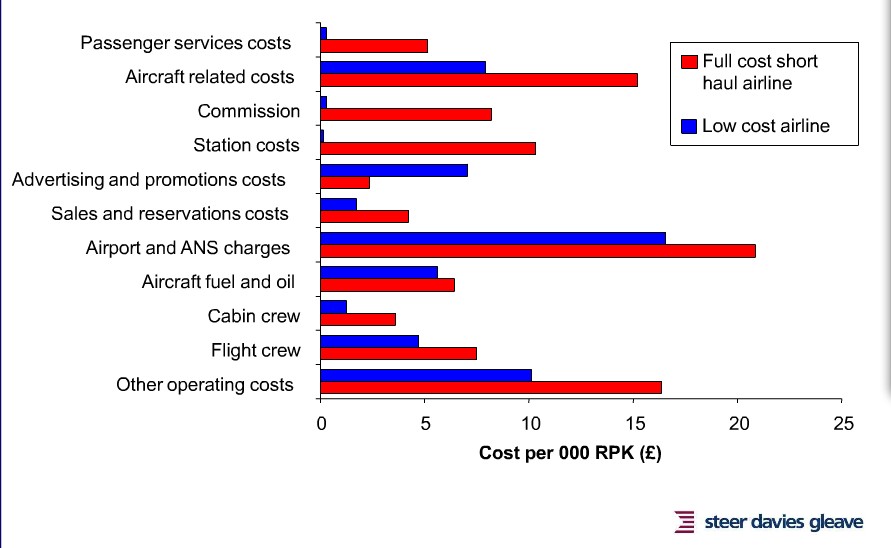
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**Table of Contents**

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| --- | --- |
| Introduction | 3 |
| Market Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning | 4 |
| Environmental Analysis | 6 |
| SWOT Analysis | 8 |
| Competitive Analysis | 10 |
| Price and Promotion | 11 |
| Sales and Marketing | 14 |
| Strategic Planning | 14 |
| Conclusion | 16 |
| Reference page | 17 |
| Appendix | 19 |

**Introduction**

RyanAir has become one of the most talked about companies in the world over the past few years. They are known for “no-frills” service beating any other airlines price. Founded in 1984, RyanAir has made a fast rise to financial success. Started by Christopher Ryan, Liam Lonergan and Tony Ryan they began with just an individual 14 seat airplance flying just one route. They continued to add more and more routes and airlines while incurring a financial loss until 1991 when they hired now current CEO Michael O’Leary. He restructured RyanAir’s business model to have the lowest costs and prices in the industry. They began to grow rapidly and began making profits by 2000 when they opened their own website. It is a fantastic story of success as they have gone from flying 14 people per flight to over 2 million per year today. Their average ticket price is only $40 Euros which averages out to roughly half the price of their competitors[[1]](#footnote-1). The graph[[2]](#footnote-2) to the right shows how they reduce their prices in comparison to the competition.

The extent that they will go to offer low prices (as well as low quality service) will push the expression “any press is good press” to the limit. Due to mass amounts of complaints as well as a very outspoken CEO, the world has taken notice to both the financial and environmentally unsustainable practices of RyanAir. All of this attention has lead to websites created by past customers such as IHateRyanAir.com and even the BBC documentary “Why Hate RyanAir?” which painted the company in a negative light. Some of the major concerns are the new C02 tax that is being applied to all airlines. RyanAir has refused to pay this tax and have forced it on their customers. They advertise this tax as a “eco-tax” to make it sound like a charitable environmental donation. Also they have publically stated that they are against the tax and do not feel they are responsible for the harm that the airline industry has on the environment. Next, the in flight service is very poor. They do not offer complimentary meals, they have very uncomfortable seats, lineup and wait times are extensively long and will offer no refunds of any kind. Even with what seems to be a dedication to low quality service they have been able to provide a service to customers of simply getting from point A to point B. This has worked financially for them so far, but is it sustainable? The rest of this report will examine the pros and cons of this strategy as well as offer some recommendations. The purpose is to examine whether the current course that RyanAir is on can be maintained in the long term.

**Market Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning**

**Segmentation**

According to CIM (1994) “Market segmentation is subdividing the market into distinct and increasingly homogenous subgroups of customers whereby any subgroup can conceivably be selected, as a target market that have similar needs, wants and characteristics to be met with a distinct marketing mix.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

The major segmentations are geographic, demographic, psychographic and behaviouristic. Ryan Air’s target market has divided to particular subgroups based on geographic, demographic and behaviouristic.

Geographic

Ryan air operates throughout the European regions across 27 countries, connecting to 160 destinations. The passenger origination of Ryan Air is mainly based in United Kingdom.

Demographic: Age

Ryan Air’s passenger age group:

9 % are between 18 to 24 years

31 % are between 25 to 34 years

23 % are between 35 to 44 years

20 % between 45 to 54 years

16 % are 55+ years[[4]](#footnote-4)

According to the following table, 83 % of passengers between ages 18 to 54, with the 25 to 34 years age group being the single largest group at 31 %[[5]](#footnote-5). At this particular age group, people intend to travel more often to get explore the world. Moreover, people will try to compare the price of the tickets, as you travel more that you will be more price sensitive on the tickets. Ryan Air known as low cost carrier will definitely meet their needs.

**Targeting**

Since Ryan Air is known for being a low cost carrier in the airline industry, they can provide some of the most competitive fares for consumers. According to the age group table, 83% of the passengers are between ages 18 to 54, which demonstrates the target market of Ryan Air is young and mostly price sensitive. Ryan Air has the best opportunity to hit the target market in the future.

**Positioning**

* Focus on travellers from Asia by introducing new airline packages as it is the largest market today.
* Business Travellers- by enhancing the level of services and giving value for money, as they are ready to shell money for comfort and satisfaction.
* Students- Introduction of new airlines with provision for extra luggage to target students coming from different parts of the world for their further education.

**Environmental Analysis**

**Micro Environment**

Existing Competitors- Ryan Air’s main competitors are Easy jet, Aer Lingus who also provide low cost services. The flight rates of Easy Jet are 26% higher whereas of Aer Lingus are double the rates of Ryan Air. Ryan Air understands the needs of their customers, which is mainly low prices. Ryan Air gains a strategic advantage over its competitors due to its affordable prices.

(Refer Appendix for the comparison of prices with competitors)

Marketing Intermediaries

Ryan Air follows the strategy of Disintermediation. Ryan Air has taken full advantage of the growing popularity of the internet. Ryan Air implemented its reservation system called Skylights which allowed the customers to book their flights directly through their website. Currently, more than 90% of the total flight bookings are through internet. Disintermediation is a great strategy as it reduces number of channels; it is also more profitable for the company as they do not have to pay any commission to the middleman. However, we as a team feel that as airline business is perishable, there should be an intermediary who will help to get business during shoulder period and reduce the loss of perishability.

Publics

Internal Publics

Ryan Air does not treat their employees fairly. Michael O’Leary, the CEO of Ryan Air criticised his employees for stealing Ryan Air`s electricity by charging their personal mobile phones. Even the employees in Ryan Air are not paid enough and are made to work very hard. The average salary of Ryan Air employees annually is around 14,300 pounds which is almost 400 pounds less than what a pensioner gets[[6]](#footnote-6). We believe that if the employees are not happy, they will not keep their customers happy. Ryan Air is making so much profit due to its low cost services, so they should increase the salaries of their employees and award them for their performances to keep them motivated as happy employees will result in happy and satisfied customers. They should change their policy of the company towards their employees by introducing a GOLDEN RULE ``Seek to treat others as you would like to be treated”.

Media Publics

Ryan Air believes that any publicity is good publicity. Ryan Air does not spend money on advertisements, rather they publicise their company in a bad way as they feel bad publicity spreads faster than the good publicity. Ryan Air had announced in media that they will be removing two out of three toilets from their aircrafts to accommodate six more seats. This was a bad way of publicising their company however they choose to do it as they just want to be in the minds of people and this publicity is free of cost. We believe that this they should change this attitude of the company. There are many cost effective ways to publicise about a company. It can be done through social media sites, newspapers, radio which will be cost efficient and high result oriented.

**Macro Environment**

Economic Environment

Ryan Air`s main target markets are people from UK, France, Germany, Italy and from few other countries. The disposable income of people of these countries is quiet high. Ryan Air has low cost services and is only targeting people who are cost sensitive and who do not care a lot about the quality of service. We agree with the fact that Ryan Air has low cost services which are attracting so many customers, but we would also want to target people who have disposable income to spend and who care about the quality of services. So we think that apart from their target market, Ryan Air should also introduce a business class to cater to people who are ready to spend money if they are given value for their money.

(Refer Appendix for Disposable income Bar Graph)

Natural Environment

Ryan Air has increased its CO 2 emissions by 20%[[7]](#footnote-7) from years 2009 to 2012 which is very high and it is affecting the natural environment. This increase in CO 2 emissions is mainly due to the increased number of flights. The European Union has imposed aviation carbon taxes on airlines as per the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). We suggest that, instead of increasing the number of flights, they could introduce bigger flights which can accommodate more passengers in one trip. This could help to reduce the CO 2 emissions. Ryan Air passed on this tax to passengers by increasing the price of each seat by 0.25 pounds.

(Refer Appendix for CO 2 Emissions bar chart)

**Sustainability Efforts**

Ryan Air calls itself the Europe’s greenest Airline. Ryan Air ranks first for efficiency in seating capacity which reduces the CO 2 emission as less number of flights are required to accommodate passengers. Ryan Air’s competitor Easy Jet has ordered for short haul aircraft Ecojet, which will generate 50% less carbon dioxide than the current planes. Easy Jet hopes to get those new Ecojet aircrafts by 2015. Jet Blue Airways and Flybe use a regional jet model which is light and fuel efficient than their older planes. Alaska Airlines reduced its fuel cost by $10,000 by just removing 5 magazines from each aircraft as less fuel was needed if weight was reduced. British Airways saved 50,000 tons of CO2 in two years by keeping short routes and more direct International routes[[8]](#footnote-8). Continental Airlines spent extra money to introduce fuel efficient planes which reduced fuel consumptions by 35% per passenger mile flown. Virgin Atlantic invested all their profit of 10 years to develop renewable energy technologies. They recently tested an airline using biofuels with an aim to improve fuel efficiency by 30% until 2020.

**SWOT Analysis**

With any successful company it is important to constantly be examining yourself internally. Knowing your own strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats will help your business adapt, innovate and improve.

**Strengths**

To begin talking about RyanAir’s strengths it starts with their financial success. *“we grew to 50 bases and over 1,500 routes, (and) Our profits rose 25% to a record €503m”[[9]](#footnote-9)*. Not only are they continuing to grow, but they are still improving their net profits. They are doing this by constantly slashing costs while offering very affordable tickets to customers. As the company increases and expands they are also hiring more employees. This helps the local economies in the areas where they have airports throughout Europe. Also, the service they provide of low cost, low service flights are very ideal for backpackers and budget travellers. People who are looking to see Europe for a cheap price can hop on quick flights through RyanAir. There is also a great amount of brand awareness. People in Europe who are looking to book a cheap flight, most likely are going to think of Ryan Air first.

**Weaknesses**

Despite their financial success they are offering terrible in-flight service. Many customers are not happy with this and are devoted to never fly with RyanAir again. *“According to the result of poll conducted by BBC involving air travelers in 2003, 56 percent of respondents claimed that the airline caused them ‘the biggest headaches’ in terms of services and customers. Also, in 2007 Ireland’s Commission for Aviation Regulation recorded a total of 60 percent of all complaints accumulated by the commission”.* [[10]](#footnote-10)The upper management at RyanAir has shown no sympathy or compassion for its unhappy customers. They are constantly suggesting new ways to cut prices, yet worsen service. For example in the past year they have suggested standing sections, charges to use the washrooms and a no window airplane. They have made a habit of not addressing the customers concerns. The problem with them being financially successful currently is that they may become short sighted and not plan for the future. With the increasing amount of unhappy flyers, the more people will spread the word of why it is not a good decision to fly with RyanAir.

**Opportunities**

Since RyanAir is already profitable, despite the negative press, this gives them a great opportunity. They don’t have to focus so much on ways to make money, but more on how to create a better brand image. If companies can think of RyanAir as a company that cares about its customers it will help them in the long run. Happy customers will lead to more customers, and with more customers comes more revenue. This is the biggest area that RyanAir can capitalize on right now as there is such a huge room for improvement. With the addition of a business class they can start competing with higher end service airlines. People will still associate Ryan Air with low costs and will want to try their business class to experience a great form of service.

**Threats**

Currently, RyanAirs threats are other airlines such as British Airways, Air France, Air Berlin, etc; as they all offer a greater variety and better in flight service. Customers who value comfort during their flights will want to pay the extra money and not chose RyanAir as their airline. The airline industry in Europe is also very competitive. With some many different countries that all have very marketable tourism destinations there are constantly flights in the area. With constant threats of competition there is a lot of pressure on how Ryan Air can adapt and innovate to stay successful. Media outlets that portray RyanAir in a negative way are also a threat. They are advertising negative messages about the company and could sway potential customers.

**Competitive Analysis**

**Competitors**

Among the competitors of Ryan Air, Easy Jet has 134 destinations throughout Europe, British Airways has 169 destinations, Alitalia Airline has 86 destinations, and Ryan Air has 160 destinations. Only British Airways has more destinations than Ryan Air, but according to the price comparison we have in the next part, British Airway’s ticket prices are about twice more than Ryan Air. In fact, Ryan Air offers some of the most competitive tickets will definitely be above than other competitors.

**Price Comparison**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Airline | Route | Fares |
| Ryan Air | London, UK to Milan, Italy | $117 |
| Easy Jet | London, UK to Milan, Italy | $126 |
| British Airways | London, UK to Milan, Italy | $216 |
| Alitalia | London, UK to Milan, Italy | $247 |

The following table compares the fares of four European carriers for a one-way ticket from London to Milan on 14 December 2012. Two of the airlines, Ryan Air and EasyJet are low cost carriers and the other two; British Airways and Alitalia are regular scheduled airlines. The fares ranged from $117.00 to $247.00[[11]](#footnote-11) with Ryan Air offering the lowest fare.

When doing a price comparison between Ryan Air and other full service airlines it can be very misleading. Ryan Air has a very long list of hidden fees and use this to fool their customers. *“Ryanair, which has been accused of luring customers with low fares but demanding sky-high fees for ‘extras’, imposes charges for anything from checking bags into the hold – up to £40 – to changing the name on your ticket, for £110[[12]](#footnote-12)”.* While the customers who originally book their ticket with Ryan Air can sometimes see a price as low as just 10 euro, however it is never what they end up paying when their trip is over. For example,

Flight from Stockholm to Berlin:

Ryan Air:

87 euro ticket

$6 admin fee, $10 boarding fee, $20 reserved seating fee, $15 for 1st bag, $35 for second

Total – 173 euro if booked online[[13]](#footnote-13)

This is not a sustainable strategy. Customers should get what they are expecting. The combination of when these fees begin to add up mixed with poor in flight service; guests will begin to regret booking with Ryan Air. The price of the flight has to be either low enough where the customer can still be satisfied with the service because they are getting a good price, or the service standards need to improve in order to be able to get away with hidden fees.

**Price and Promotion**

**Pricing strategies**

We have chosen six pricing strategies, which should be combined and used at the same time:

1. Last-minute pricing

Like other airlines RyanAir has got high fixed costs. In addition, its product (flights) is perishable. As soon as the plane took off, the company lost money from empty seats. For this reason, we believe, it is better to sell tickets at the lowest price with a great discount, than do not sell them at all. To cover the fixed costs at least RyanAir should offer unsold tickets at a price equal to their cost since 24 hours before the departure. We chose quite short period of time (24 hours), because the company may face a risk to elephant clients to wait and buy tickets at the last moment to save money, even if they have planed their trip in advance.

1. Discounts based on time of purchase

All airlines have close relationships with airports and dispatcher services. RyanAir has to plan its flight schedules in advance to get perditions to take off and land at an airport, as well as to have a free air passage. At the same time the company work on a vast territory and has got a limited number of aircrafts. That is why to change a schedule or a model of airplane (depending on the number of passengers who want to fly) on a specific flight is extremely difficult. To ensure better planning, we propose to provide a discount for passengers who buy tickets in advance. The discount may reduce company’s profit in compressing with the maximum possible by selling the tickets at full price. On the other hand, the discount is an additional reason for customers to plan their trip in advance. And so, having the largest part of the information about the volume of demand for a particular flight, the company can manage their fixed assets more affectively, which may reduce the cost and loss of idle or underutilized aircrafts.

1. Volume discounts

This is a discount for wholesalers and travel agents, which will help RyanAir to establish long-term relationships within the distribution channel. In their turn, wholesalers and travel agents can bring the company additional income by taking a part in physical distribution and increasing sales.

1. Promotional pricing

To improve customer opinion about the airline, we propose to organize a number of “Nature Care Flights”. The idea is a certain amount of each ticket’s price from these flights (for example, 1 euro) are sent to a special Fond. Money from the Fond can be use by RyanAir to organize and hold public events in support of natural environment, such as planting new trees by customers. It is important that clients are well informed about what RyanAir knowingly shares the profits from these flights.

1. Psychological pricing

RyanAir can increase ticket prices, if it gives passengers more comfort, the feeling of absolute security and confidence in the professionalism of the crew on board, the friendly atmosphere and the knowledge that the company really cares about natural environment and tries to reduce the negative impact to a minimum. While the prices will not sky rocket, they will be a more honest price. Getting rid of hidden fees and giving customers a price that they will not be surprised with in the future will build trust with the customers.

1. Product-bundle pricing

The cost of one flight is relatively small. For this reason, the company is interesting in selling customers multiple tickets for traveling on the combined routes. The discount is attractive for individual ticket’s buyers, because they can save money. Moreover, the proposal may be interested for travel agencies which organize tours to several European countries together.

The new policy of "fair price" is also in some ways the product-bundle pricing. Instead of a flight ticket, a luggage ticket, meals on board, a boarding pass and so on, the customer can purchase one package, which include all these products by lower price.

**Sales and distribution strategies**

We believe that the best sales strategy for RyanAir now is retain existing customers and building long-term and mutually beneficial relationship with them. As an additional strategy, we would like to point out is to attract new customers through the introduction of business class flights.

For distribution the company can firstly use the available resource which is its own website. The website allows customers to search for and buy tickets for all company’s flights. However, this website needs to be improved. For example, based on personal experience, we can conclude that it is very difficult to find a section of the website where customs can contact the company or post a review of its services. The design of RyanAir website (with its purple and yellow colors) does not seem to be very attractive and makes people’s eyes tired.

**Advertising and promotion strategies**

We believe pull strategy is the most effective, because RyanAir needs to work with clients to improve their attitude and image of the company.

* Membership cards

Before purchasing a ticket, the customer can log in on the company website and to get a temporary client card number. This number can be used during purchasing tickets to collect additional air-miles. Once the amount of miles collected at one year became more than one thousand, the customer can receive his or her client card made from plastic. Bonuses can be used to pay part of a flight or a whole flight or for upgrading to business class.

* E-mail promotions

Information obtained during the registration process on the website is a good basis for this type of promotion. If the client does not mind, the company may send special offers and information about different actions on his or her e-mail.

* Personal selling

Presentations at the offices of large companies, whose activities connected with numerous trips of employees.

Another part of the promotion is internal marketing. This is necessary to spend money and effort to organize information sessions for RyanAir employees. They must be well aware of the causes and purposes of changes, the mission and vision of the company. In addition, workers should timely receive the information about company’s promotion events (such as “Nature Care Flight”), to enable them to share this information with customers and answer their questions, if necessary. Flight attendants can also act as salesmen as they have to offer drinks and food, if they are kind and polite they will sell more. Also this adds to the overall in flight service.

**Sales and marketing objectives**

**Sales products**

* Core product – Flight, the opportunity to go from point A to point B relatively quickly.
* Facilitating product – Airport service, such as luggage care and a shuttle from airport to the aircraft.
* Supporting product – In-flight services and products. For example, on-board meal and movies.
* Augmented product - Round the clock service, friendly and safe atmosphere on board, public events, customers’ support phone service.

**Marketing objectives**

The main RyanAir marketing goal should be - to build a sustainable business. To achieve this, the company must meet some objectives:

* Have a good, mutually beneficial relationships with customers - over 75% of customers used the company's services before and are willing to do it again.
* Customers have the ability to contact RyanAir directly and feel the company support – the website development, well visible sections, easy searching, the ability to write a negative review and receive the company response.
* Reduce the negative impact on nature through a gradual upgrading of aircrafts and partly cover the damage with green social events and information sessions.

**Projected expenditures**

We believe that the as long as price increasing would include value increasing, customers are willing to pay the extra money. That is why we expect that the cost of implementing the proposed changes will be proportional to the additional revenue from the more expensive tickets. And the total income of the company will remain almost unchanged.

**Strategic Planning**

Ryan Air’s operation requires many different types of resources that they transform into revenue. These include Human, financial, product, etc. Having the proper strategies in place can help overcome any challenges and create a successful business. For Ryan Air, they need a combination of many different resources. Where they have been lacking has been service. This needs improvement both by product and human resources. With more comfortable seating, sustainable in flight products, leg space and entertainment options, Ryan Air can improve its physical product. By creating friendlier employees and much easier to use services it helps improve the human resource aspect. With the improvement of both Ryan Air has much more to offer customers.

In terms of the timeline where all of these recommendations will take place, they are certainly planned for the long run. It is obviously not feasible to start implementing physical upgrades as well as offering mass amounts of discounts both at the same time. It will be much too expensive. Ryan Air already is involved in many environmentally sustainable projects. By advertising these efforts as well as newly developed ones, such as recyclable materials used for all food products in flight, planting a tree for every ticket sold etc; the public will begin to look at Ryan Air differently and start to trust their brand. Once trust has risen significantly they can begin to slowly upgrade their planes with comfortable seating, floor space and add a business class. This can be done over the next 5 years with the additional of seasonal discounts. In the next 5-10 years after Ryan Air can look in to purchasing bigger sized planes to fit more people.

One area where Ryan Air tries to save money is by landing planes in smaller airports so that guests can avoid the rush and they can turn the plane around faster, making for more flights. This works well at times however it can sometimes inconvenience travellers by dropping them further away from their destination. Also guests will need to find alternative forms of travel which will cost even more on gas which further harms the environment. A strategy that they can use is continue to land in these but give travellers the option for 20 euro extra Ryan Air can arrange a hybrid taxi car service to pick them up and take them to where they want to go. They can partner with Honda who have recently launched hybrid civics and insights taxi cabs for use in Europe[[14]](#footnote-14).

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, Ryan Air has been able to make a quick rise to success and has been very successful financially. With that said however, there must be a long term plan. Customer satisfaction is arguably the most important factor to maintaining a successful business. Currently Ryan Air is experiencing very low levels of satisfaction. There could not be a better time to implement a new marketing strategy that is aimed at winning back the public’s trust. By implementing new sustainable practices, as well has launching a new PR campaign focused on building a better, more trust worthy brand, Ryan Air can continue to be successful for a very long time.

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**Appendix**

**Price comparison of Ryan Air with Competitors**

("Ryan Air")

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Average Fare | Percentage Price Greater than Ryanair |
| Ryanair € 43 | (+11%) |
| Easy Jet €54 | 26% |
| Aer Lingus €86 | 100% |
| Iberia €169 | 293% |
| Lufthansa €244 | 467% |
| British Airways €248 | 477% |
| Air France €254 | 491% |

**Economic Environment- Disposable Income**

("EuroStat")

**CO 2 Emissions by Airlines**

("Green Airoline")

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