

The Great Transition

Note of Intent

Group P.75

Le Boulev'Art des Rencontres

Assessment of the Issue We Want to Tackle:

It is well established that we now live in the “era of information”. The internet and other information technologies have made it so that anyone fortunate enough to be part of the “global middle class”, over half of the world population¹, now is connected in some way or another to a giant web of hyperlinks spanning the entirety of the globe. This is an unprecedented situation in the history of humankind, and like any new developments it comes with its lot of challenges.

Indeed, studies after studies are all coming to the same inescapable conclusion: **we feel lonelier than ever before**. Many examples can be found in scientific journals as this has become a hot topic for researchers trying to improve the daily life of their countrymen. In 2016, in the United Kingdom a study conducted by the Red Cross found that over 9 million people, **a fifth of the population, always or often feel lonely**². In the United States, the situation is perhaps even worse! An article from the New York Times presented a mountain of evidence clearly outlining the existence of a “loneliness epidemic”³. As if this was not worrying enough, medical professionals such as doctors and psychologists are now ringing the alarm about the detrimental effects loneliness has on one’s health. Very surprisingly **loneliness is a better predictor of an early death than obesity and is linked to a reduction in lifespan equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day**⁴, demonstrating a strong causal relationship between social isolation, illness and an early death

One could have expected, or hoped at least, that technology would help resolve this pressing issue. The so-called “social networks” built their brand image on the business of bringing us closer together. Except for Christianity, “Facebook has more adherents than any religion in the world”⁵ but no global community has emerged from this fact. Rather it is quite the opposite that has happened and studies are showing that people who use social media heavily, especially Facebook and Instagram, feel a lot worse on a daily basis than people who do not engage in such activities.

This state of affairs leaves us wondering: what can be done to alleviate the suffering cause by the inhumanity of our modern, impersonal world? Could technology have a role to play?

Le Boulev'Art des Rencontres

Our project started with a simple question: Have you ever decided not to go to see a movie or an exhibition just because you didn’t want to go all alone?

Nowadays, students work a lot by themselves with their computer and with little, if no, connection with other students rather than during classes and the very few group projects they have to do.

¹ Hamel, Homi Kharas and Kristofer. « A Global Tipping Point: Half the World Is Now Middle Class or Wealthier ». Brookings (blog), 27 septembre 2018. Last consulted 17/12/19.

² British Red Cross. « Action on Loneliness ». Last consulted 17/12/19. British Red Cross *Isolation and Loneliness*, 2016

³ Kristof, Nicholas. « Opinion | Let’s Wage a War on Loneliness ». The New York Times, 09/11/19, sect. Opinion. Last consulted 17/12/19

⁴ Novotney Amy, « Social Isolation: It Could Kill You ». American Psychological Association. May 2019. Vol 50, No 5. Last consulted 17/12/19

⁵ Christopher Ingraham. « If Facebook Were a Religion, It Would Be the Second Largest in the World ». Washington Post. 30/06/17/ Last consulted 17/12/19.

The purpose of our project is to create an application through which students could be connected with other students during activities around culture and the arts.

Via the application, any student would be able to propose an activity or register to participate to one. The one creating the said activity would decide on the number of person allowed (the best being only few to ensure communication). Registration to the activities will be mandatory. Moreover, all the activities will be centered around art. In this respect, people who wish to for instance visit museum or go to the cinema or to a concert could search for a partner through the app. The app is not to be a meeting app but one centered around activities. Using the same system of Tinder, swipe right, swipe left for the activities, a match between two people for one activity would then result in first a chat between the two and then the organization of the said activity will be up to them.

Expected Impact

Assessment of Efficiency of the App/Website Through Feedback and Ratings

Some experts think that the health impacts of loneliness and social isolation are as bad as those associated with smoking and obesity. Among others, it has been associated with a greater risk for all-cause mortality, multi-morbidity, depression, and suicidal behaviour.⁶ For university students, they are experiencing a great transition in their life which is in between school and society. It's crucial to consider how university students can be supported to develop friendships and social networks as a key part of the student mental health puzzle.

After a period of operation, we would like to build up a community where lonely people can meet up and further communicate in the form of attending small-scale art activities. The impact of our project are as follows:

From the App's Perspective:

- Help to break down the loneliness vicious circle of students who feel lonely because of being alone. Going out with a buddy with same interest in arts will be much easier, which serves as a first step against lonely, boring and perplexed spare time.
- Provide meetup activities of small scale, in which lonely people can communicate fully and in depth and probably develop further friendship after the activities.
- Gradually form art communities / interest groups and corresponding open communication platform.

Impact on Customers:

- Students will spend more time on real world activities and face-to-face communication rather than online social media, which is good for their physical and mental health, improving social and academic performance.
- Students will improve their self-cognition from the feedbacks in communication and become more and more confident in social occasions.

⁶ Diehl, Katharina, Charlotte Jansen, Kamila Ishchanova, et Jennifer Hilger-Kolb. « Loneliness at Universities: Determinants of Emotional and Social Loneliness among Students ». International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 15, no 9 (septembre 2018). Last consulted 17/12/19.

- Strengthen the appeal of art, probably some students may find inspiration or passion from the art works.

Evaluation of Major Risks

Not Meeting End-User Expectations

During the early stages of develop and throughout the project, seeking input from prospective users about how the app can better address their needs. This will result in a better application, and more receptive users.

Risk of Security Breaches

The danger lies in underestimating the need for proper security precautions within the app. Regular and prompt bug fixing across different platforms in response to user feedback is a vital aspect of retaining user confidence. After deploying the application for use, regular updates are necessary for response to security concerns raised by users in the course of its life. Hackers, malware, virus and software fragmentations are some of the major security challenges in the life of the application.

Sustaining Funds

Raising capital to finance the development of the application remains a challenge. The funds raised must be adequate to finance the full development and deployment of the application to the end-users for success. Even after developing and marketing the final product, collecting revenue and retaining loyal customers remains a challenge as well.

Business Plan

We are faced with restricted funding, personnel and time. Business incubation services can provide us with access to necessary tools by providing free or low-cost workspace, mentorship, expertise, access to investors and sometimes capital in the form of loans. This also provides us with improved focus for effective business growth, as a result of a structured environment and curriculum. It is important for us to frequently utilise and develop optimization capabilities. It's even more important that we learn from user feedback to make our platform better. Direct access to expertise can prove to be beneficial and allow space for rigorous testing and adaptation.

To build a sustainable app business it is essential to create a sustainable revenue stream. This means ensuring user engagement with the application while monetizing it effectively, which can be a difficult balance to strike. The monetization strategy should combine several monetization methods to ensure continuity of revenue sources.

Scaling Opportunities

Scaling the possible market ; First step: University students in Paris. Within the Greater Paris Region there are 18 universities and almost 60 business schools which are host to 635,000 students (over 5% of the region's population), around 100,000 of which are foreign students. Around 65% of students say they have ever lonely for a moment, the proportion of foreign students should be even higher.

Assumptions:

1. 20% of the targeted students have specific interests on art activities
2. half of the targeted students with an interest in art will register on an app like ours (based on our survey)
3. in the launching phase of the project, 10% of total feasible population will be penetrated through the marketing.
4. 20% of the registered customers will actually use the app
5. 20% of the motivated market will turn into frequent users
6. Loyal users have the demand of the service at least once every two weeks
7. 5% percent of active users will subscribe the in-app content for an average price of 5 euro

Maximum Penetration:

Approximate customer base: $=635000*65%*20%*50%*(1+10%) = 45402$

Approximate monthly uses: $=45402*20%*2.5 = 22701$

Approximately monthly revenue $= 22701*5%*5 = 5675.25$

Cost Structure

In order to have a clear picture of how much time and money are required, an estimation of mobile app essential features, tech stack, and the estimated number of hours is necessary.

- Initial investment: development of the website and app (ISO/Android)
- Daily operation: app maintenance/ customer service
- Marketing campaign (social media: Facebook/Instagram; university student associations; ads on Google/Youtube/)

Generating Revenue

App Monetization

- *Rewarded video-ads*

The most effective kind of mobile ad is the rewarded video ad. This is a video advertisement that publishers motivate users to watch by providing an incentive. The value of the reward must be carefully calibrated so that the majority of users will recognize the benefit of watching video adverts. Users have five seconds to decide if they want to watch a brief sponsored video in exchange for 30 minutes of uninterrupted access. Otherwise, they can bypass the offer.

- *In-App Subscriptions*

In-App Subscriptions (also referred to as “freemium content”) involving monetizing certain features of the app . For our case, they’re not contingent on moving on or being able to experience the whole app. This would involve selling subscriptions that allow users to remove all traces of ads in their mobile app interface and offering access to offers from partners (cinema, leisure, dining). Subscriptions provide a recurring revenue stream ; not unpredictable one-off buys. Freemium mobile apps allow users to preview what the application offers without any upfront investment.

Testing & Learning

Optimization:

- Tracking User Engagement with Monetization Streams
- Post implementation of a revenue-stream combination, it is necessary to analyse the optimal methods of monetization and update strategy accordingly.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- App usage
- Time spent in app
- Number of in-app purchases

Communication Plan

The main axis of communication and means of promotion, which represents an important challenge as the app has to quickly gather its community, are the following.

- Marketing : Position and target
- Communication axis : values and storytelling
- Promotion : media planning, earned media and PR

Conclusion

Our idea is to build a bridge between lonely students who wants to attend art activities but not by his/herself. We believe that art has the power of curing and inspiring people. To strengthen the link, we intend to develop an online platform Le Boulev'Art des Rencontres where people can propose or join an art event. By analyzing the pros and cons, impacts and threats, as well as the financial performance of the project, it comes out that it is a sustainable model but it needs initial investment and takes time to gain profit and achieve our goal.

Who are we ?

We are a group of 4 students from the School of Management and Innovation of Sciences Po Paris. The name of our group is P.75.

He Sijing (100200623) : Master International management & Sustainability

Melchior Amélie (100140302) : Master Marketing: New Luxury & Art de Vivre

Nakamura Lucas (100142183): Master Communication, Média & Industries Créatives

Rispoli Matthieu (100142218): Master Finance et Stratégie

Singh Divyangi (100202978) : Master International management & Sustainability

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