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Report on Destination and Product Marketing Planning TFMK2003: Assignment with Senior Citizen Knitting Group, Balbriggan

Catherine Gorman

Technological University Dublin, catherine.gorman@tudublin.ie

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Report on
Destination and Product Marketing Planning
TFMK2003
Assignment
with
Senior Citizens Knitting Group, Balbriggan



Dr. Catherine Gorman,
Department of Hospitality Management and Tourism
College of Arts and Tourism, DIT,
Cathal Brugha Street, Dublin 1

Tel: 4027583 Email: catherine.gorman@dit.ie

Context of the Project

Destination and Product Marketing Planning is a module attracting **five ECTS** which runs in Semester 2 each year and is delivered as a core module as part of the following programmes: There were 30 students studying the module and 20 of them went on the fieldtrip to Balbriggan

- DT 412/2 B.Sc in Tourism Marketing

The learning objectives of the module are to provide an overview of tourism marketing planning of either/and a tourist destination and/or a tourism product such as accommodation. Component elements of a marketing plan include developing a mission statement, situational analysis, developing the marketing mix and issues of control and implementation. Successful implementation of a marketing plan for a destination requires that all stakeholders including the local community are involved in its preparation. The expected learning outcomes of the module with italicised outcomes relevant to SLWC are as follows:

The student should be able to:

- Appreciate marketing decisions made in relation to tourism products and destinations.
- Analyse competitors and identify collaborations, networks and co-operatives.
- Identify the types of communication relevant to target market segments.
- Recognise the use of pricing strategies and distribution strategies for both products and destinations.
- Demonstrate an understanding of marketing controls and auditing.
- *Formulate a marketing plan.*
- *In participating on a site visit specific to the module engage and critically evaluate operation within the industry*

Delivery of the Module

This module is allocated three hours per week. The methods of delivery involve a mix of lecture, guest lecture and a fieldtrip. All materials are uploaded on to Web courses including web links (usually embedded in the presentation notes), examples of exam questions and various documents and academic papers

Assignment/project

The assignment description, useful links, mark allocated and criteria used are uploaded on Web Courses on Day 1 of meeting with the students. The assignment attracts 40% of the total mark for the subject. Attendance and paper evaluation attracts 10% of the module...

There are two parts to the assignment/project

1. Attendance on a fieldtrip
2. An academic report undertaken in pairs following a brief which requires the students to focus on an aspect of marketing planning. A theoretical context is expected at the outset of the work and students are encouraged to make recommendations. It is required that the community input is evaluated as to its usefulness

Community Participation

During the period 2016/17, a number of modules ran their assignments through a 01 School initiative called *Students in Action*. Fingal County Council the previous year had

made contact with the School and was interested in developing links between the staff, students, County Council, the communities and providers of leisure, tourism and hospitality within Fingal. Fingal had highlighted the changing face and increase in size of Balbriggan. The increase in multi-cultural nature also contributed to its changing identity in a town which had once been a popular seaside destination. With this in mind, Balbriggan was considered a suitable destination as the basis for the assessment for this module Destination Tourism Marketing Planning. It was also decided to focus on a similar theme 'input from older people within the community' as been previously the case for this module

Timeline and Actions

Dec 2016/Jan 2017 Identification of community input and pre-visit

The facilitator through snowballing accessed a number of senior citizens within the community who met on a regular basis as a knitting group. Their willingness to participate and access to the group to enable sufficient time to gather data had to be considered. Eddie Keyes in the Balbriggan Library was the initial point of contact and he provided leads to activities that take place locally.

February 2017 Class preparation and reflection

Students were allocated their themes. As part of the assessment, consent forms and a protocol had to be developed. A series of questions pertinent to their topic area also needed to be generated prior to the visit. Their aspect of the marketing plan had to consider the potential relevancy of the input and the type of terminologies used to ensure clarity and understanding as to what was being sought.

March 14th Visit to Balbriggan Senior Citizens Resource Centre

We were welcomed by the group who were happy to meet with the students. Of interest they were mainly female and they were the most willing to talk. Students sat down beside them, consent forms and the protocol were circulated and duly signed, and conversations were duly gathered.

March/ April Student development of projects

This took place March/April when the assignment was submitted for correction Post visit reflection and discussion was undertaken in class.

April Feedback to Fingal County Council

A poster synopsising the outputs from the project was presented to Fingal at the feedback session held in April. This had been developed in consultation with the students. A number of councillors and representatives were present at the session. Unfortunately there was no representation from Balbriggan. It was Sean Corrigan CEO Chamber of Commerce (who led the students on tour of the town) was to be invited. The senior citizens were not invited. This was due to the logistics (availability of

transport) of an invite. Due to personal circumstances, follow-up was not undertaken in May/June.

Key Student/DIT Outputs of the project (2016/17)

- **Thirty (30)** students undertook this project involving the Senior Citizens in Balbriggan.
- **Fifteen** reports were undertaken
- One poster synopsizing the output of the engagement was developed and displayed in Fingal County Council
- Students experienced the issues and challenges of gathering input from a group of people who would not usually be consulted about developing such a plan
- Intergenerational awareness and engagement

The students learnt through engagement to evaluate the benefit and the limitations to seeking input from the older community. Post visit reflective discussion was around the value of the input, the parochial nature of the input and in general the negativity about the County Council. This feedback is invaluable to highlight the challenges that exist when operationalising engagement with all stakeholders as advocated by policy such as LA21.

Key Community Outputs of the project

- Greater awareness and insight of tourism potential and marketing planning
- Increased links and engagement with DIT. This engagement took place on two fronts: engagement between students, the older community and the facilitator, and engagement between Fingal CC and the facilitator

Conclusion

Involving a mediator in the form of Fingal CC could be questioned... however; they have a role in providing facilities for all within a community as well as developing policies and prioritisation of resources. While personal circumstances did intervene in terms of getting feedback from each site in May/June, the lack of community presence at the Fingal County Council evening feedback session needs to be explored. With this in mind, it is the intention to run with a similar approach for the module in 2017/2018, and strengthen the community links with engaging with a local community in Blanchardstown involving Blanchardstown Area Partnership (BAP)... to be continued!