

Adventure bus transport network KE has dominated New Zealand tourism travel industry for backpackers.

Central issue-The central issue of this case study is how KE can sustain and grow its business in the competitive and dynamic backpacker bus market in New Zealand. Its general challenges include labelled as party bus, distinguish itself from mainstream, finding high-quality bus drivers, competition and change in customer behavior. **COVID-19 pandemic lockdown** became a major barrier. Country NE's excellent pandemic handling and KE with its culture of service excellence, reliability, responsiveness, customer relationship and co-creation brought its business back on track. The case study explores the challenges and opportunities that KE faces in the post-COVID-19 travel environment.

<p>Strengths</p> <p>Greater frequency of bus services (Jan-Apr,4-5times/week)</p> <p>They stay flexible with departure dates</p> <p>Value for Money- cost includes activities, accommodation</p> <p>Rigorous driver selection procedure</p> <p>Empowered drivers, experienced guides</p> <p>Customer cocreation, constant innovation</p> <p>Allow passengers to get on and off the bus</p> <p>Strong brand recognition and larger customer base</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Scarcity of high-quality bus drivers</p> <p>Company's policy of choosing passengers before trip and discarding onboard repulsive passengers with full refund</p> <p>This policy may spread negative word of mouth</p> <p>Low margin business</p> <p>To be labelled as Booze Bus will harm reputation</p> <p>Driver's exhaustion</p> <p>Can be crowded during peak season</p>
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>Growth in backpacking market</p> <p>Positive word of mouth marketing by ex-KE backpackers</p> <p>Advertising overseas to attract international tourists.</p> <p>New Zealand's overall safe, healthy and scenic surrounding</p> <p>Partnering with other businesses</p>	<p>Threats</p> <p>Competition from other bus services-e.g., Stray bus</p> <p>Pandemic and natural disasters disrupt business</p> <p>Strive to be seen as leading edge and not mainstream</p> <p>Adventure activities by others may not be of best quality</p> <p>Do not rely on repeat customers</p>

- Kiwi Experience maintains a continual customer focus from start to end of the trip in the following ways-
 - Kiwi Experience selects fun-loving, young adventurous travelers, backpackers.
 - Drivers are carefully selected, they listen and respond to customer complaints, provide hassle free travel
 - Allow customer cocreation-employ previous satisfied customers to spread positive word of mouth
 - They listen to customer feedback through questionnaires, driver feedback, and mystery shoppers.
 - Flexibility with departure dates, value for money -activities and accommodation in the cost of the trip.
 - They rigorously select drivers who are fun, young, adventurous, outgoing, and experienced.
 - They give customers souvenirs and memories at the end of the trip to act as positive reminders.
- Culture: KE's culture is built on service excellence, reliability, responsiveness, customer relationship and co-creation. Kiwi Experience employees are encouraged to be themselves and to have fun.
 - Kiwi Experience employees are empowered to make decisions that are in the best interests of customers.
 - Kiwi Experience employees are encouraged to go above and beyond to provide excellent service.

Leadership:

 - The company's founders have a clear vision about providing excellent customer service.
 - The company's leadership team is committed to innovation and continuous improvement.
 - The company's leadership team is committed to giving back to the community.
- There are many ways for service companies to get customers to play a more active role in the service experience.
 - Customer Co-creation: Involve customers in the design of services.
 - Give customers more control over the service experience. This could involve allowing customers to choose the time and place of service delivery, or to customize the service to their needs.
 - Empower customers to help themselves. Self-service options, such as online chat or knowledge bases.
 - Reward customers for their active participation (filling feedback form) by offering discounts, loyalty points.