them, and any inquiries should be directed to them.

11- Do you follow us after we arrive at the destination country? How do you do that?

No, we do not monitor any student or person that applies to a program using our directory.

13- All programs are in English, or can we also study in another foreign language?

It depends on the program. Most of the study abroad programs on our website are offered in English, but some are offered in a different language.

STUDIESABROAD:

Services Offered:

- CP Manager dedicated to your program
- Airport transportation
- Student accommodations
- Health and liability insurance
- On-site orientation and city tour
- Cultural activities in the host city
- Day or overnight excursions
- Organized group meals
- Reserved classroom space
- Access to on-site ISA offices
- 24-hour ISA resident staff support
- Re-entry resources
- Student and faculty program evaluation

Application process:

- Online application or printed one

Customer service:

- they offer internships.
- Services-learning.
- High school.
- Scholarships

- Housing
- Cultural Activities.
- Airport Reception
- Visa Support

Contact:

Email reply:

They don't offer degree programs. Their programs are focused on undergraduate students who are already enrolled in college.

Facebook reply:

We only work with US and Canadian students for semester study abroad opportunities due to specific agreements with certain universities. They also said: The best place to look for information from us will be studiesabroad.com. You should be able to find answers to many of your questions there (as they could not mention details on FB).

AIFSABROAD:

Contact:

Facebook reply:

yes: Our programs are for students enrolled full-time in colleges or universities in the United States. If you are at school in the US, you can apply to study abroad with AIFS. For a complete list of our programs, visit our website: <http://ow.ly/U5ZP30jykh>.

Using their service:

It seems only for Americans because they require the state, and it is impossible to proceed without it. Anyway, I put my address in the US and chose Florence university (they have limited programs but are too expensive and include meals and housing sometimes). They automatically created an account for me so I could track the progress and pay the fees, so I stopped here (they offer flight choices as well)

STUDYABROAD:

Service offered:

- Search engine:
 - Search by program level
 - Search by program type
 - Search Programs by Country
- Resources and Essential Info for Study abroad
- Student Stories & Reviews
- Comprehensive Program Directory (including summer study abroad, internship, service learning and volunteer abroad programs, high school study abroad, intensive language programs)

Customer service:

StudyAbroad website is accessible to the user. They hope to encourage students to use their system to research study abroad opportunities. They, provide

- The most comprehensive and up-to-date listing of over 150,000+ study abroad programs.
- Information on over 100 study abroad scholarships
- Free access to the Study Abroad Student Guide
- Nearly 150 relevant articles to help students before, during, and after studying abroad
- Student study abroad blogs – written for students, by students

Other information:

Their revenue comes from Ads; they don't directly help students as our company does; they give them only access to information and programs providers (free).

Their business model is far from ours (they can be considered as indirect competitors rather than direct ones)

Using their service:

Random selection of programs (not inclusive). I search programs in Italy I found very few similarities. I used their service, and I sent it to Torino and the University of Siena for two applications. I was now waiting (not sure if the applications will be forwarded to the university or the website guys will handle my requests).

ERASMUSU:**Service offered:**

It's a social network focused on Erasmus and international students of all kinds. Accessing their platform, a student can:

- Comment on any city or university in the world, share their experiences, and read the reviews of other users.
- Get information about any city or university (the weather, photos, forum, people in the city, reviews, other users' experiences, etc.)
- Meet people who were, are and will be in any city or university.
- Find their friends through a system that searches by university, city, mobility program, age, gender, etc...
- View ranking of the best cities and universities ordered by party, people, art, health, etc.
- Do all kinds of things you already know from another social network (writing on the board, private messages, uploading, tagging photos, changing your status, and much more).

Application process:

As a student, you can look for accommodation or roommates. Choose university/city, then choose your move-in date and your move-out date, and you can access many announcements shared by other students.

Customer Service:

So simple, you search an accommodation in a particular city and search through the announcements you find, choose the one you like and book it.