

SBMA7122D - International Business

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International Business Plan:

Entry of EasyJet into the North American Airlines Sector

Executive Summary

This international business plan provides comprehensive details about the proposed expansion of EasyJet into the transatlantic and North American market. EasyJet has grown substantially over the course of the years to become a leading European airline and has developed a reputation for efficiency, reliability, safety and cost effectiveness. Its area of operations however is restricted to Europe and it does not have prior experience or knowledge of the transatlantic and the North American market. It shall thus have to operate with great care and develop effective strategies for the development of an appropriate aircraft fleet, the creation of suitable airport and ground infrastructure and the development of sales and market share on a progressive basis.

This business plan has been developed with the help of acknowledged and modern management tools and techniques. Appropriate recommendations for the implementation of EasyJet's expansion into the transatlantic and North American market have also been provided.

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1. Introduction

This international business plan provides details about EasyJet's proposed expansion into the North American airline sector. Commencing business in 1995, EasyJet has over the years developed its low cost airline operations and now operates numerous flights to several destinations in Europe (EasyJet, 2018a). The organisation has developed a strong reputation for punctuality, efficiency and effectiveness and feels that the time has come to embark upon a substantial expansion in business operations, thus its decision to enter the highly lucrative and yet intensely competitive North American low cost airlines sector (EasyJet, 2018a). The North American low cost airline market offers enormous potential but is likely to be extremely challenging, in terms of competition, regulatory measures and customer expectations (Mouawad, 2012). This business plan has been developed with the help of modern management and marketing tools and techniques and aims to provide useful and comprehensive details.

2. Global Vision and Goals

EasyJet has over the years expanded its operations in Europe and now flies to approximately 125 destinations, making use of a fleet of 193 aircraft (EasyJet, 2018a). It has grown to become the second largest airline in Europe on the basis of numbers of passengers per year (Morris, 2018).

Igor Ansoff (1965) stated that organisations grow in four stages, namely market penetration, market development, product development and diversification. EasyJet has until now grown with its existing products, i.e. low cost airline travel in its existing market, i.e. Europe in order to increase revenues and market share (Morris, 2018). It is now time for EasyJet to move into the next phase of the Ansoff Matrix, i.e. market development.

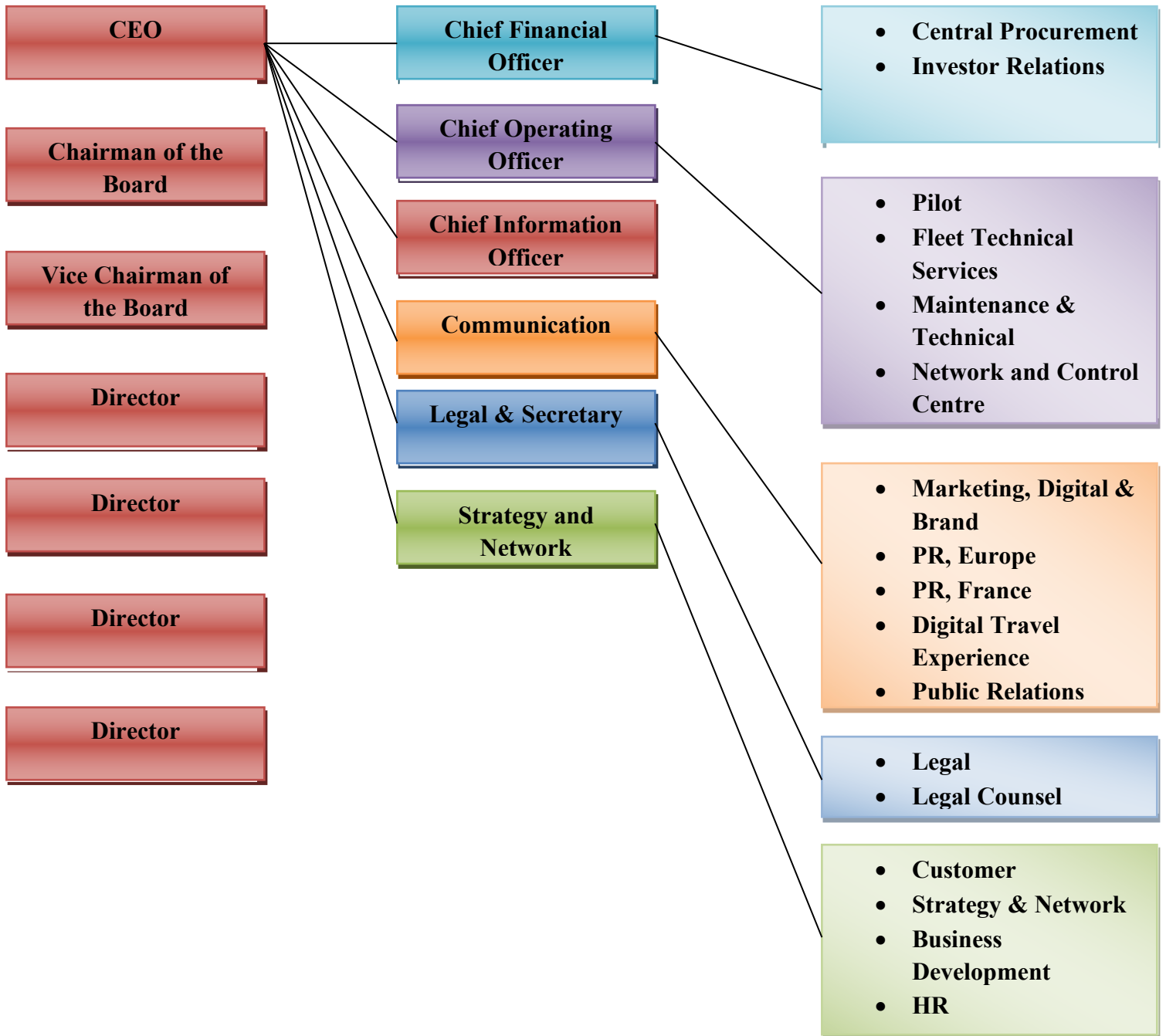
Yip (2000) stated that business organisations are driven to globalise their operations by four factors, namely market factors, cost factors, competitive factors and government factors. EasyJet, in its efforts to globalise is certainly driven by market factors considering that airline customers across the world are increasingly making use of low cost airlines (Ros, 2016). Various competing organisations are also globalising their operations in the airlines sector in order to increase their revenues and market share (CAPA, 2017). Enhancement of business operations through globalisation will also provide opportunities to EasyJet to enhance the scale, scope and cost efficiencies of its operations (CAPA, 2017). The North American regulatory climate for airlines also provides sufficient scope to EasyJet to expand its operations (Zacks Equity Research, 2018).

The Uppsala model of internationalisation furthermore states that organisations first tend to enter into areas with low psychic distance and thereafter consolidate their operations in such areas, develop their internationalisation strategies and thereafter move into other areas (Forsgren, 2002). EasyJet's vision for globalisation and expansion thus appears to be in accordance with the tenets of the Ansoff Matrix, Yip's Globalisation Drivers and the Uppsala Internationalisation model (Blomstermo & Sharma, 2003).

3. Organisational Structure

EasyJet has a flat organisational structure with few hierarchical levels (EasyJet, 2018b). With the span of control being limited, confusion in delegation does not occur (EasyJet, 2018b). The work process is simple and easy to delegate (EasyJet, 2018b). The following chart provides details of the EasyJet organisational structure.

Chart 1: Organisational Structure of EasyJet



(Source: EasyJet, 2018b)

4. Situation Analysis / Market Research

4.1. PESTLE Analysis

The macro and micro environment of EasyJet, with particular regard to its expansion into the US market has been carried out with the help of various marketing tools and techniques (Ansoff & Nakamura, 2007).

Political

The airlines sector is influenced by various types of political developments across the world (Cederholm, 2014). The political environment of a region also influences organisational strategies, policies and processes (Cederholm, 2014)s. EasyJet will have to abide by US rules and regulations, with particular regard to cabotage (Cederholm, 2014). It will have to abide by international regulations, especially in the area of fossil fuel emissions and be on guard with regard to the possibility of terrorist attacks on its transatlantic flights (Mhlanga & Steyn, 2017). Whilst fuel prices have been suppressed for some time, they are moving up in response to reduction of production by the OPEC countries and Russia (Mhlanga & Steyn, 2017). Such increase in fuel prices may result in pressure on costs (Mhlanga & Steyn, 2017).

Economic

Air travel is often influenced by general economic conditions; the recovery in the international economy should boost air travel, even though the possibility of enhancement in oil prices may result in upward pressure on costs (Shankman, 2014). The potential of Brexit on air travel outside Europe, especially to America remains uncertain but could adversely affect business and sales (Giles, 2016). EasyJet has until now had to primarily deal with European currencies and the Euro. Introduction of transatlantic operations will necessitate substantial dealings in US dollars (Giles, 2016).

Socio-Cultural

Personal and business travel, have been growing in recent years (PwC, 2014). This implies the growth of potential for airline operations in different areas across the world (PwC, 2014). The transatlantic route from Europe to North America is extremely popular; both for personal and business travel and air travel have become a common lifestyle in the population (Fowler & William, 2017). Whilst customer preferences for reduction of fossil fuel emissions could reduce consumer demand for transatlantic travel, modern airlines and aircraft manufacturers are constantly working towards the production of more efficient aircraft, with particular regard to fossil fuel emissions (Fowler & William, 2017).

Technological

Technological advances have impacted the airlines sector extensively in recent years (Te Hau, 2017). Continuous efforts are being made for the production of lighter and fuel efficient aircraft (Te Hau, 2017). EasyJet has also continuously made use of the Internet for all its airline bookings (McDonald, 2015). The organisation also focuses on the use of recent aircraft models (McDonald, 2015). The commencement of transatlantic operations will call for the deployment of new aircraft and give the opportunity to the airline to bring in the latest models of fuel efficient airplanes (Calder, 2015).

Legal

The airline industry is extensively regulated, both in Europe and in the USA (Gollan, 2017). EasyJet, which until now had to abide by EU laws will now also have to comply with US rules and regulations (Gollan, 2017).

Environmental

The airline industry has constantly been criticised for its contribution to noise pollution, fossil fuel emissions and traffic congestion (Serpen, 2014). Weather disruptions have increased in recent years, which could impact transatlantic flights (Serpen, 2014). EasyJet has a big responsibility in areas of reduction of fossil fuel emissions and carbon footprint (Serpen, 2014).

4.2. Porter' Five Forces Analysis

Power of Buyers

The power of buyers within the airline sector, more so, the low cost market is relatively strong on account of the availability of alternatives and the availability of information with customers (Pearce, 2013). Low cost airlines, especially from Nordic Europe have already started and several traditional airlines with different fare structures for different classes operate between Europe and North America (Fedosova, 2016). Such availability of choice and low switching costs result in high power of buyers.

Power of Suppliers

EasyJet has to deal with different suppliers, both in the purchase of aircraft and in its operations, with particular regard to fuel, supplies and airport managements (Belobaba *et al.*, 2009). It thus has to deal with several types of reasonably powerful suppliers and develop strong relationships with each of them in order to ensure efficient operations (Belobaba *et al.*, 2009). The power of suppliers can be considered to be medium to high.

Threat from New Entrants

The airline industry is both capital and technology intensive and entry into the sector is comparatively difficult (Clayton & Hilz, 2015). Notwithstanding such barriers, recent years have

seen the formation and emergence of several new airlines, especially in the Middle East and in Asia (Clayton & Hilz, 2015). The entry of new airlines has definitely altered the competitive landscape of the airlines sector (Clayton & Hilz, 2015). The threat from new entrants can be considered to be medium.

Threat from Substitutes

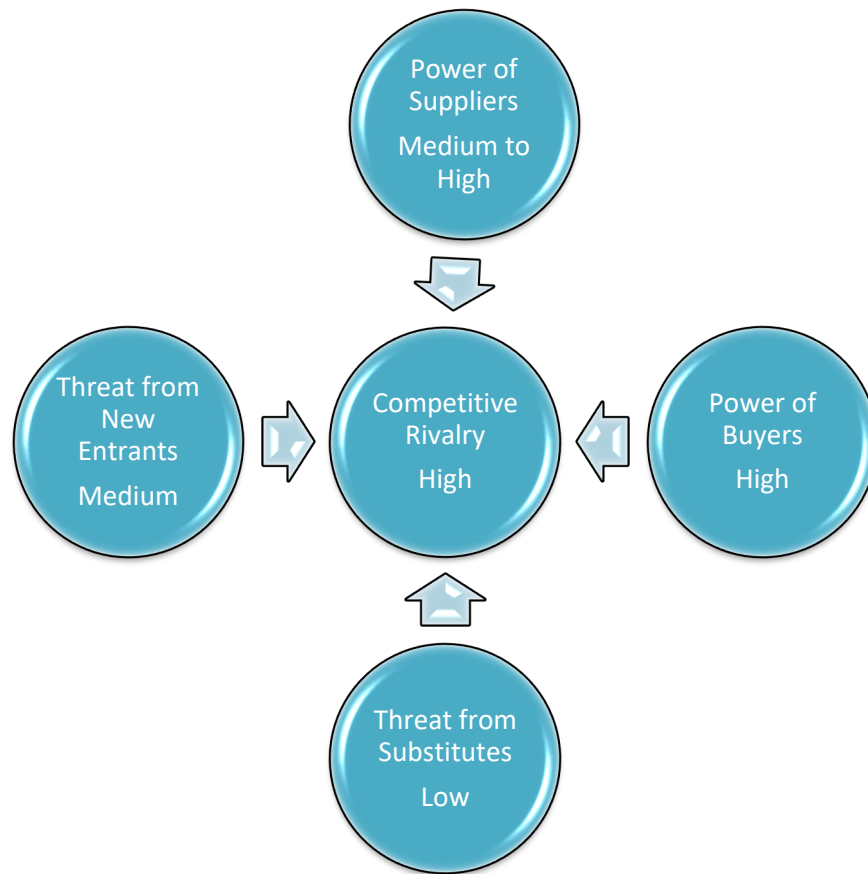
Flying is the only viable transportation method for transatlantic travel (Fowler & William, 2017). The threat from substitutes can be considered to be low.

Market Rivalry between Participants

Competition in the European low cost airlines sector is intense and growing steadily (ICSANA, 2015). Whilst low cost transatlantic operators are restricted in numbers at present, several full fare airlines with different rate structures for different classes operate on these routes, several of them with loyalty schemes (ICSANA, 2015). Competitive rivalry is thus high.

The following chart graphically depicts the application of the Porter's Five Forces analysis to EasyJet's entry into the North American Market.

Chart 2: Porter's Five Forces Analysis to EasyJet's



(Source: Adapted from: Porter, 2004)

4.3. SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis of the organisation is provided below.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Strong competence in the low cost airlines sector • Capabilities in achievement of rapid turnaround time • Reputation for punctuality and safety • Low average fleet age	• EasyJet is presently unlikely to have the required fleet size to service transatlantic flights. • Does not have experience of flying outside Europe • Existing airline laws in the USA may

• Strong reputation and brand image in Europe and across the world (as people from numerous countries use RyanAir for their European travel) • Ability to service numerous routes and destinations	restrict operations • Competition from low cost airlines from Scandinavia, who have started operating on transatlantic flights • Total absence of airline infrastructure in North America
Opportunities • Very strong potential for transatlantic airline traffic • Competition is mainly from traditional full fare airlines • Travellers in Europe, as well as North America would like to make use of low cost transatlantic flights	Threats • The commencement of transatlantic operations are likely to involve extensive costs • Intense competition from full fare carriers, who dominate the transatlantic route and have loyalty programmes

(Source: Serpen, 2014; Fedosova, 2016; Gollan, 2017; McDonald, 2015; Cederholm, 2014; Morris, 2018; EasyJet, 2018a)

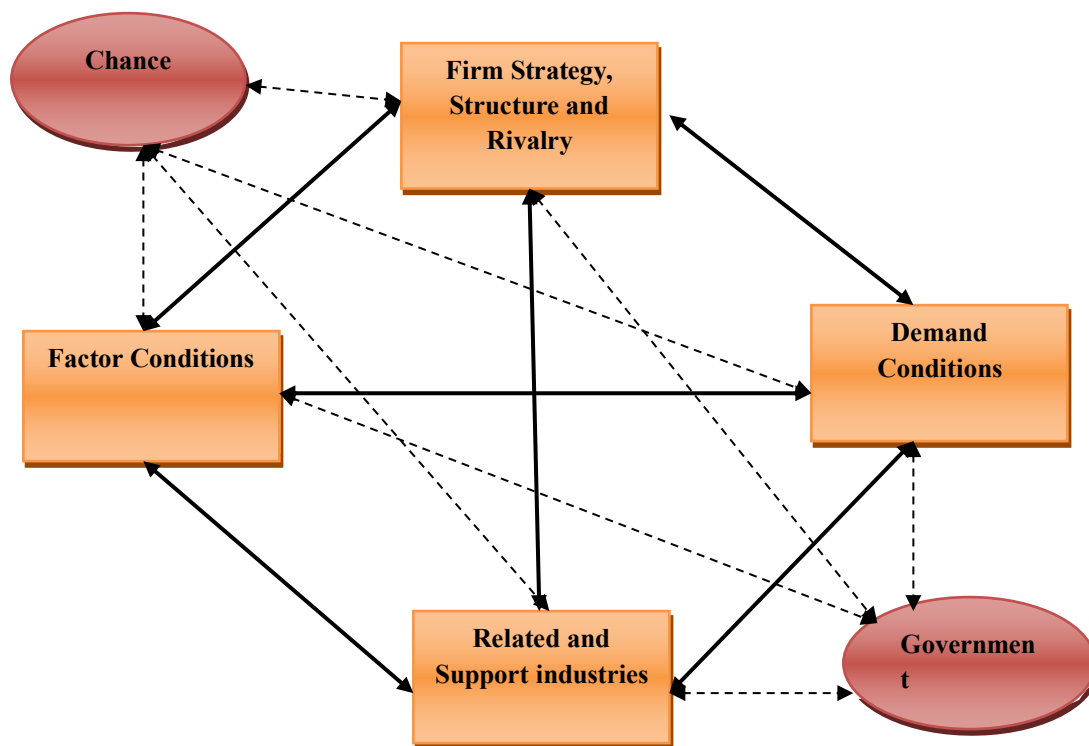
4.4. Competitor Analysis

The extent of competition in the transatlantic and North American sector is likely to be extremely strong on account of the entrenched operations of numerous traditional full fare carriers like British Airways, KLM and Singapore airlines (Lynn, 2017). Whilst the number of low cost carriers is restricted at present to a few Scandinavia based airlines, these have definitely occupied first mover advantage in the sector (Mandic *et al.*, 2017). Notwithstanding the extent of competition, it is clear that the potential for business is extremely high.

4.5. Porter's Diamond Theory of National Advantage

The Porter's Diamond model helps in understanding the competitive position of a nation on account of certain factors available to them (Warren, 2007). It can also be used for other major geographic regions (Warren, 2007). The model as well as its application to EasyJet's entry in Europe is provided below.

Chart 3: Porter's Diamond Model



(Source: Adapted from Warren, 2007)

- **Firm Strategy, Structure and Rivalry:** The airline industry is oligopolistic in nature and has a restricted number of market participants. Competitive rivalry amongst market participants is high, both in the traditional full fare sector, as well

as the low cost airlines sector. The product offering has been comparatively static for a long time (Serpen, 2014).

- **Demand Conditions:** Demand for air travel is continuously increasing, driven by greater business and personal travelling needs and lower fares. The development of low cost airlines has resulted in significant enhancement in demand for air travel (Pearce, 2013).
- **Related and Support Industries:** North America has an extensive network of both primary and secondary airports and EasyJet should not have difficulty in identifying particular airports for its operations. With the airline industry being substantially developed, Easy Jet should not face significant difficulties in running its various operations (Calder, 2015).
- **Factor Conditions:** North America is geographically immense and levels of affluence are high, with correspondingly strong demand for short and long haul transportation. All airports are connected with highways and infrastructure is very strong. The labour force is adequately skilled and labour costs are similar to those of Europe (Te Hau, 2017).
- **Chance:** Brexit has introduced uncertainty in the development of the final trading agreements between the UK and the US. This shall hopefully be resolved in the coming year. Fuel prices have remained low for the last three years but are currently moving upwards on account of production cuts by the OPEC nations and Russia (Giles, 2016).

- **Government:** North American governments encourage business, free trade and competition. EasyJet should benefit on account of this environment (Mhlanga & Steyn, 2017).

5. Risk Analysis

The plan for commencing transatlantic operations to North America and operations between cities and towns in the region is a complex, expensive and extremely challenging plan, which will require high amounts of investment in aircraft, people and supporting services, as well as high levels of operational and managerial knowhow (Calder, 2015). Such a business plan shall automatically be vulnerable to various types of projects, managerial, marketing, operational, financial and reputational risks (Calder, 2015). Numerous problems and challenges can occur in a business venture of this size with adverse consequences for the organisation (Mandic *et al.*, 2017). The project may get delayed on account of various reasons. Threats could arise on account of political volatility and terrorism (Chang & Yu, 2012). Sharp upward movements in oil prices could put upward pressure on costs (Graham, 2013). Delays in finalisation of agreements with airports and airport authorities could result in business delays with correspondingly adverse consequences (Graham, 2013).

It is thus important for EasyJet to develop an extremely broad based and comprehensive risk management exercise, commencing with the comprehensive identification of all possible risks in various areas (Flouris & Yilmaz, 2011). The identification of diverse risks should be followed by their assessment and their likely consequences on airline operations in case of crystallisation (Flouris & Yilmaz, 2011). EasyJet's management will have to comprehensively

assess various risks in order to ensure appropriate and effective risk management strategies (Flouris & Yilmaz, 2011).

6. International Business Strategy

It is important to discuss the various options available in the development of an internationalisation strategy. Most businesses commence their internationalisation efforts with direct exports, followed by the establishment of marketing efforts and thereafter by the development of production basis (Hegge, 2002). Whilst these are applicable for production / manufacturing and marketing organisations, EasyJet will have to commence its operations first through the initiation of transatlantic flights from specific commencement points in the UK and important European locations to specific destinations in the US (Hegge, 2002).. The commencement of transatlantic flights between specific destinations shall progressively be followed by the development of a network of destinations, similar to the one that has been created in Europe (Calder, 2015). Growth in this area is likely to be organic and shall occur from year to year with progressive expansion in fleet size (Mathews & Zander, 2007).

The development of international business strategy also calls for the choice of entry methods, which can range from the appointment of franchisees to the creation of joint ventures with local organisations and the development of fully fledged subsidiaries for carrying out business (Mathews & Zander, 2007). Rugman and Brewer (2001) stated that whilst the creation of joint ventures can help in accessing the venture partner's knowledge of the local market and reduction in initial capital costs, it can lead to reduction of managerial independence and open up the possibility of conflict between the two partners. It is thus suggested that EasyJet should form a fully fledged subsidiary for conducting the American operations, i.e. EasyJet North America

(Mathews & Zander, 2007). This will provide it with the flexibility and the independence to set up transatlantic and North American operations at its own place and in accordance with its predetermined strategy (Mathews & Zander, 2007).

7. International Marketing Plan

The International marketing plan for EasyJet has been designed in accordance with the TOWS matrix in order to ensure the utilisation of its strengths to take advantages of opportunities and avoid real and potential threats, the use of opportunities to overcome weaknesses and the minimisation of weaknesses and threats (Ghauri & Cateora, 2010).

1. SO (Use of Strengths to take advantage of Opportunities)

EasyJet should take advantage of its established competencies in areas of cost control, punctuality, safety and rapid turnaround time to exploit existing opportunities for transatlantic and North American traffic. It should make use of its global reputation and brand image to attract potential travellers (Hollensen, 2011).

2. ST (Use of Strengths to avoid Threats)

EasyJet should make use of its strong reputation, brand image and brand strength to enter the transatlantic market and compete strongly with full fare carriers, as well as low cost airlines. It should make use of its long relationship with aircraft suppliers to develop aircraft suitable for transatlantic journeys and North American operations (Craig & Douglas, 2005).

3. WO (Use of Opportunities to Overcome Weaknesses)

EasyJet should make use of a strong potential for transatlantic and North American traffic in order to develop a specific fleet that shall be ideally suited for North American operations. It

should progressively enhance its knowledge of North American flying conditions in order to enrich its knowledge and experience of flying in Europe (Hollensen, 2011).

4. WT (Minimisation of Weaknesses and Threats)

The organisation should focus strongly on the minimisation of its existing weaknesses and threats by initiating strategies, plans and processes for the development of a suitable, comprehensive, modern and cost effective fleet of aircraft (Mandic *et al.*, 2017). The development of such a fleet will help EasyJet considerably in enhancing its cost effectiveness, fuel efficiency and market penetration. It must obtain comprehensive knowledge of existing laws, rules and regulations in order to ensure smooth running. It should develop agreements with various airports across the region in a progressive manner in order to build up desired infrastructure over a predetermined time period (Bradley, 2005).

8. Recommendations / Conclusions

This business plan has provided comprehensive details about EasyJet's proposed internationalisation into the North American airlines sector. The plan envisages the conduct of transatlantic flights, as well as flights across the stipulated region. The examination carried out for the purpose of this plan revealed that the transatlantic and North American market has enormous potential in terms of customers and business (Calder, 2015). The element of competition from other market participants is however expected to be extremely high on account of the fact that (1) several low cost aircraft carriers currently operate in North America, (2) numerous full fare airlines operate on the transatlantic route and (3) some low cost aircraft carriers have started operating between Europe and North America (Pearce, 2013). It is also a matter of considerable concern the EasyJet's experience in the low cost airlines sector is

restricted to Europe and it does not have any experience of operating in the North American market or any infrastructure in place (Mandic *et al.*, 2017).

It has thus been recommended that EasyJet should firstly enter the American market through a fully fledged subsidiary, which shall provide it with comprehensive independence in the conduct of its operations. It should secondly develop a specific and modern fleet of additional aircraft specifically for this purpose. These aircraft should be developed for long haul flights, as well as flights across North America and should provide high levels of efficiency, reliability, safety, and cost effectiveness. EasyJet should furthermore work on the development of its own infrastructure in North America, including agreements with airport authorities and the development of infrastructure. It should finally make good use of its existing reputation and brand image in order to compete intensely in the transatlantic and North American markets in order to attract both business and tourism traffic. It is felt that the adoption of these various recommendations should help EasyJet in entering the transatlantic and North American market with substantial success.

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