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ENHANCING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY: A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF CREART TRAVEL

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Abstract

The travel industry contributes to total global revenue showcasing its significant contribution to the global economy in 2019-2024. This revenue includes earnings from services such as flights, accommodations, tours, transportation, and other travel related activities. The travel industry employs 3 million people, demonstrating its role as a major employment generator. Emerging as a significant entity within Indonesia's tourism industry, Creart Travel as part of PT. Semesta Muda Berkarya, providing a range of cutting-edge travel services suited to both individual and business customers. Despite its tremendous potential, the company faces obstacles including low brand awareness, fierce competition in the industry, and a slow rate of growth. This research will examine Creart Travel's present business strategy and pinpoint workable alternatives in order to strengthen the company's competitive edge and accomplish sustainable development. Both internal and external analyses are part of the comprehensive research technique used in this study. Instruments consisting of Porter's Five Forces framework, the Internal-External (IE) Matrix, and SWOT analysis are used to evaluate the company's internal strengths and weaknesses, in addition to its external opportunities and threats it confronts. Primary data gathered from corporate clients, when combined with secondary data derived from industry studies, provides important insights into market trends, customer needs, and competition strategies. According to the findings, Creart Travel's essential strengths derive from its strategic connections, customer-oriented service offerings, and creative travel packages. Nonetheless, limited brand visibility and a lack of individuality in marketing methods hinder its development. The study advocates for the implementation of targeted strategies, including the enhancement of digital marketing campaigns, the exploration of niche markets such as bleisure (business-leisure) travel, and the augmentation of service personalization, in order to attract and retain clientele.

Keywords: Travel, Business Strategy, Competitive Advantage, Tourism Industry, Marketing, SWOT Analysis, IE Matrix.

Introduction

The travel industry generates a total global revenue of $295.7 billion, showcasing its significant contribution to the global economy in 2019-2024. This revenue includes earnings from services such as flights, accommodations, tours, transportation, and other travel related activities (Inversini et al., 2015). There are 589,000 businesses operating within the travel sector, reflecting the industry's diverse range of service providers,

including travel agencies, airlines, hotels, tour operators, and local businesses supporting tourism. The travel industry employs 3 million people, demonstrating its role as a major employment generator (Kotler & Keller, 2016). This figure highlights the industry's dependence on a large workforce to manage operations, provide customer service, and deliver exceptional travel experiences (Xiang et al., 2015). And the total wages paid within the travel sector amount to $97.5 billion, emphasizing the industry's impact on providing livelihoods and contributing to household incomes (Wang et al., 2020). This also reflects the travel sector's role in supporting local and global economies through direct and indirect employment (Peng et al., 2020).

The global travel industry along with its allied sectors saw a slump in market value mainly on account of the pandemic in 2020 which devastated the industry globally amid travel restrictions along the globe (Aminzadegan et al., 2022). This, in turn, brought a halt to the sector which plays a key in the economic growth of any nation. The market size of the travel and tourism sector globally reached a value of $631 billion in 2021. The travel and tourism market globally grew by 43% in 2021 as the sector witnessed a recovery in the demand & Key travel destinations among travelers globally (Global data, 2021). In 2023, Indonesia welcomed 11.67 million international tourists, showing a nearly 98.2% increase compared to 2022.

The largest number of tourists came from Malaysia (1.9 million), followed by Australia (1.43 million), and Singapore (1.41 million). Bali remained the primary entry point, accounting for 44.94% of total foreign arrivals. (Databoks, 2023). Tourism is a vital contributor to Indonesia’s economy. In 2023, the tourism sector generated over USD 6 billion in revenue, contributing 3.76% to Indonesia’s GDP. This rebound from the pandemic reflects a growing reliance on both international and domestic travel (Business Tempo, 2023). Indonesia saw a massive domestic tourism movement in 2023, with 1.4 billion domestic trips. This significant number reflects the strong demand for local travel, contributing substantially to the national tourism sector’s recovery (Shaharuddin et al., 2023). Business to Consumer (B2C) Travel Agencies, These cater directly to individuals or groups for leisure or personal travel (Meng, Zhou, J., Liu, B., & Mao, 2021).

Business-to-Business (B2B) Travel Agencies: These specialize in corporate and group travel services, handling arrangements for companies, events, or conferences (Nyanga et al., 2020). The rise of online travel agencies (OTAs) like Traveloka and Tiket.com also reflects growing consumer demand for convenient, self service options. With increased domestic and international travel, there is a greater demand for travel agencies that offer personalized services, corporate travel management, and tourism packages tailored to niche sectors consisting of ecotourism or adventure tourism (Xue et al., 2023). Furthermore, the rise in domestic tourism emphasizes the importance of agencies that specialize in offering genuine local travel experiences (Hossain et al., 2021). These findings imply that travel agencies in Indonesia have significant growth potential, driven by both domestic and international tourism (Hung & Wu, 2021).

Following the pandemic, there has been a substantial revival in pent-up demand for travel, encouraging many customers to fervently look for possibilities to get back to

both domestic and international destinations (Mihardja et al., 2023). As a result, in order to properly capitalize on this expanding demand, we must establish a strong marketing plan for Creart Travel. Understanding clients' desires, such as unique experiences, tailored itineraries, or easier reservation processes, allows us to create targeted advertisements which effectively engage them and differentiate our brand in a highly competitive industry. This plan will allow us to benefit from a revival in travel demand while also cultivating long term client loyalty. Research Questions as follows (1) What strategies should Creart Travel develop to facilitate business growth; (2) How can Creart Travel effectively implement these strategies to achieve measurable outcomes; (3) How can Creart Travel analyze the characteristics and preferences of potential target markets to identify opportunities for growth.

Research Methods

Research design refers to a researcher's complete strategy or framework for systematically incorporating the numerous parts of a study in a consistent and logical manner. It ensures that the research problem is adequately addressed by outlining the methodology and processes for data collection, measurement, and analysis. A carefully planned research design guides the investigation, ensuring its rigor and the validity of its conclusions.



Figure 1. Research Design
(Source: Author, 2024)

The research design for Creart Travel effectively addresses a critical business issue through the implementation of both internal and external analyses. The method begins with identifying the business difficulty, followed by an internal analysis focusing on the company's resources and supply chain. Following that, an external study is performed using approaches such as PESTEL, Porter's Five Forces, and competition analysis to examine market circumstances and consumer behavior. The findings have been compiled into a SWOT analysis, which aids in the identification of the root cause of the problem. Consequently, a business solution, namely a marketing strategy, is developed. Finally, a complete implementation plan was developed to ensure that the

strategy is carried out successfully. This technique ensures that Creart Travel takes a systematic, data-driven approach to tackle business difficulties and improve its market competitiveness.

A conceptual framework is a visual or verbal depiction that shows how essential concepts, variables, and the organizational structure of a study or business model interact with one another. It serves as a comprehensive tool for the researcher or strategist, promoting an awareness of the interrelationships between numerous components and illuminating how these elements can be used to achieve certain goals. Conceptual frameworks are usually established following a thorough study of the literature, since they serve to outline existing knowledge and indicate areas of lack that the research seeks to solve.

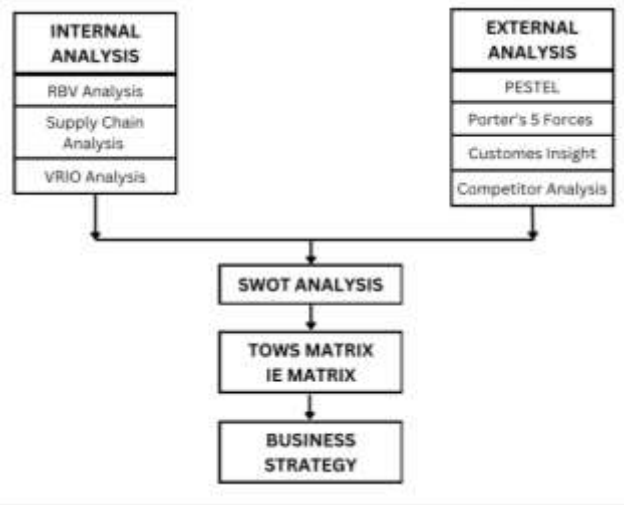


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework
(Source: Author, 2024)

The conceptual framework outlines a strategic approach to address the company's difficulties, which include insufficient brand recognition, ineffective marketing initiatives, and stagnant sales growth. The concept advises using a SWOT analysis to evaluate internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external possibilities and threats. The findings of this study are then used to design a focused marketing strategy that effectively addresses these specific problems. The major goal is to improve marketing effectiveness, raise brand awareness, and eventually promote sales growth.

Research and Discussion

Resource Based View (RBV)

Based on the interview with the Karmellow team, there are several resources of the company, including: Creart Travel has various tangible and intangible resources that support its operations. In terms of tangible resources, Creart Travel has an experienced travel team with good communication skills and a deep understanding of the destination, as well as a strategic office location in BSC City that increases visibility and attracts customers (Huang & Xu, 2018). Additionally, the reliable technology infrastructure ensures a smooth user experience, while the stable cash flow allows the company to offer competitive pricing, invest in marketing, and deal with market fluctuations. Strong

financial partnerships with airlines, restaurants, hotels and tour operators also help secure exclusive offers and competitive prices. On the other hand, Creart Travel's intangible resources include a good brand reputation thanks to quality services at affordable prices, although it still lags behind major competitors in branding. Long-term and exclusive relationships with partners such as airlines, hotels and local tour operators are an advantage, supported by the experience of working with large companies that continue to provide rebooking. In addition, Creart Travel's competence and capabilities can be seen from its experienced travel team, specialist staff, and strategic office locations that provide added value for customers.

Value Chain Analysis

The integration of these primary and support activities increases Creart Travel's margin by ensuring efficient, client-focused services. Strategic partnerships, technology utilization, and strong customer support help the company differentiate itself from competitors, attracting repeat clients and enhancing overall profitability.



Figure 3. Value Chain Analysis

VRIO

Based on the interview with all Staff of Creart Travel, several resources and capabilities can be considered valuable, rare, inimitable, and organized to capture value, as discussed below.

Table 1. VRIO Analysis of Creart Travel

VRIO ANALYSIS OF CREART TRAVEL AGENT					
Resource/Capability	**V**	**R**	**I**	**O**	**Competitive Implication**
Labor	YES	NO	NO	YES	Competitive Parity

Office Location	YES	YES	YES	YES	Sustained Competitive Advantage
Database Supplier	YES	YES	YES	YES	Sustained Competitive Advantage
Technology Infrastructure	YES	NO	NO	YES	Competitive Parity
Cash Flow	YES	YES	YES	YES	Sustained Competitive Advantage
Partnership Investments	YES	YES	YES	YES	Sustained Competitive Advantage
Brand Reputation	YES	NO	NO	YES	Competitive Parity
Relationships with Partners	YES	YES	YES	YES	Sustained Competitive Advantage
Experience	YES	NO	NO	YES	Competitive Parity

(Source: Author, 2024)

Pestel Analysis

There are five factors in the PESTEL analysis for Creart Travel, examining how external factors impact B2B travel operations, focusing on the relationship between the Creart Travel and its corporate clients. Here is the PESTEL framework in Creart Travel Agent:

Tabel 2. PESTEL Analysis

PESTEL	Impact	Implication
Politics	The Indonesian government continues to promote tourism, focusing on developing destinations that appeal to international and domestic businesses, such as conferences, exhibitions, and corporate retreats. Policies that enhance business travel infrastructure, like airport expansions and hotel developments, could provide opportunities for B2B travel agencies such as MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions), by leveraging increased collaboration with private sectors and promoting exclusive, sustainable travel packages.	Opportunity

Economy	Business Travel Full Recovery Expected by 2025, While annual business travel spending growth is expected to slow somewhat in 2023, Companies recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, their budgets for business travel are gradually returning to pre-pandemic levels. Travel agencies catering to businesses may experience increased demand for corporate travel management services.	Opportunity
Social	Bleisure travel, which combines business trips with leisure activities, is becoming increasingly popular as employees seek to balance work and personal life. B2B travel agencies can meet this demand by offering packages that integrate local experiences and leisure activities into business trips. The rise of bleisure travel is driven by factors such as a greater emphasis on work-life balance and the flexibility enabled by remote work options.	Opportunity
Technology	Approximately **70%** of corporate travel managers in Indonesia use online booking tools integrated with travel management software to reduce travel related administrative costs. Signifies the ongoing transformation of the travel industry, where digital platforms play a crucial role in shaping user behavior and preferences.	Threat
Environmental	Indonesia is prone to natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and volcanic activity, which can disrupt business travel. Agencies must have contingency plans and offer travel insurance that covers such disruptions to ensure business continuity.	Threat
Legal	Travel agents were required to possess official operational licenses from the government, such as the Tourism Business License (SIUP) and the Tourism Business Registration Certificate (TDUP)	Opportunity

Porter five forces Analysis

Creart Travel faces various competitive forces as outlined in Porter's Five Forces analysis. The threat of new entrants is considered moderate, as while there are barriers such as brand loyalty and established supplier relationships, new competitors can still enter the market. However, they may struggle with brand recognition, securing contracts with key suppliers like airlines and hotels, and competing on service quality. The bargaining power of buyers is high, as clients have multiple options, including other travel agents, direct bookings, and online platforms, allowing them to demand lower prices, customized packages, and value-added services.

Similarly, the bargaining power of suppliers is also high, with Creart Travel relying heavily on airlines, hotels, and transportation providers, making strong partnerships and favorable negotiations essential to managing costs and maintaining competitiveness. The threat of substitutes is significant, as corporate clients can opt for direct bookings through online travel agencies (OTAs), airlines, and hotels, or use internal travel management software to reduce costs. Lastly, industry rivalry is intense, with numerous competitors vying for market share. This competitive environment compels Creart Travel to differentiate itself through high-quality service, competitive pricing, and strong client relationships to maintain its market position.

Customer Insight

In this research, Out of 97,373 companies operating in DKI Jakarta, I have gathered responses from 404 participants by distributing the questionnaire via WhatsApp and past clients. The respondents are individuals working in companies who hold decision-making power regarding the use of travel agents for their operational needs. Author used The SERVQUAL model to measure and analyze service quality, It is primarily used to identify gaps in service quality and improve customer satisfaction. The model evaluates service quality across five key dimensions: Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy, Responsiveness (RATER).

Tabel 3. Customer Insight

Dimension	Expectation Score (Average)	Perception Score (Average)	Interpretation	Implication
Reliability	5	**4.373**	Customer Needs **Proactive communication,** keeping them informed proactively about changes, cancellations, or other relevant updates. **Ensuring a streamlined and error-free** booking experience for hotels, transportation, and other arrangements. Personalization: Offering tailored solutions for specific business contexts, such as conferences, client meetings, or team training. **And need quick and effective** handling of any issues or last-minute changes.	Opportunity
Assurance	5	**4.456**	Customers need **staff who are well-informed and can provide accurate,** comprehensive guidance on travel policies, routes, and logistics. **Companies require assurance that the travel agency can effectively manage their travel needs** without issues, showcasing dependability and competence. A significant priority for customers is ensuring safe and secure travel experiences, especially for business-critical trips.	Opportunity
Tangibles	5	**4.363**	Clients **expect high levels of professionalism in staff** conduct, attire, and the agency's overall presentation. **Customers need communication materials** (e.g., brochures and websites) that are visually appealing, clear, and easy to navigate. **Clients seek interactions that are both professional and efficient**, reflecting the agency's expertise.	Opportunity
Empathy	5	**4.373**	Customers **want services that align with their unique corporate travel policies and goals**. Clients seek to feel valued through services that cater specifically to their company's identity and	Opportunity

			requirements. They expect their feedback to be acknowledged and translated into actionable improvements in services. **Companies need a travel partner that can handle last-minute changes**, special preferences, and unique requirements with ease.	
Responsiveness	5	**4.373**	Customers **want services that align with their unique corporate travel policies and goals.** Clients seek to feel valued through services that cater specifically to their company's identity and requirements. Feedback Responsiveness, They expect their feedback to be acknowledged and translated into actionable improvements in services. **Flexibility and Adaptability,** Companies need a travel partner that can handle last-minute changes, special preferences, and unique requirements with ease. **Proactive Understanding,** Proactive Understanding: Clients value a partner that takes the time to understand their specific needs without being prompted.	Opportunity

Competitor Analysis

The following is an analysis of 3 travel agencies operating in Jakarta, The table provides a comparative analysis of four travel agencies: Creart Travel, Cakrawala Travel, Werkudara Group, and Gudeo Tour across various key factors

Table 4. Competitor Grid

Factor	Creart Travel	Cakrawala Travel	Werkudara Group	Gudeo Tour
Services	Corporate events, travel management,airline tickets, Outing Event MICE, event organization	Tour, airline tickets, MICE, event organization, facilitation	Corporate events, travel management, creative services, wellness	Tours, outbound activities, gatherings, meetings, adventure
Price	Offers adjustable pricing tailored to the client's needs.	Offers competitive pricing for various services.	Offers competitive pricing for various services.	Offer affordable and competitive pricing for tours, outbound activities, gatherings, and meetings.
Destination Coverage	Domestic	Domestic and international tours	Domestic and international tours	Domestic
Target Market	Corporates & Group Bookings	Corporates & General public	Corporates & private clients	Corporates & adventure seekers
Social Media	Active on Instagram only	Active on Instagram, detailed website	Active on Instagram, detailed website	Active on Instagram, detailed website

	1.743 Followers @creart.travel Web : -	2.007 Followers @cakrawala_travel Web : cakrawala.com	3.150 Followers @werkudaragroup Web : werkudara.com	823 Followers @gudeo.tour Web : gudeo-tour.com
USP	Adjustable Budget & High Quality Trip	Comprehensive travel and event services	Human-centered approach, creative strategies.	Official tour and event organizer.
Logo				

(Source: Author, 2024)

TOWS Matrix

Below is the TOWS Matrix, which highlights the strategic alignment of Creart Travel's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to develop effective strategies for market growth and competitive advantage.

Table 5. TOWS Analysis

TOWS MATRIX	Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
STRENGTH (S)	**SO Strategies** - Capitalize on office location for corporate travel expansion - Capitalize on political stability for corporate travel expansion - Increase marketing efforts targeting corporate clients to build trust - Improve service offerings by incorporating additional features to appeal to bleisure travelers - Use licensing and credibility to secure government and corporate contracts - Personalize travel solutions using established forecasting capabilities	**ST Strategies** - Leverage established relationships to compete with new entrants - Enhance credibility to differentiate in a competitive market - Expand service offerings to counter substitution threats - Develop niche packages using established expertise to address generalist perception - Improve digital presence to compete with competitors' online offerings
WEAKNESS (W)	**WO Strategies** - Boost branding by leveraging government initiatives and economic growth - Invest in Human Resource development to tap into mice opportunities - Leverage licensing advantage to build trust and market presence - Adopt automation to streamline operations and handle growing demand - Improve communication materials to align with client needs	**WT Strategies** - Enhance digital infrastructure to adapt to industry changes and meet evolving client expectations. - Develop contingency plans to mitigate natural disaster risks - Enhance branding to strengthen market position against competitors - Expand service offerings to reduce substitution risks - Streamline operations with automation to improve efficiency

(Source: Author, 2024)

Internal External Matrix

To identify the most effective strategic solutions for Creart Travel, the Internal External (IE) Matrix serves as a fundamental analytical instrument. This matrix assesses the internal strengths and weaknesses of an organization through the utilization of Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) scores, along with external opportunities and threats as indicated by External Factor Evaluation (EFE) scores. By positioning Creart Travel in the IE Matrix, it can determine whether the company should concentrate on a growth strategy, maintain its current status, or restructure its operations. This methodology establishes a comprehensive and coherent framework for strategic decision-making, thereby ensuring that the strategy is aligned with Creart Travel's internal competencies and the external environment.

Table 6. INTERNAL Matrix

INTERNAL		Weight	Rating	Score
STRENGTH	Creart Travel has built strong relationships with major companies, ensuring repeat business and demonstrating its reliability and professionalism.	0,2	4	0,8
	Creart Travel has long standing partnerships with airlines, hotels, and tour operators allow Creart Travel to offer unique packages and exclusive travel experiences	0,09	3	0,27
	The strategic location of Creart Travel's office in BSC CITY enhances visibility, accessibility, and client walk-ins.	0,05	3	0,15
	Being registered on E-Catalogue, LPSE, and E-Procure platforms simplifies procurement processes and strengthens Creart Travel's credibility as a Limited Liability Company.	0,18	4	0,72
	Creart Travel provides value added services like travel insurance and negotiated corporate rates & ensuring cost efficiency.	0,13	4	0,52
WEAKNESS	Despite offering quality services at affordable prices, Creart Travel struggles with low brand recognition, limiting its visibility compared to established competitors.	0,15	1	0,15
	The lack of advanced HR development programs and innovative practices may hinder employee growth and differentiation in the competitive travel market.	0,1	1	0,1
	Creart Travel's lack of variety in services makes it less attractive to niche markets and specialized customers.	0,05	2	0,1
	Without enough automation, managing complex itineraries can use up resources and reduce service efficiency.	0,05	2	0,1
	Total Score	**1**		**2,91**

(Source: Author, 2024)

Table 6. EXTERNAL Matrix

EXTERNAL		Weight	Rating	Score
OPPORTUNITY	The Indonesian government's focus on developing business oriented destinations, Creart Travel with opportunities to expand services through sustainable and collaborative packages.	0,15	3	0,45
	Indonesia's stable political and economic growth offers a strong foundation to capitalize on increasing domestic market expansion.	0,09	3	0,27
	The projected recovery of business travel by 2025 creates growing demand for Creart Travel's corporate travel management services.	0,05	3	0,15
	The rising trend of bleisure travel provides Creart Travel an opportunity to offer packages that blend business and leisure experiences	0,15	4	0,6
	Creart Travel's possession of essential licenses like SIUP and TDUP gives it a competitive advantage in a market where many competitors lack proper certifications.	0,15	4	0,6
	The opportunity exists for Creart Travel to align services with corporate travel policies, providing personalized solutions and managing last-minute changes efficiently.	0,08	3	0,24
WEAKNESS	High substitution risk arises as clients increasingly book directly through OTAs, airlines, or manage travel in-house, reducing the reliance on travel agencies.	0,1	2	0,2
	Indonesia's susceptibility to natural disasters necessitates Creart Travel to develop contingency plans and offer comprehensive travel insurance to ensure business continuity.	0,1	1	0,1
	Moderate entry barriers make it easy for new competitors to join the market	0,05	2	0,1
	Creart Travel risks being perceived as a generalist, losing clients to competitors who specialize in niche areas like wellness retreats or adventure-based activities.	0,08	2	0,16
	Total Score	**1**		**2,87**

(Source: Author, 2024)

According to the analysis conducted using the IE Matrix, Creart Travel is in Cell V, as evidenced by the Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) score of 2.91 and the External Factor Evaluation (EFE) score of 2.87. This value indicates a moderate level of internal resilience coupled with external opportunities for Creart Travel.

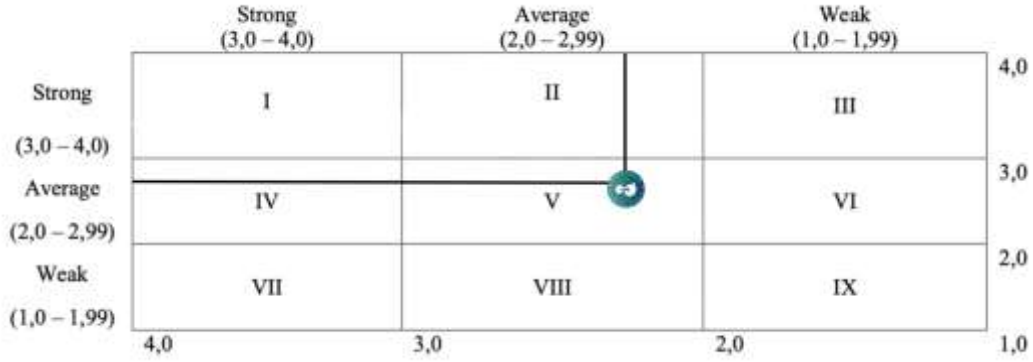


Figure 5. IE Matrix
(Source: Author, 2024)

The priority matrix delineates Creart Travel's strategic activities according to their impact and effort. It classifies tasks into Quick Wins, Major Projects, Fill-Ins, and Thankless Tasks, offering explicit direction on prioritizing efforts for maximum outcomes with efficient resource allocation. The Priority Matrix evaluates initiatives based on their impact, practicality, and urgency, thereby facilitating the optimal allocation of resources to meet company objectives. This process enables Creart Travel to identify high-priority strategies and concentrate on impactful activities while preserving a long-term goal for sustainable growth.

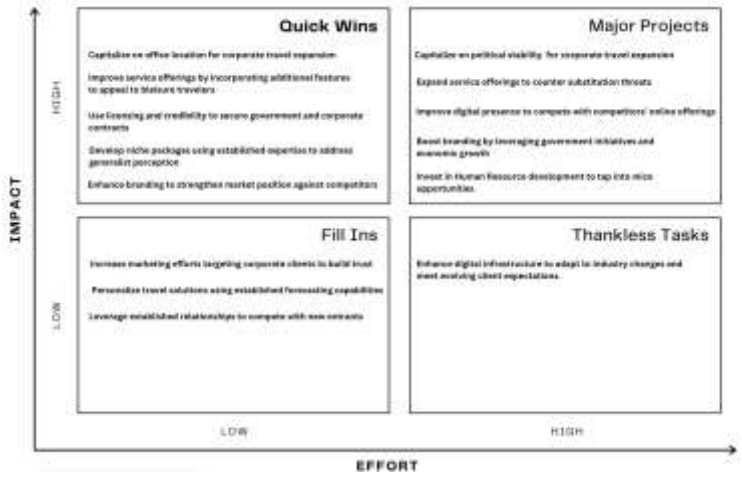


Figure 6. Proposed Implementation Plan
(Source: Author, 2024)

Conclusion

Creart Travel’s business approach emphasizes creativity and innovation to meet the growing demand in the tourism sector while promoting sustainable and customer-centric solutions. By conducting thorough internal and external evaluations and aligning its plans with significant market opportunities, the company aims to strengthen its competitive

advantage, improve operational efficiency, and enhance brand visibility for long-term growth and contribution to Indonesia's tourism industry.

To achieve this, Creart Travel should leverage its core strengths, such as strategic partnerships and innovative travel packages, collaborating with airlines, hotels, and tour operators to secure exclusive deals and offer personalized travel experiences for both individual and corporate clients. Enhancing digital marketing efforts through targeted campaigns on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube can boost brand awareness and customer engagement, while expanding into niche markets like eco-tourism and adventure travel can help differentiate the brand and attract new customers. A data-driven approach to marketing and operations, including tracking website traffic, social media engagement, and customer conversion rates, will ensure the effectiveness of digital strategies. Utilizing advanced CRM tools and streamlining operations through automated booking systems will enhance service delivery and efficiency.

Additionally, fostering long-term partnerships with key service providers and investing in employee training programs will equip the team to manage complex travel arrangements and deliver exceptional customer service. Conducting comprehensive market research through surveys, focus groups, and competitor analysis will provide insights into customer preferences, enabling Creart Travel to tailor its offerings and stay ahead of industry trends. By continuously refining its strategies based on data-driven insights, Creart Travel can optimize its value proposition, expand into high-potential markets, and secure a sustainable competitive position in Indonesia's travel industry.

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