

Winter Consulting

Capstone Project for Winter Consulting ' 2025

Consulting & Analytics Club, IIT Guwahati

CASE 1 – Regional Airline × Fuel Price Shock: Navigating Profitability, Stability, and Growth

Context

A fast-growing regional airline operates short-haul routes connecting Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities to major hubs across India. The airline's mission is to expand regional connectivity while maintaining a lean cost structure.

Business Model Overview

Network & Fleet

- High-frequency, short-distance routes
- Narrow-body aircraft optimized for regional operations

Revenue Streams

- Passenger ticket sales
- Ancillary revenues (baggage, seat selection, meals)
- Government-backed regional connectivity incentives

Cost Structure

- Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) as the largest variable cost
- Fixed lease, crew, and airport handling costs

FY24 Performance

- Load factors: 70–75%
- Several routes at thin but positive margins
- Government-supported routes provided margin stability

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The Shock

In FY25, Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) prices rise sharply due to global crude volatility, currency depreciation, and limited domestic tax relief.

Immediate Impact

- Per-seat operating costs increase materially
- Several marginal regional routes turn loss-making
- Fare increases risk demand erosion in highly price-sensitive markets

System-Level Effects

- Network profitability becomes uneven, with cross-subsidization breaking down
- Fixed lease obligations accelerate cash burn

Early Internal Estimates

- 30–40% of routes risk structural unviability
- Breakeven load factors exceed realistic demand on multiple sectors

Strategic Alternative: Expanded UDAN Participation

The government expands participation under the UDAN Scheme, offering:

- Guaranteed minimum revenue on select routes
- Partial fuel and airport charge subsidies
- Long-term route allocations (3–5 years)

Trade-offs

- Mandatory capacity commitments
- Restrictions on pricing and frequency
- Reduced fleet redeployment flexibility

Implication

- Short-term cash flow stability and fuel risk insulation
- Potential long-term margin compression and rigidity

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Decision Dilemma

Over the next 18–24 months, leadership must choose a clear strategic priority:

A. Network Optimization & Dynamic Pricing

Absorb fuel shocks through route rationalization, yield management, and cost discipline.

B. Government-Backed Route Expansion

Prioritize revenue stability and downside protection via subsidized routes.

C. Structural Operating Model Redesign

Rework fleet mix, route strategy, and cost base to reduce long-term fuel sensitivity.

A blended approach is possible, but one path must be primary.

Deliverables

1. Problem Diagnosis

Key Questions

- How much of current losses are fuel-driven vs structurally embedded?
- Which routes are fundamentally broken vs salvageable?
- How do fuel shocks propagate across route economics, fleet utilization, cash flow, and investor confidence?

2. Strategic Options Assessment

Option A: Network Optimization & Pricing

- **Upside:** Margin recovery on core routes, higher yields on business-heavy sectors
- **Risks:** Demand elasticity, load factor collapse
- **Time to impact:** 3–6 months

Option B: Government-Backed Route Expansion

- **Upside:** Revenue stabilization, downside protection
- **Risks:** Operational inflexibility, capped long-term margins
- **Time to impact:** Immediate to short-term

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Option C: Structural Redesign

- **Upside:** Long-term fuel resilience, structural cost competitiveness
- **Risks:** High execution complexity, capital intensity
- **Time to impact:** 12–24 months

3. Recommendation & Rationale

Your recommendation should clearly:

- Prioritize one strategic path
- Explain why others are supporting, not primary
- Balance:
 - Profitability
 - Network stability
 - Growth optionality

Explicitly state:

- What not to pursue aggressively
- Which trade-offs the airline is consciously accepting

4. Metrics & Success Criteria

Track 2–3 core KPIs:

- CASK
- Route-level EBITDA margin
- Cash burn rate

5. Risks & Mitigation

- **Sustained fuel price volatility**

Managed through selective hedging, flexible capacity deployment, and predefined route exit triggers

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- **Demand erosion in price-sensitive regional markets**

Addressed via granular pricing, fare segmentation, and frequency optimization rather than uniform fare hikes

Submission Guidelines:

A concise PDF deck of maximum 5 slides (excluding title slide and appendix) presenting your analysis and recommendation

Evaluation Criteria:

- Strategic clarity and sound judgment
 - Logical structuring with clear, MECE thinking
 - Realism of assumptions and feasibility of recommendations
 - Ability to articulate trade-offs and second-order effects
 - Clarity and executive-level communication
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CASE 2 – Viewer Retention in OTT Platforms: Diagnosing Engagement Patterns

Context

A leading OTT streaming platform produces and distributes original television series across multiple genres. While the platform consistently achieves strong viewership at launch, it faces a persistent business challenge:

A significant proportion of viewers disengage during Season 1, limiting user lifetime value and complicating content renewal decisions.

Internal teams suspect that episode-level content design choices such as pacing, cognitive load, and episode structure may be contributing to early viewer drop-off. However, the platform currently lacks a clear, data-backed understanding of which factors matter most.

To address this gap, the platform has shared internal episode-level engagement data with a consulting team for analysis

The Business Problem

The platform seeks to answer three core questions:

1. Why do viewers drop off?
 2. Which factors have the greatest impact on drop-off risk?
 3. What changes can be made, at the content or product level to reduce drop-off without compromising creative quality?
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About the Dataset

The dataset contains episode-level viewing, behavioral, and content attributes of multiple series on an OTT platform. It captures how episodes differ in design, how viewers interact with them during playback, and the resulting engagement outcomes.

Link for the dataset - [DATASET](#)

Your Role

You are engaged as a consultant to help the platform diagnose the root causes of early viewer drop-off and recommend actionable solutions.

Participants are expected to:

- Use the data to identify and validate problems
- Avoid assumptions not supported by analysis

Key Questions to Address

Participants are expected to use the provided dataset to address the following:

1. What patterns or relationships in the data explain differences in viewer continuation across the episodes?
2. Can episodes be meaningfully segmented based on content characteristics and viewer behavior, and how do these segments differ in engagement outcomes?
3. Based on your analysis, what actions (if any) should the platform consider to improve the performance, and why?



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Solution Design

Based on their findings, participants should propose **practical and implementable** recommendations that address the issues identified through analysis.

Recommendations may include (but are not limited to):

- Changes to episode structuring or sequencing
- Product-level interventions to support viewer understanding or continuity
- Targeted actions for specific episode or content segments

All proposed solutions must:

- Be clearly linked to insights derived from the data
- Be feasible within the context of an existing OTT platform

Prioritization and Risk Mitigation

Participants should recognize that not all recommended actions can be implemented at the same time.

They are expected to:

- Prioritize recommendations based on potential impact and feasibility, clearly justifying why certain actions are chosen over others
- Identify key risks associated with the chosen actions and propose practical mitigation measures to manage these risks

Deliverables

Participants are required to submit a presentation of **up to 7 slides**, excluding the title slide and appendix.

The 7 slides should clearly cover the problem understanding, data-driven insights, segmentation (if any), conclusions, recommended actions, prioritization, and risk considerations.

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Evaluation Criteria

Submissions will be evaluated based on:

- Depth and quality of data analysis
- Clarity of problem diagnosis
- Strength and logic of recommendations
- Feasibility of proposed solutions
- Ability to clearly link insights to actions



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Case 3 – Reducing Missed Appointments in a Telemedicine Platform: Product Decisions

Context

Telemedicine platforms have become an important channel for accessing healthcare, especially for routine consultations and follow-ups. By offering convenience, flexible scheduling, and remote access to doctors, these platforms aim to improve healthcare accessibility while optimizing doctors' time and capacity.

As usage has scaled, operational reliability has become critical to sustaining trust on both sides of the marketplace. One key challenge emerging for the platform is ensuring that scheduled consultations are actually completed as planned, without creating friction for patients or inefficiencies for doctors.

Existing Product

The telemedicine app allows users to:

- Browse and select doctors for online consultations
- Choose and book available consultation time slots
- Receive appointment confirmations and reminders
- Complete the consultation and pay after the session
- Join scheduled consultations via in-app video calls
- Access digital prescriptions and consultation summaries after the visit

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The Problem

The platform is experiencing a high incidence of missed appointments, where patients either join consultations late or do not join at all.

This results in:

- Idle and underutilized doctor time
- Reduced confidence among doctors in the reliability of scheduled consultations
- Increased customer support interactions related to rescheduling and complaints

Over time, these effects contribute to:

- Lower doctor retention
- Reduced platform credibility
- Pressure on overall unit economics

Key Constraints

Participants should assume the following constraints:

- Doctors operate on tight and fixed schedules
- A significant share of users are first-time telemedicine users
- Internet connectivity and device reliability may vary

Your Role

You are a Product Manager tasked with reducing missed appointments.

You cannot:

- Redesign the entire product
- Assume new hardware or major infrastructure changes

You can:

- Improve existing features
- Introduce small, focused product enhancements
- Modify flows, defaults, or in-app interactions

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Deliverables

Participants are required to submit a maximum 5-slide presentation (excluding title slide and appendix) that addresses the following:

- Problem Identification: A clear articulation of the primary problem driving missed appointments in the current product experience, grounded in realistic user and system behavior rather than surface-level symptoms
- A well-reasoned product recommendation that addresses the identified problem without redesigning the entire app
- A concise explanation of why this approach is preferable to alternative interventions
- Identification of key risks or limitations associated with the proposal, along with mitigation considerations
- Success Metrics: Clearly define how the effectiveness of the proposed solution would be measured, including at least one primary metric and one supporting metric

Submissions should demonstrate clarity of thought, focus on the core problem, and practical product judgment.

Evaluation Criteria

Submissions will be evaluated based on:

- Clarity in identifying the core problem
- Soundness and practicality of the proposed solution
- Quality of reasoning and prioritization
- Awareness of risks and feasibility considerations
- Appropriateness of defined success metrics