SUMMER INTERNSHIP

Phase II Interim Report
Report On- MiStay
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Introduction

MiStay falls in OTA or Online Travel Agency/Aggregator industry. This industry specializes in the selling of services or products pertaining to travelling. MiStay offers hourly hotel booking services in the form of 3 slots. The first slot from 8 am - 12 pm, second slot 1 pm - 7 pm, third slot 8 pm - 7 am. Being a start-up MiStay remains agile, which allows it make significant changes to its models or bushiness tactic if required and if it feasible with the current work force. The major customers are Unmarried couples for MiStay, followed by students a close second, businessmen as the third. While MiStay necessarily didn't plant to position itself for unmarried couples, but when a breakdown was down of their major customers, it made all sense. Considering most hotels charge for a whole day if a couple wanted a room for some intimate time, so MiStay for such couples becomes a perfect choice, as they can save substantial money. While it was initially unintentional, MiStay has embraced the changed as it is an inclusive company which doesn't believe in prehistoric social stigmas followed by society. Currently due to the pandemic at hand MiStay intends to leverage the couple customer base due to the face there is going be a substantial dip in the vacations due to people avoiding travelling. So a major chunk of bookings will only come from local customers, which majorly consists of couples. As from the customer base it can be infered easily that MiStay isn't exactly target towards the leisure segment in the online hotel booking market, hence it operates mostly in Big metro cities where is a need for hotel bookings for smaller time spam, contrary to vacations in which you'd normally prefer a whole day of booking.

Due to being a start the role that concerns me

exactly doesn't fall under any department but per say as it is under marketing as the blog I write as an intern depend on the marketing strategy in the sense they choose the keywords we are targeting in our blogs. Roles wise the role assigned to me is 'Content development for On-Page search Opitimisation. Coming to contribution me along with the other interns are writing approximately blogs post, with a goal to write 100 blogs each by the end of internship. The content needs to be well engaging and well researched, preferably related to travelling or other hot topics. Implement specific target keywords in those blog posts naturally. The keywords will depend on the current marketing strategy. Also it is asked to link older blogs to newer ones where ever relevant, and do the same to older with newer ones that are relevant. Being in a team of five, each person is assigned with a reviewer and reviewee randomly, hence review each post of your reviewee before they are publish a post, and contact your reviewer so they do the same for your post. Lastly post summaries of you blogs with a hyperlinks to main blog, on forums where question relevant to your blog posts are being asked or discussed.

The current work flow of the company consists of:

(This data was provided by Sandeep Jaiswal, the CEO of MiStay)

1. Management Team (currently founders)

2. Operations

    a. Customer Operation

        i. Customer experience champion

        ii. Escalation

    b. Hotel operations

        i. Hotel Partnership (Business development)

        ii. Hotel Onboarding

        iii. Relationship management

    c. Finance Operations (aka accounts)

    d. People operations (akka HR)

3. Technology

    a. Frontend

    b. Backend

4. Marketing

Methodology

<u>Ethanographic Study</u>

1. Research Problem

To write in-depth content that is engaging whilst incorporating the Target Keywords provided by the marketing team, so the blogs are search engine optimized (SEO) for the keywords

2. Location for research

Due to being a WFH internship, the location is limited to the virtual space and platforms Ghost, Zoom and Flock

3. Formulate presentation method

As this is a summer internship project, the presentation method is to take a role in the organization itself to do the research. Further so some extra data is needed, the organization is aware of the research so the response might differ.

4. Acquired permission and access

As Participant observational method is being used and the company is already aware of it, no extra permission is required for the research.

5. Observe and Participate

From an observer standpoint, the project aims to find a perfect balance between engaging content with the TKW(target keywords) incorporated in them naturally, but at the same time a high number of blogs is required, so the number of overall keywords increases and all the keywords are on concentrated only in few blogs. This allows MiStay to increase their reach greatly as the blogs are of very diverse topics. The main three customer bases MiStay intends to target is the Unmarried couples, as once lockdown is removed locals are most likely to use hotels of which unmarried couples would be the majority, the second is students for the similar reasons, and thirdly is business travellers as they might have to travel for work from one metro city to another.

As a participant, the aggressive marketing of MiStay seems to be completely in with the research problem, and they have adapted to the current pandemic well. With their aggressive approach with a diverse and high number of articles, they are likely to come out on top in comparison to their competitors once the lockdown is removed.

6. Interview

7. Archival Data

As MiStay is a start up no archival data is available.

8. Code and analyze data

The data is limited to only qualitative data as this is a experiential learning project. Something to notice regarding the marketing strategy which arises from analytic of the most used or searched keywords related to MiStay or online hotel booking, was the appeal to MiStay towards unmarried couples. When MiStay was established it was with the sole intent to offer customers hourly hotel service so they can check in different times and don't have to pay for the whole day, but instead only the time they intend to stay for. So the main target audience for business traveller and young adults or college students on short trips. But soon from the analytic they received from the marketing they realized, there was this is third customer based consisting of mostly unmarried couples who just need a place for intimate time, and the social stigma towards unmmaried couples doesn't allow them to get that in their own homes. There was obviously a concern for illegal activity, as by law get a room for prostitute is illegal. So while MiStay doesn't have any problem offering rooms to unmmaried couples with consent and legal age, it on the hoteliers if they want to accept local ids for or not. As India slowly overcome social stigmas, MiStay intend on capitalizing this customer while also solving issues faced by unmarried couples.

According to the MiStay website "If there is no mention of restrictions related to allowing local ID/ unmarried couples in the hotel policy section of hotel profile page in our website, it means those hotels accept local ids/ unmarried couples."

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1. Companies self image inside

The company has a very organic and transparent imagine inside. As there are only around 15 employees with 5 interns, there aren't any grudges between employees. As the employees can directly see their efforts being transformed in to something tangible let it be in the finance, marketing or operations or business plan department, the inside image is quite positive as the employees themselves are the company.

2. Self image of employees

In continuation to the previous point, the employee have a postive self image again due to the same reason, they are able to see their effort converted into action and how it is helping the company go forward. As a single department has 3-4 members, every employees has substaintial amount of

responsibility and accountability of the employees towards MiStay, even the intern, which give a sense of corporate indetity.

3. Employee satisfaction

From the all hands Zoom meeting, where members of all the departments were involved to the basic interaction of employees on Flock (the platform employees use to connect), is is visible the employees are highly satisfied.

4. Effectiveness of instruments used to motivate employee

These are the instruments primarily used to Sandeep to motivate the employees

a.) Sense of Purpose: Ensure they understand how their work translates into actual positive impact in peoples live, which they can be proud of and that can act as motivator

b.) Autonomy: Giving the freedom to make their own plan (in alignment with company goal) instead of micromanaging every step - this instills greater degree of ownership

c.) Linking the work with their personal growth plan: Devising their growth plan, paying attention to their growth in measurable manner builds trust and loyalty

The tools have been truly effective for the reason, each tool in a way is interconnected to each other. One can only get a sense of purpose when given the needed freedom, and then only can one link work and personal growth. This holistic approach also allows the the employees to be empowered whilst attracting future prospect with the company culture.
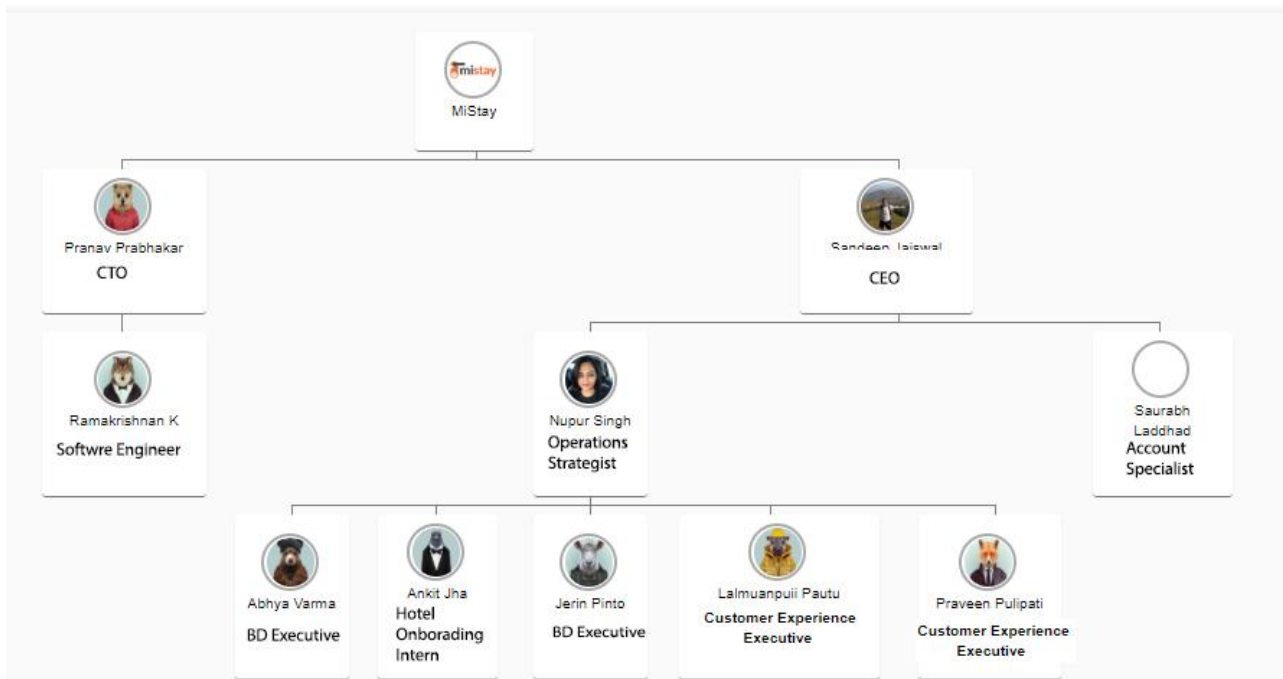
5. Power Equations and hierarchy

(This data was provided by Sandeep Jaiswal, the CEO of MiStay)

The power equation
Director> Executive> Specialist> Strategist

Hierarchy

6. Work culture

The work culture is a mixture of Co-operation and Transparency. As it is a start with approximately 15 members, co-operation is highly required as the employees are dependent on each other to deliver a coherent product to the customers. For the same reason the work culture is transparent. There is also adequate space for creativity where ever it is required and possible, for example the interns are given full creative freedom as long as they follow the basic guidelines to include keywords and size of the articles.

7. Sources of opportunity for company

The company can try to expand to non metro cities a bit more, and a membership program for customer with a subscription models seems very much valuable for the current customer base of unmarried couples, business traveler and young adults who are likely to have regular or more frequent use of the platform.

MiStay also has

a. Largest inventory for short stay hotels (1.8k)

b. Largest collection of premium hotels- brands like Hyatt, Holiday inn, The Park, Lemon Tree listed on its website

c. Highest technology adoption (customized integration with channel managers)

Observations

Organizational Training

There wasn't any to be exact training from the organization as the role was for content writing. I and the other interns went through a detailed zoom call on what are our responsibilities would be and what is expected from us daily. We were also sent a guideline on how to approach blog writing and tasked with writing 100 blog titles each, the same blog titles which we are currently writing blogs on, once they are selected by the marketing team personal. We have the option to connect to the CEO, Sandeep through Flock to solve any query we have, and if there are any mistakes or changes required, Sandeep communicates us the same through Flock.

Self learning

This internship till now has been mostly self learning, as me and my fellow interns have been treated like employees, which is a positive I feel like. The biggest self learning I have had perhaps is to learn how to write a blog without giving huge amount of effort which eats my whole day. Being a complete fresher, even with no internship experience, I always had the idea to give my best for highest of quality of work. But I truly saw the concept of marginal utility which we learnt in economics in first term work in real life. Spending four hours just for a content which would be rated 8/10 is perhaps not worth it, when I can write a 7/10 content in 2 hours. This is mainly because after writing the content, I have responsibility of reviewing of blogs of another intern, and at the same answer relevant questions on forums with content from my blogs, so I can drive more traffic to the blogs. So learning this exact balance of quality and quantity is my biggest learning. A secondary learning is how to naturally incorporate keywords to topics that are at all not related. And perhaps a learning which is unrelated to our course wise, but related to more about growing as a person is learning new things about different cities, from culture to festivals to location and history of flea markets, to history specific cuisine and where to find the best in a city. The amount of research required before and during writing an article has and still in enriching me with new knowledge, which allows me to know more about a plethora of things. Also co-ordination with my fellow interns, who are reviewee for my articles and the one for whome I am reviewer is also a important lesson. Learning how to point out someone's mistakes in an article without coming out rude or too specific is also a trait I have acquired.

Identification of problems

1. MiStay owns a substantial part of the hourly basis hotel market in Metro cities, but it is missing out on the holiday hotels, which still consists of huge revenue stream, specially in tier 3 metro cities which are also tourist destinations. Kerala is a good example for this, as it serves as a beach vacation for many and while MiStay is operational in Kerala, it is not in a very small way. So how MiStay would grow towards that kind of revenue stream is a problem in itself, due to its positioning.

2. MiStya strives on transparency and freedom, as it is star up. The same transparency has helped in cooperation between employees a vital part and helped in growing a corporate identity. But a concern would to grow as a company in size, how to incorporate the newer employees in and still be able to practise the same work culture. With 11 Employeers it is quite easy to be transparent and give freedom, as it is easy to keep track of their activities, when you scale it up to 50 it can become challenging considering Sandeep keeps everything in check personally.

Conclusion

While it is not possible to give a hard conclusion given it has been only a month, with another to spare and the lack on physical interaction does make it harder, MiStay has been a great learnign experience. Firstly of how to be of responsible and work in a team and try to achieve the same goal. Secondly while I am intending to get a HR major, I will take marketing minor so the having a content development for on-screen search optimization is very much beneficial, specially considering the current pandemic at hand. Being a part of a start up allows your see your work being translated into action in a much more substantial way, and being part of online meetings has greatly helped me learn how team dynamics work. The model MiStay is very interesting and has huge chance of being a big thing in the future I personally believe, if they can implement a subscription model, as considering the current world state subscription models are the way to go and much better than a one time time purchase.

Bibliography

- Sandeep Jaiswal, CEO, MiStay