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Indie Campers:  
Driving through expansion

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## ABSTRACT

Founded in 2013 by two friends, Indie Campers was a start-up that was dedicated to the innovative concept of the camper van rental - vans transformed into "mini-homes" with bed, kitchen and shower. The vans had a young and adventurous look and were attractive for young people who wanted to travel with no constraints. Indie Campers offered the opportunity to explore, to get lost and to discover.

Since the beginning, the company had experienced a fast growth, at an approximate rate of 300% yearly. Expected revenues for 2017 were 6.4 million euros. This growth was mainly due to its customer-oriented service: close and professional treatment; flexible schedules for pick-up and drop-off of vans; availability to pick-up and drop-off the van at different locations.

However, in 2017 the scale of the company had reached a dimension that created a lot of challenges. While keeping the same systems to manage operations, in 5 years, Indie Campers grew from a fleet of 2 vans to a fleet of 413 vans, and from one depot in Portugal to 62 locations spread through 6 countries. During the high season of 2017, the depots with more demand had to pick up and deliver around 20 vans a day. The number of people working in depots was about the same as in 2015 and the service procedures that created success for Indie Campers made the task even more challenging. The staff's fatigue made it difficult to deliver an excellent service and to pay the attention customers expected.

The operational problems that arise from fast growth are the main topic of this case study. Related themes are the company's value proposition, productivity and customer and employee satisfaction.

A Literature Review is presented in order to contextualize the topics addressed. Finally, a Teaching Note is developed, relating the Case Study and the Literature Review and providing a class plan and tools to analyse the different issues.

**Keywords:** Indie Campers; strategy; growth; expansion; operation; camper van rental

## RESUMO

Fundada por dois amigos em 2013, a Indie Campers era uma start-up que se dedicava ao aluguer de veículos com um conceito inovador: a "camper van" - carrinhas transformadas em pequenas casas com cama, cozinha e chuveiro. As carrinhas tinham um aspecto jovem e aventureiro e eram atractivas para jovens que queriam viajar sem preocupações. A Indie Campers oferecia a oportunidade de explorar e partir à descoberta.

Desde o início que a empresa foi crescendo muito rapidamente, a um ritmo aproximado de 300% por ano. A facturação esperada para 2017 era de 6.4 milhões de euros. Este crescimento acontecia especialmente por a empresa ter como foco principal as condições de serviço que oferecia aos seus clientes: tratamento próximo e profissional; horários flexíveis para receber e entregar as carrinhas; possibilidade de receber e entregar a carrinha em localizações diferentes.

Contudo, em 2017, a empresa atingiu uma dimensão que impunha muitos desafios à sua gestão. Sem alterar a sua forma de gerir operação, em 5 anos, a Indie Campers passou de uma frota composta por 2 carrinhas para uma frota de 413 veículos, e de 1 ponto de entrega em Lisboa para 62 localizações em 6 países. Durante a época alta de 2017, os pontos de entrega mais movimentados chegavam a ter dias com mais de 20 entregas e recolhas. A operação continuava a ser assegurada por um número de pessoas por armazém semelhante ao que era em 2015, e as condições de serviço que tinham gerado sucesso para a empresa representavam dificuldades adicionais. O crescente cansaço dos colaboradores constituía um entrave a desempenhar um serviço de excelência e à atenção esperada pelos clientes.

Os problemas operacionais originados pelo crescimento repentino são o tema principal deste caso. Temas relacionados são a proposta de valor da empresa, a produtividade operacional e a satisfação do cliente e dos funcionários.

Complementarmente e por forma a contextualizar devidamente as questões abordadas, foi realizada uma revisão de literatura. Finalmente, é apresentada uma *teaching note* que procura relacionar o plano teórico com o caso em estudo, fornecendo um plano para aula e ferramentas para analisar as diferentes questões levantadas.

**Palavras-chave:** Indie Campers; estratégia; crescimento; expansão; operação; aluguer de caravanas

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Indie Campers is a caravan rental company founded in 2013. The company rented camper vans, which are vans transformed into "mini-homes" with kitchen, bed and bathroom. In 2017, the company had experienced a fast growth, expanding, since 2013, from 2 to 413 vans and from 1 to 62 locations. Its revenues for 2017 were expected to be 6.4 million. Indie Campers recognized that the company's success was mainly due to its customer-oriented service and free image. However, considering the fast pace at which the company was growing, operations got really difficult to manage.

Along this dissertation, the effects of both customer satisfaction and geographic expansion on firms' performance are explored. Moreover, the compatibility between an excellent service and productivity is a main topic.

This dissertation intends to provide a framework for an instructor to use the case in strategy or marketing courses. The goal is that, during preparation and class discussion, students understand practical issues that companies face.

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part is the case study in which the path of the company is described, as well as its expansion strategy. Furthermore, issues related to the fast growth of Indie Campers are addressed.

The second part, the Literature Review, covers theoretical material that may be useful to the case analysis. It has, as main topics, expansion, fleet management and tourism, customer-oriented service and productivity.

Lastly, the Teaching Note relates the case study with the Literature Review. It includes a class plan and an analysis of important issues to be raised when using this case in class.

Indie Campers' future choices are wide open. For now, it is time to raise the right issues so that students can discuss and suggest strategies to improve the company's performance.

## II. CASE STUDY

At the end of a working day in mid-October 2017, André Leitão, the COO of Indie Campers, was the last one leaving the office. Before turning off his laptop, he started to recall the past 5 years and how the company had grown from an idea to a true reality. When opening the homepage of the company, André could read: “We live to explore, to get lost and to discover. We do it all for the stories, the mischief and the magic. We live free.”

“Living free.” It was the moto of Indie Campers, a Portuguese start-up founded in February 2013 that rented camper vans. It aimed to provide travellers with the ultimate road trip experience, giving them the opportunity to start their journey in one location and end it in any of its other national or international depots. The company had been growing very fast and revenues were expected to reach 6.4 million euros in 2017.

However, André started to think that it was not an easy task for the Operations Team to keep up with the rhythm that this “free spirit” image required. The summer had been a rush because of high demand and high season didn’t seem to end. The operational Staff was reaching its limit.

But would the company be able to preserve its image and have efficient operations at the same time? It was time to talk to the Board about this problem.

### **History of the Company**

Indie Campers was created by two friends in 2013: Hugo Oliveira and Stefan Koepl. The friends wanted to create an alternative to the typical motorhome rental while giving customers the opportunity to enjoy a different kind of vacation, based on adventure and independence.

Earlier in the summer of 2011, Hugo, who turned out to be the CEO of Indie Campers, had finished the first year of his Masters in Management at Nova SBE. In order to pay his fees and continue his studies, he needed to work during the Summer. To do so, he decided that he would take a "Work and Travel" visa to spend his summer in Australia, where he spent three months working on an orange production farm. Hugo needed to earn the most while spending the least, so he rented an old motorhome as his house for those three months. It was an old van which had "RENT ME" written with scratches in the vehicle's ink. Even though it was old, it was practical and just what he needed for those three months. It gave him independence and an easy way to move himself while he was in Australia. This type of motorhome rental

was a common business in Australia. It was really popular among young people with the same type of lifestyle as Hugo.

When he returned to Lisbon, he had to think about a theme for his Master thesis. The idea was to make a business plan for an imaginary company. That was when he remembered his motorhome in Australia and how that would be a good option for travellers in Portugal. The country had an attractive weather as well as a long sea shore where young people would camp on during the summer, while visiting all the different beaches. He started to develop his business plan and imagined a company focused on an adventurous and free spirit. So, instead of thinking of the regular motorhome, big and white, equipped for a two-month trip, the answer would be to develop the "camper van" concept - big vans that were turned into "lighter" motorhomes, with less space but easier to ride and ideal for a two or three week trip.

Hugo finished his Master thesis with excellent results and thought that his idea had potential and that it should not stay just in an imaginative world. He felt that it should be developed into reality. Stefan was his colleague and friend at Nova SBE and shared the same entrepreneurial spirit. It was not difficult for him to be excited about the idea as well. In February 2013, Indie Campers was born.

The company started with three vans and one location - Lisbon - and the first year had revenues of 13.000 euros. In the second year, they increased to 114.000 euros. This growth rate was relatively constant during the next years. In 2015, Steffan sold his share of the company to Hugo, given that he wanted to return to Austria. It was the year in which the location of Faro was introduced and the company had its first international expansion to Spain. In 2016, the office team increased from three to seven people and, during the summer, the company had a fleet of 100 camper vans. By 2017, the company already operated in 62 locations spread along 6 countries, and revenues were estimated to be of 6.4 million euros for the year. (see **exhibits 1, 2 and 3**). In 2018, Indie Campers planned to open 12 more locations.

### **The Business Model**

The activity of Indie Campers was based on a simple and straightforward business model. The company bought new vans in large quantities in order to enjoy better prices. Vans were turned into "mini-homes" and equipped to house 2 or 4 people, with beds, bathroom and kitchen (see **Exhibit 4**). On average, the company paid around 20.000 euros to buy a van and 3.500 euros

for the modifications of each van. The image of the vans was young and attractive. From the outside, they were usually colourful and said "RENT ME" in stylish lettering (see **Exhibit 5**), in memory of the motorhome Hugo used in Australia. All reservations and customer relationship were made online and the company's channel of communication and advertising was the Internet. An important part of the company's revenues were the extra services they would offer with customers paying extra fees. These extras represented 20% of Indie Campers' total revenues (see **Exhibit 6**).

As its main value proposition, the company provided fun and freedom through a combination of flexibility with customer relationship.

Indie Campers allowed customers to experience flexibility directly in its service conditions. The company practiced a mixed check-in/check-out: customers could pick up the van wherever they wanted and leave it wherever they found more suitable within the depot locations of the company – as long as it was previously agreed. Also, they would pay a daily price for the van (see **Exhibit 7**), without mandatory schedules to pick up or return the van. This happened since the beginning, in order to be consistent with the image of the company and to keep winning clients.

The company practiced a relaxed treatment to customers and always made the effort to be constantly available to something they might need. The goal was to “treat the customer as a friend”. This would transmit a youth spirit and a dedicated image. When arriving to depots, customers would have all types of tips to their trip – which went from beaches to restaurants to “town secrets”. Staff wanted clients to live the country or town as if they were locals. Any good experience customers lived as consequence of staff’s advice, they would associate it to Indie Campers. It generated word of mouth and high online rating. Some customers experienced the same kind of trip with Indie Campers in a different location – for example, customers who had travelled through the Portuguese shore would do it the next year in Spain with Indie Campers.

The company had its headquarters in Lisbon and its depots spread around Europe. Besides the people working on the headquarters (around 30), the company had its operational staff (around 100) spread throughout the other countries. Each country had a country manager and each depot had a location manager. Each location would have a different number of employees – called “roadrunners” – depending on its size.

In order to find new locations to expand, Indie Campers used, above all, data from Google. New locations were decided by crossing online data with Airport traffic and motorhome research. Locations were organized between “fixed” and “remote” locations. Fixed locations were the ones where Indie Campers had a depot. Remote locations were locations that were officially present on the website and were available for rental but did not have a depot. For remote locations, a staff member would take the van from the nearest depot to the customer and then would return to the depot by bus or train. Remote locations were used to gain space online and strengthen the image of the company, but also to test the market on those specific locations. If one remote location started to be successful, the company might consider having a depot there. Fixed and remote depots didn’t look different on the website and so they were not distinguishable to the final consumer. In 2017, the company had 17 fixed locations and 45 remote locations. In fact, since 2015, when the company started expanding abroad, it had more remote than fixed locations (see **Exhibit 8**). The company needed to spend extra money for a staff member to deliver a camper van on a remote location. However, because they demanded a lower initial investment, these locations represented a lower risk – and an opportunity to explore the market.

By October 2017, Indie Campers had 7 models of camper vans with different prices available. The vans were different from the ones of competitors on image, quality and low gas consumption. Models differed from each other based on number of people hosted – between 2 and 4 -, design, size and driving style. The models would serve different needs such as adventure or family trip, long or short hours on the road and large spaces for storage. In 2013 and 2014, there was one model. In 2015 and 2016, there were 5 models and in 2017, the company introduced the last 2 models, (see **Exhibit 9**).

### **The Competition**

Indie Campers did not have a competitor that exactly matched its value proposition and its dimension at the same time. However, there were some companies and businesses that could be considered as competition.

On a first level, there were camper van rental companies in specific places. However, each of these companies had a fleet of just about 10 vans and acted on a very local basis. They were generally connected to a theme, like surfing, tracking, etc. As these companies did not have

the same scale as Indie Campers, their pricing was not as competitive. This phenomenon happened in Portugal, Spain, and France. (see **Exhibit 10**)

Secondly, there were the traditional motorhome companies. Among these companies, the largest one was McRent – a company that operated all around Europe. The company rented motorhomes that were more comfortable and more suitable for families with children (see **Exhibit 11**). This company’s motorhomes could house up to 6 people, while Indie Campers had a maximum of 4 per van. Even though these motorhomes were not as economic in rental price, gas and highway fees and not as flexible in terms of parking, they were also spread throughout Europe, including Portugal, which allowed the same type of flexibility. The company had already started to sell its business based on flexibility - “Motorhome hire holidays give you the freedom to discover a new destination every day (...) No constraints, no limitations - with a motorhome of your choice supplied by McRent you decide how to spend your day and how to enjoy your spare time”<sup>1</sup>. The main difference between the two companies was that while Indie Campers focused on an adventurous trip, McRent focused on a comfortable family trip.

Car rental businesses and the proliferation of hostels and Airbnb represented another type of threat. Since this type of housing was somewhat affordable for youngsters as well and car rental prices were much lower than any van of Indie Campers, the company had to keep working on competitive prices and image differentiation.

Indie Campers management recognized that, in order to keep up with the market, the company needed to always defend its position, mainly on flexibility and service conditions.

### **Service and Image of the Company**

“In the beginning, we would do anything to build our customer network. I remember we once bought a shovel and a hoe for a customer who wanted to do some gardening” said, laughing, André Leitão.

In fact, people in the company were certain that their success was mainly due to their customer-oriented position. Since the beginning, their aim was to "shift the hassle of travel planning towards a relaxed, personalized experience through the dedicated support of the

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<sup>1</sup> McRent's official website - homepage

<sup>2</sup> Indie Campers official website - Mission and Drive

bookings team."<sup>2</sup>. The people they hired for operations and customer support were always "the nicest people of each country", always with a smile on their faces, always offering to help with whatever customers might need. They would be available for pick up and delivering of the vans 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The company had excellent reviews online, with a satisfaction rate of 4.8 out of 5, and good word of mouth. Its Mission and Drive was to "enable the freedom of movement, inspiring and connecting explorers worldwide with unforgettable European destinations", so flexibility needed to always be a part of Indie Camper's competitive advantage. And customers recognized it was (see **Exhibit 12**).

Working at a depot demanded being available for the customer from the beginning until the end of the trip. Each depot had a staff of 2 to 6 people (see **Exhibit 13**). During high season, some depots would deliver or receive about 20 vans a day (see **Exhibits 14 and 15**). The fact that the company emphasized its free image, led to the decision that customers would pick up and leave vans at what time and place they decided.

### **The Operational Side**

The company wanted to provide customers with flexible service conditions while spending the least it could with operations. There were few operational people for the number of vans and even though remote locations allowed for savings on a depot rent, they demanded increased travel costs. On average, per rental, a trip was 9,5 days long, revenues were of 1140 euros, and direct costs were approximately 120 euros. This meant that operational costs accounted for roughly 10% per rented van - these included outsourcing services (like laundries and plumbers), operations staff wages, van relocations and pickups at the airport. Due to the volume of clients, average costs per rental were higher during winter and lower during summer.

"Each day is a day. There is never a day that is the same as any of the others", said Luís Noronha, location manager at Porto.

In the beginning, it was clear for the creators of Indie Campers that its service conditions needed to be as free as possible. They wanted customers to feel that their trip had been as easy as they could have imagined.

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<sup>2</sup> Indie Campers official website - Mission and Drive

It led them to choose a direction that, in 2017 - when the company had grown so much on such a short time -, André considered as being no longer sustainable. Nevertheless, the company was already planning to continue expanding geographically and open 12 new locations in 2018 (see **Exhibit 16**). The company had achieved a dimension that made the operational activity of the company a lot more difficult to control. And it would continue to be more and more difficult as Indie Campers would continue to expand.

These difficulties were a consequence of three main factors: vans were rented on a daily price, without a schedule to pick up or drop off; customers could leave their vans in a different depot from where they had picked them up, which made inventories difficult to manage; most of the locations were remote locations, which required that a member of staff needed to deliver a van to a remote location and be absent for almost the entire day. In addition, customer treatment needed to be direct and informal, while professional.

For a member of depot staff, daily functions were: to pick up customers at the airport or another central place previously agreed; front desk service, which involved activities like sending confirmation e-mails for all clients of the following week, confirming all reservations for the next day and explaining to customers all contract and service conditions when they arrived to the depot; to control van inventory and stocks of other material, especially when reservations were made too close to the pickup date; managing suppliers, like drycleaners, mechanics or plumbers, who worked for the company as outsourcing services; cleaning the vans, both outside and inside; customer support, which was the moment when staff would especially focus on the relationship with the client by giving advice both on the usage of the van and on places to visit. In the summer of 2017, staff worked a daily average of 12 hours and it was difficult for them to have a day to rest.

Indie Campers charged a daily fee and allowed customers to deliver vans at what time they preferred (charging only an extra fee after 6pm). This policy turned daily operational activity irregular and unpredictable. Most client pickups were in the morning and drop offs near the evening. All vans that were to be picked up on a specific date needed to be prepared the previous day. This meant that, if a van was dropped during the afternoon, some members of the operational staff needed to work faster and through the evening. While the Board kept this policy to provide the best and most relaxed experience to customers, operational staff considered that the company should work like an hotel: check-out should be done until noon or 1 pm and check-in from 5pm onwards.

Allowing customers to pick up a van in one location and drop it off in another was one of the main advantages Indie Campers presented in its service conditions. Customers could enjoy this condition by paying an inter-zone fee of 100 euros. However, it represented an add-up to the challenges operational staff had to face in their job. The company used an algorithm that distributed vans according to reservations. This algorithm helped making the distribution of the vans per depot as efficient as possible. Still, the fact that the company had so many locations and so many different van models available in every location required some journeys to relocate the vans (see **Exhibit 17**). Even with the inter-zone fee, it meant extra costs for Indie Campers and it demanded extra work for depot staff.

Most of the locations presented on Indie Campers website did not have actual depots. These were called "remote locations". This was a major challenge for people working at the company's depots. Each depot had 1 to 6 remote locations. In order to deliver a van to a customer in one of these locations, a staff member needed to drive the van to the location and then return to the depot using public transportation. This also meant extra costs and time spent on the journey (see **Exhibit 18**). Besides that, it meant more work for those that stayed at the depot while the other was absent. It got especially serious in locations with a lower number of employees. For a depot like Porto, which had 2 remote locations -Vigo and Santiago de Compostela -, this was an issue that was always present in the daily activity, since at least one trip to a remote location per week was required. For Santiago, a well-known pilgrimage site with beautiful tracking spots, it was common to have reservations there, especially during the Summer. It took 12 hours for a staff member to drive a van to Santiago, deliver it to the customer and return by train. That employee would be absent the whole day. During high season, the team had 4 people working, so a pickup at Santiago would reduce the team's productivity in the depot by 25%. When the depot was especially crowded and, at the same time, van deliveries had to be made to Santiago, two members of staff would leave Porto at 5.30 am (each one driving a van) in order to be able to return by van and be in Porto by lunchtime to work at the depot. Staff considered this activity to be extremely tiring and stressful and started to ask the company to hire more people.

Adding to these challenges, staff also considered difficult being the first and only people from the company that customers would personally meet. Until they arrived to a depot, customers had never seen anyone from Indie Campers. The fact that everything was made online was not an issue for anyone at the company, Board or operations. Nevertheless, it required an extra effort from people from operations while treating the customer in a way that developed

empathy and service satisfaction. Even though operations staff were hired based not only on their technical abilities but also on their social skills, it was difficult to be nice while being so tired. They had to show a smile on their faces in a casual conversation with customers while under stress because of the number of tasks still to be done before the end of the day.

Although Indie Campers had a large commercial team ready to listen to every customer in several languages, clients would feel more familiar with the depot staff because they were the only people they would meet in person. Any doubt or complaint customers would have they would transmit it directly to them. Most of the times, customers chose not to activate insurance for their trips in order to save some money (see **Exhibit 19**). If something happened to the vehicle, they needed to pay. Charging these fees for vehicle damage or dealing with insurance problems was responsibility of the people working at depots. Approximately 4% of customers had trouble with vehicle damage and needed to pay at drop-off. According to depot staff, these situations were unpleasant for both sides and some of them used to lead to tense conversations, which staff people needed to handle with a lot of patience and diplomacy.

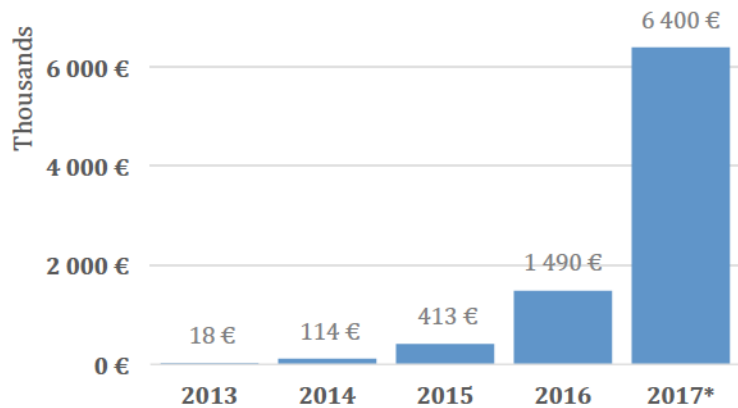
All these issues were really making staff from operations to consider they would soon reach their limit. They reported it to André on a regular basis. But, at the same time, he could understand the Board's point of view and their willingness to keep growing.

## EXHIBITS







**Exhibit 1 - Revenues per Year**

Year	Total Revenue
2013	18 000 €
2014	114 000 €
2015	413 000 €
2016	1 490 000 €
2017*	6 400 000 €

\*Estimated

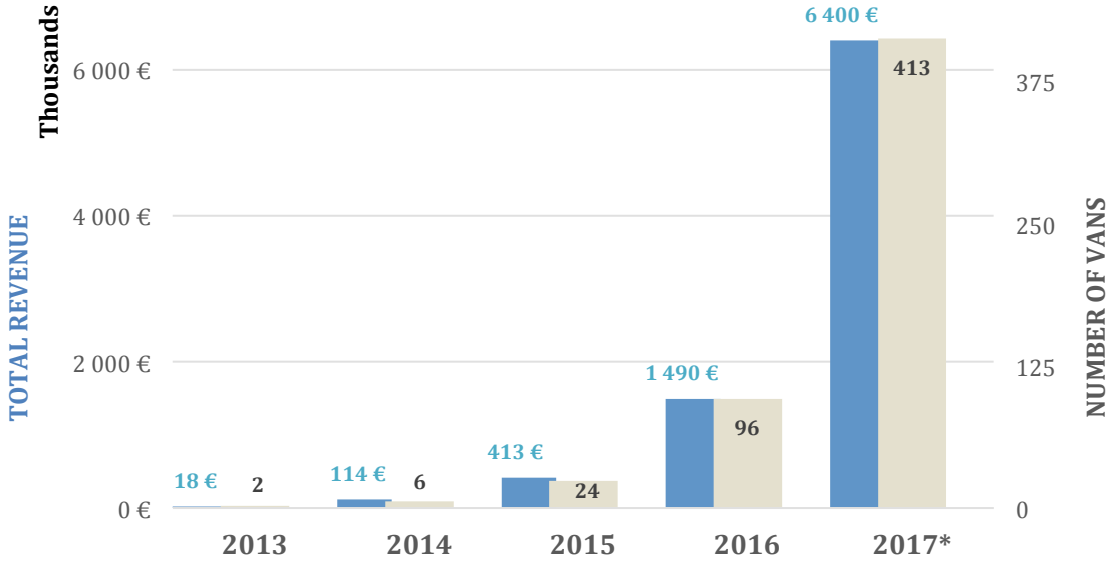


**Exhibit 2 - Depots or locations per country or island**

Portugal 	Spain 	France 	Italy 	Belgium 
Faro	Alicante	Biarritz	Bari	Brussels Charleroi
Lisbon	Barcelona	Bergerac	Bergamo	Brussels Zaventem
Peniche	Bilbao	Bordeaux	Bologna	
Porto	Girona	La Rochelle	Brindisi	
	Granada	Lille	Firenze	
	Madrid	Lourdes	Genova	
	Malaga	Lyon	Milano Malpensa	Switzerland 
	San Sebastian	Marseille	Milano Linate	Geneve
	Santander	Montpellier	Napoli	
	Santiago de Compostela	Mulhouse	Pisa	
	Seville	Nantes	Rome CIA	
	Toledo	Nice	Rome FCO	
	Valencia	Paris Beauvais	Torino	
	Vigo	Paris CDG	Treviso	
		Paris Orly	Venice	
		Pau	(Sicily)	
		Toulouse	Catania	
		(Corsica)	Palermo	
		Bastia	Trapani	
		Ajaccio	(Sardinia)	
		Figari	Olbia	
			Alghero	
			Cagliari	

**Exhibit 3 - Number of vans per year**

Year	Number of vans
2013	2
2014	6
2015	24
2016	96
2017	413



**Proportion of the evolution of the number of vans and revenues per year**

**Exhibit 4 - The inside of an Indie Campers van**



**Image source:** Indie Campers' official website

**Exhibit 5 - The outside of and Indie Campers van**



**Image source:** Indie Campers' official website

## Exhibit 6 - Extra prices

Extra	Cost
Surfboard	12.5€ per day
Paddleboard	20€ per day
Wetsuit	5€ per day
Foldable bicycle	10€ per day
Barbecue	20€ per booking
Chemical toilet	40€ per booking
GPS	30€ per booking
Exterior table and chairs	20€ per booking
Sleeping bag	15€ per booking
Child car seat	0 €
WiFi	30€ per booking
Portable heater	10€ per booking
Pair of snow chains	40€ per booking

### Exhibit 7 - Price of camper van rental per day for the Summer 2017 (in euros)

PORTUGAL AND SPAIN														
	5 - 31 JAN	FEB	MAR	10 - 30 APR	MAY	JUN	1 - 23 JUL	24 JUL - 14 AUG	15 - 21 AUG	1 - 14 SEP	15 - 30 SEP	OCT	1 NOV - 20 DEC	21 DEC - 4 JAN
<b>Sporty Active S Urban</b>	42 €	40 €	60 €	59 €	69 €	74 €	92 €	97 €	92 €	74 €	69 €	64 €	39 €	69 €
<b>Active Plus</b>	47 €	45 €	65 €	69 €	79 €	84 €	102 €	107 €	102 €	84 €	79 €	69 €	44 €	74 €
<b>California</b>	77 €	75 €	85 €	74 €	84 €	89 €	107 €	112 €	107 €	89 €	84 €	74 €	49 €	79 €
<b>Motorhome</b>	52 €	50 €	80 €		74 €	84 €	89 €	107 €	112 €	107 €	89 €	84 €	74 €	49 €
<b>Explorer</b>	57 €	55 €	74 €	79 €	89 €	94 €	112 €	117 €	112 €	99 €	89 €	79 €	54 €	84 €

REMAINING LOCATIONS														
	5 - 31 JAN	FEB	MAR	10 - 30 APR	MAY	JUN	1 - 23 JUL	24 JUL - 14 AUG	15 - 21 AUG	1 - 14 SEP	15 - 30 SEP	OCT	1 NOV - 20 DEC	21 DEC - 4 JAN
<b>Sporty Active S Urban</b>	42 €	40 €	60 €	54 €	64 €	69 €	82 €	87 €	82 €	69 €	64 €	59 €	39 €	69 €
<b>Active Plus</b>	47 €	45 €	65 €	64 €	74 €	79 €	92 €	97 €	92 €	79 €	74 €	64 €	44 €	74 €
<b>California</b>	77 €	75 €	85 €	69 €	79 €	84 €	97 €	102 €	97 €	84 €	79 €	69 €	49 €	79 €
<b>Motorhome</b>	52 €	50 €	80 €		69 €	79 €	84 €	97 €	102 €	97 €	84 €	79 €	69 €	49 €
<b>Explorer</b>	57 €	55 €	74 €	74 €	84 €	89 €	102 €	107 €	92 €	94 €	84 €	74 €	54 €	84 €

ISLAND LOCATIONS (CORSICA, SICILY AND SARDINIA)														
	5 - 31 JAN	FEB	MAR	10 - 30 APR	MAY	JUN	1 - 23 JUL	24 JUL - 14 AUG	15 - 21 AUG	1 - 14 SEP	15 - 30 SEP	OCT	1 NOV - 20 DEC	21 DEC - 4 JAN
<b>Sporty Active S Urban</b>	39 €	60 €	54 €	64 €	69 €	79 €	84 €	84 €	79 €	69 €	64 €	59 €	39 €	69 €
<b>Active Plus</b>	44 €	65 €	64 €	74 €	79 €	89 €	99 €	99 €	89 €	79 €	74 €	64 €	44 €	74 €
<b>California</b>	74 €	85 €	69 €	79 €	84 €	94 €	99 €	99 €	94 €	84 €	79 €	69 €	49 €	79 €
<b>Motorhome</b>	49 €	80 €	69 €	69 €	84 €	94 €	99 €	104 €	99 €	89 €	79 €	69 €	49 €	79 €
<b>Explorer</b>	54 €	74 €	74 €	84 €	89 €	99 €	104 €	109 €	104 €	84 €	84 €	74 €	54 €	84 €

**Exhibit 8 - Locations per year - divided by depots and remote locations**

**a) Locations 2013 and 2014**



Locations 2013 - 2014	
Depot	Remote
Lisbon	-
Porto	-

**b) Locations 2015**



 Depots     Remote locations

Locations 2015	
Depot	Remote
Lisbon	Madrid
Porto	Malaga
Faro	Barcelona

### c) Locations 2016



 Depots
  Remote locations

Locations 2016	
Depot	Remote
Lisbon	-
Porto	-
Faro	-
Malaga	Seville
	Alicante
Barcelona	Girona
	Valencia
Bilbao	San Sebastian
	Santander
	Biarritz
	Madrid

## d) Locations 2017



 Depots     Remote locations

Locations 2017	
Depot	Remote
Lisbon	Peniche
Porto	Vigo
	Santiago de Compostela
Faro	-
Malaga	Seville
	Granada
Barcelona	Girona
	Valencia
Madrid	Toledo
	Alicante
Bilbao	San Sebastian
	Biarritz
	Santander
Bordeaux	La Rochelle

	Bergerac Toulouse Pau Nantes Lourdes
Paris CDG	Paris Orly Paris Beauvais Brussels Charleroi Brussels Zaventem Lille
Lyon	Geneve Mulhouse
Milano Malpensa	Milano Linate Bergamo Torino Genova
Bologna	Treviso Venice Florence
Roma FCO	Pisa Roma CIA Napoli Bari Brindisi
Catania	Palermo Trapani
Olbia	Alghero Cagliari
Bastia	Ajaccio Figari
Marseille	Nice Montpellier

## Exhibit 9 - Van models, 2017

### Sporty



A practical option for a dynamic holiday. Its compact size makes for an ideal vehicle both for city driving, as well as remote road adventures.

Fiat Ducato 30

- Seating and bed for 4 people
- Living area - 7,5 m<sup>2</sup>
- WC available as extra

### Active S



An alternative short sized campervan as compact and easy to drive as the Sporty model, but exhibits a distinct interior layout. The key difference between the two stems from the design of the sleeping area and the passenger seating.

Fiat Ducato 30

- Seating and bed for 4 people
- Living area - 7,5 m<sup>2</sup>
- WC available as extra

### Urban



The Urban is an elegant solution for those who love to travel in pairs. Both compact and subtle, this premium two-person campervan blends with city traffic. From the outside, it won't even be taken for a campervan

Mercedes-Benz Vito

- Seating and bed for 2 people
- Living area - 6 m<sup>2</sup>
- WC available as extra

## Active Plus



The Active Plus is a medium sized model, compact yet spacious, thus ideal for families and groups of friends. Smaller than the Motorhome, it allows for an easier navigation.

### Fiat Ducato MH2

- Seating and bed for 4 people
- Living area - 8,4 m<sup>2</sup>
- WC with shower

## California



Displaying a design that recalls the success of a road legend - Volkswagen's first campervan model -, California van aims to be a symbol of independence and freedom that inspires travelers with a back-to-basics feeling through the distinctive style and elegance of the 60's.

### Volkswagen California BlueMotion Coast

- Seating and bed for 4 people
- Living area - 7,5 m<sup>2</sup>
- WC optional as extra

## Motorhome



With ampler living space and storage available, the motorhome model is the largest of the fleet and an excellent solution for a fun group getaway or a family holiday.

### Fiat Ducato LH2

- Seating and bed for 4 people
- Living area - 9,4 m<sup>2</sup>
- WC with shower

## Explorer



**Image source:** Indie Campers' official website

Having a premium van of this size outfitted for two travelers means more space, to cover more miles, and stay more comfortable than with any other van. It is more suitable for longer trips.

Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 211

- Seating and bed for 2 people
- Living area - 10 m<sup>2</sup>
- WC with shower

**Exhibit 10 - Examples of camper van rental companies - theme, locations and pricing**

Company	Theme	Location	Pricing compared to Indie Campers
Wildside Campers	-	Portugal - 4 locations	Slightly higher
WestCoast Campers	-	Portugal and Spain - 7 locations	Similar
FreeSpirit Campers	Music Festivals	Portugal - 1 location	Slightly higher
The Getaway Van	-	Portugal - 1 location	Slightly higher
Soul Campers	Surf	Portugal and Spain - 3 locations	Slightly higher
Chili Campers	Vintage vans	Spain - 1 location	Similar
Blacksheep Van	Roadtrips	France - 20 locations	Slightly higher

**Exhibit 11 - Outside and inside of a McRent Motorhome**



**Image Source:** McRent's official website

## Exhibit 12 - Examples of clients' reviews



**Ellie Fahey**

3 comentários · 1 foto

★★★★★ há 2 meses -

Would highly recommend going with Indie Campers - it was one of the highlights of our Europe trip travelling down the West Coast of Portugal. We hired the Active Plus model which was fantastic to drive, really economic on fuel, had lots of room and was basically brand new. It was slightly pricey in the high season, but if you're willing to spend the money it's absolutely worth while. Be prepared to drive a large vehicle - it can be a little tight on little town roads. And it's worth mentioning that you can only have hot water and 240 volt power when you're plugged into mains at caravan parks etc. However, you still have 12v to charge phones and so forth. All in all the guys at the Lisbon store (special mention to João) were cruisey, nice guys who were easy to deal with and they made the whole process very swift. Thanks guys - we're planning our next Indie adventure as we speak! :)



**James Coady**

1 comentário

★★★★★ há uma semana -

Very helpful staff to get you situated in the right van for you. They provided pick up and drop off at the airport which was convenient. The only bad thing I have to say is that I wasn't instructed about the locking mechanism on the shower door and the staff member who gave me the run down was not aware of it either. My first time showering in the van I got locked in the shower and had to break the door open. Later, I figured out I need to screw the noob in a little to make it slide. I thought I was going to die in the shower considering I was camping alone. Not the best place to die on a surf trip.



**Dylan White**

2 comentários

★★★★★ há 3 meses -

Indie Campers were superb. The service was professional and friendly the whole way through, all communications were answered promptly, etc. When it came to pick up/drop off this was handled very well and nothing was too much trouble for the staff. The van itself was excellent too and the service provided by the staff really helped make the holiday a pleasure. Absolutely miles better than any other car hire firm I've ever used. I would recommend Indie Campers to anyone.



**Julia Castro**

9 comentários · 3 fotos

★★★★★ há 2 semanas

Loved my Indie Campers experience. The freedom a van gives you is insane. You are not tied to any hotel or place... The staff was really nice and helpful, the van was just perfect. I took the 'Sporty' van and was traveling alone... 200% recommended.

Source: Google

**Exhibit 13 - Number of staff members per Depot, 2017**

Depot	June	July	August	September
Lisbon	4	6	6	6
Porto	2	3	3	3
Faro	2	2	3	5
Malaga	2	2	2	2
Barcelona	3	3	3	2
Bilbao	2	2	2	2
Madrid	1	2	3	2
Bordeaux	2	3	3	2
Paris	2	2	2	2
Marseille	2	2	2	2
Lyon	2	2	2	2
Corsica	1	1	1	1
Milan	2	2	3	2
Bologna	1	2	2	1
Rome	2	2	2	2
Sicily	1	1	1	1
Sardinia	1	1	2	2

 = 1 person

**Exhibit 14 - Pickups and dropoffs from June to October monthly per year and location, 2015 to 2017**

**a) 2015**

Locations	JUNE		JULY		AUGUST		SEPTEMBER		TOTAL
	Pick	Drop	Pick	Drop	Pick	Drop	Pick	Drop	
Barcelona	-	-	1	1	2	3	-	-	7
Bilbao	-	-	3	4	1	1	-	-	9
<b>Faro</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Lisbon</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>312</b>
Malaga	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	2	5
<b>Porto</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>496</b>
<b>* Depots</b>									

**b) 2016**

Locations	JUNE		JULY		AUGUST		SEPTEMBER		TOTAL
	Pick	Drop	Pick	Drop	Pick	Drop	Pick	Drop	
Alicante	2	1	1	-	4	1	1	2	12
<b>Barcelona</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>103</b>
Biarritz	2	1	6	6	6	5	6	4	36
<b>Bilbao</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Faro</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>222</b>
Girona	1	1	1	2	-	-	1	-	6
<b>Lisbon</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>693</b>
Madrid	-	1	1	-	2	4	-	2	10
Malaga	5	5	6	4	8	9	7	9	53
<b>Porto</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>259</b>
Santander	3	2	2	1	4	1	3	1	17
Seville	3	3	11	6	4	6	3	3	39
Valencia	-	1	6	2	2	4	-	1	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>1605</b>
<b>* Depots</b>									

**c) 2017**

Locations	JUNE		JULY		AUGUST		SEPTEMBER		TOTAL
	Pick	Drop	Pick	Drop	Pick	Drop	Pick	Drop	
Ajaccio	4	3	6	5	8	8	10	8	52
Alghero	2	2	2	2	2	3	-	3	16
Alicante	-	-	8	3	5	6	1	-	23
<b>Barcelona</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>489</b>
Bari	2	2	2	3	1	1	4	4	19
<b>Bastia</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>87</b>
Bergamo	5	4	7	4	10	10	2	1	43
Bergerac	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	4
Biarritz	6	2	10	13	8	5	7	5	56
<b>Bilbao</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>307</b>

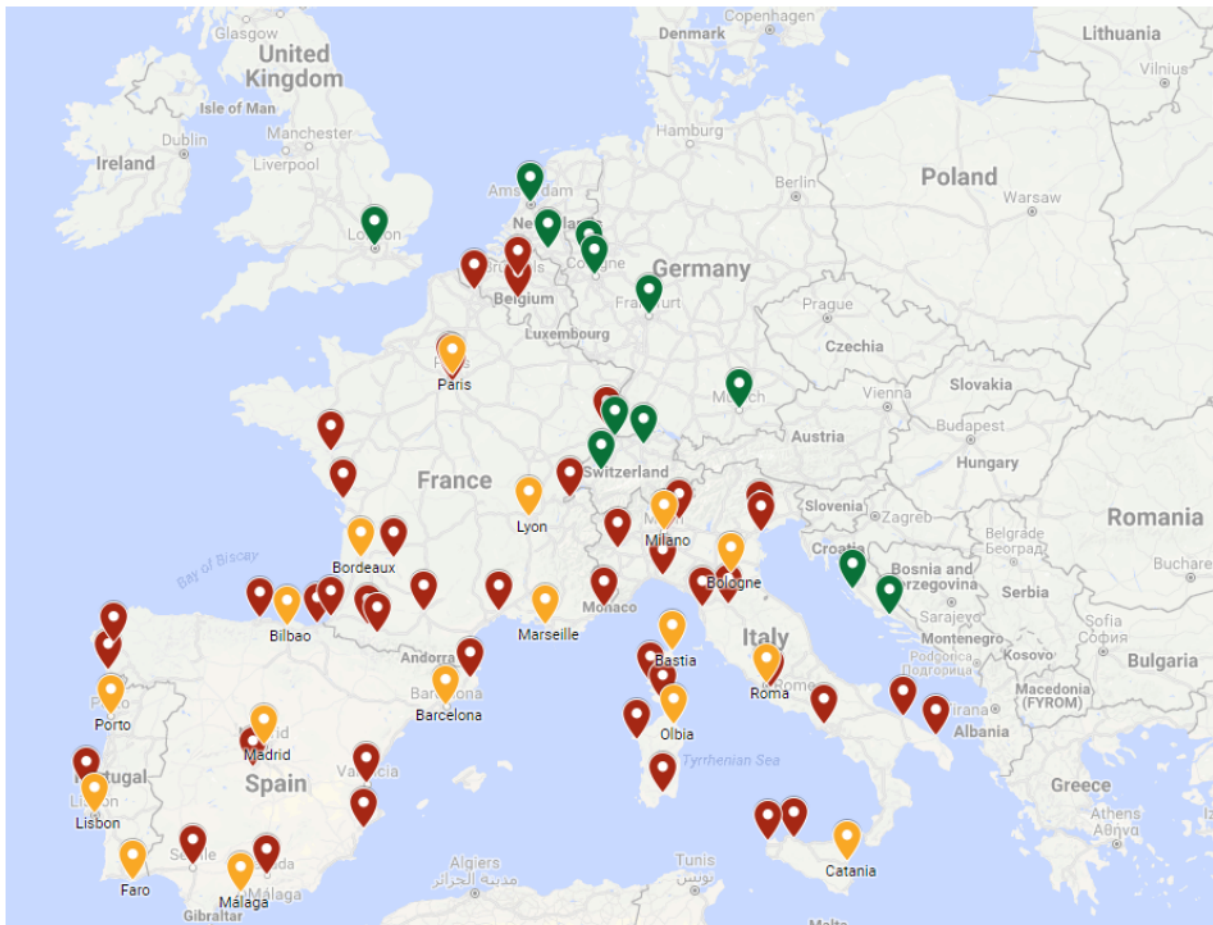
<b>Bologna</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Bordeaux</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>176</b>
Brindisi	-	-	1	1	2	2	1	1	8
Brussels Charleroi	2	1	1	2	-	1	-	1	8
Brussels Zaventem	10	1	14	16	6	9	3	2	61
Cagliari	8	4	8	10	8	11	13	9	71
<b>Catania</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Faro</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>610</b>
Firenze	3	1	7	3	10	6	3	3	36
Geneve	12	10	24	21	7	13	13	16	116
Genova	1	1	1	1	1	3	-	-	8
Girona	3	1	1	6	6	5	1	1	24
Granada	-	-	2	1	1	2	-	1	7
La Rochelle	-	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	4
Lille	2	-	2	2	3	4	1	1	15
<b>Lisboa</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>1464</b>
Lourdes	-	-	2	1	-	1	-	-	4
<b>Lyon</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Madrid</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>239</b>
<b>Malaga</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Marseille</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>91</b>
Milan Linate	4	1	2	2	10	8	3	2	32
<b>Milan Malpensa</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>214</b>
Montpellier	1	2	5	2	4	5	1	-	20
Mulhouse	-	-	5	3	2	3	1	2	16
Nantes	5	4	13	8	1	5	1	2	39
Napoli	2	2	10	4	9	9	3	6	45
Nice	6	8	9	13	4	9	12	12	73
<b>Olbia</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>136</b>
Palermo	2	3	2	3	3	6	7	3	29
Paris Beauvais	3	2	1	-	-	1	-	-	7
<b>Paris CDG</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>168</b>
Paris Orly	-	3	10	8	4	10	3	2	40
Pau	-	-	1	-	2	3	-	-	6
Peniche	2	2	1	-	2	2	2	-	11
Pisa	1	2	4	2	2	3	9	7	30
<b>Porto</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>607</b>
Roma CIA	1	-	2	5	3	5	-	7	23
<b>Roma FCO</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>146</b>
San Sebastian	-	1	1	2	1	1	-	-	6
Santander	4	4	6	5	7	9	4	3	42
Santiago de C.	1	5	7	9	4	3	4	2	35
Seville	2	3	9	10	19	23	16	12	94
Toledo	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	5
Torino	4	1	3	4	7	8	-	-	27
Toulouse	3	6	12	11	3	5	3	3	46
Trapani	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	4
Treviso	1	1	2	1	1	-	1	2	9
Valencia	1	2	7	3	7	9	4	1	34
Veneza	15	6	6	13	12	11	8	5	76
Vigo	2	5	3	1	1	1	-	-	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>851</b>	<b>726</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>1094</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>938</b>	<b>6444</b>
<b>* Depots</b>									




**Exhibit 15: Number of pickups and dropoffs from June to September 2017 per depot, including remote locations**

Locations	JUNE		JULY		AUGUST		SEPTEMBER		TOTAL
	Pick	Drop	Pick	Drop	Pick	Drop	Pick	Drop	
Barcelona	38	33	68	69	98	98	72	71	547
Bastia	7	7	14	10	25	27	26	23	139
Bilbao	30	21	60	51	70	67	53	59	411
Bologna	25	18	26	29	41	36	34	29	238
Bordeaux	16	30	56	38	32	46	32	25	275
Catania	8	8	6	6	9	12	16	16	81
Faro	30	38	66	57	91	103	123	102	610
Lisbon	122	82	179	148	234	241	223	246	1475
Lyon	14	13	48	40	25	31	25	33	229
Madrid	15	10	32	21	60	62	25	37	262
Malaga	11	16	32	26	35	48	50	33	251
Marseille	10	19	26	31	16	20	32	30	184
Milano Malpensa	22	13	40	31	66	80	41	31	324
Olbia	17	12	29	30	35	34	35	31	223
Paris CDG	34	14	52	51	42	52	28	26	299
Porto	37	32	94	58	133	97	99	105	655
Rome FCO	21	20	23	30	35	40	31	41	241
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>851</b>	<b>726</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>1094</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>938</b>	<b>6444</b>

**Exhibit 16: Planned locations for 2018**

Croatia 	Germany 	Netherlands 	Switzerland 	United Kingdom 
Split Zadar	Dusseldorf Cologne Frankfurt Munich	Eindhoven Amsterdam	Basel Friburg Zurich	London



 Depots 2017    
  Remote locations 2017    
  Planned locations for 2018

**Exhibit 17: Number of relocations per depot of origin, January to September 2017**













Barcelona		Bilbao		Bordeaux		Bologna		Catania	
Bilbao	11	Barcelona	13	Barcelona	8	Mil. Malpensa	8	Rome FCO	2
Bordeaux	11	Bordeaux	12	Bastia	2	Rome FCO	6		
Lisbon	4	Lisbon	1						
Madrid	14	Lyon	1	Bilbao	16				
Malaga	5	Madrid	12	Lyon	7				
Marseille	9	Porto	5	Marseille	9				
Olbia	3			Paris CDG	16				
Porto	1								
Rome FCO	4								
Faro		Lisbon		Lyon		Madrid		Malaga	
Bilbao	1	Barcelona	22	Barcelona	1	Barcelona	10	Barcelona	2
Lisbon	32	Bastia	1	Bastia	2	Bilbao	14	Bilbao	3
Madrid	3	Bilbao	9	Bologna	2	Bordeaux	2	Faro	6
Malaga	9	Bologna	3	Bordeaux	5	Faro	4	Lisbon	7
Porto	23	Bordeaux	8	Marseille	1	Lisbon	11	Madrid	5
		Faro	55	Mil. Malpensa	7	Malaga	10		
		Madrid	19	Olbia	1	Paris CDG	1		
		Malaga	8	Paris CDG	5	Porto	7		
		Marseille	1						
		Mil. Malpensa	15						
		Porto	91						
Marseille		Milano Malpensa		Paris CDG		Porto		Rome FCO	
Barcelona	7	Bologna	12	Barcelona	4	Barcelona	1	Bologna	16
Bastia	1	Catania	2	Bordeaux	7	Bilbao	3	Catania	3
Bordeaux	5	Lyon	3	Lyon	9	Faro	4	Mil. Malpensa	6
Lisbon	1	Marseille	4	Madrid	1	Lisbon	17	Olbia	1
Lyon	7	Olbia	3	Marseille	1	Madrid	2		
Mil. Malpensa	2	Paris CDG	1	Mil. Malpensa	2				
Paris CDG	2	Rome FCO	5						
Porto	1								

**Exhibit 18: Time spent and cost on a one-way travel for each remote location**

<b>Locations 2017</b>				
<b>Depot</b>	<b>Remote</b>	<b>Dist. (km)</b>	<b>Travel time</b>	<b>Avg cost</b>
<b>Lisbon</b>	Peniche	102	1 hour 19 min	15 €
<b>Porto</b>	Vigo	153	1 hour 52 min	25 €
	Santiago	232	2 hours 43 min	40 €
<b>Faro</b>	-	-	-	-
<b>Malaga</b>	Seville	171	1 hour 53 min	19 €
	Granada	126	1 hour 32 min	12 €
<b>Barcelona</b>	Girona	117	1 hour 26 min	19 €
	Valencia	349	3 hours 35 min	68 €
<b>Madrid</b>	Toledo	72	56 min	8 €
	Alicante	420	4 hours	35 €
<b>Bilbao</b>	San Sebastian	101	1 hour 12 min	20 €
	Biarritz	148	1 hour 47 min	24 €
	Santander	100	1 hour 14 min	10 €
<b>Bordeaux</b>	La Rochelle	190	2 hours 5 min	30 €
	Bergerac	113	1 hour 30 min	17 €
	Toulouse	246	2 hours 30 min	40 €
	Pau	216	1 hours 15 min	38 €
	Nantes	353	3 hours 21 min	53 €
	Lourdes	264	2 hours 30 min	48 €
<b>Paris CDG</b>	Paris Orly	41	48 min	5 €
	Paris Beauvais	28	30 min	4 €
	Brussels CRL	258	2 hours 27 min	35 €
	Brussels BRU	293	2 hours 50 min	38 €
	Lille	197	1 hour 57 min	33 €
<b>Lyon</b>	Geneva	150	1 hour 40 min	63 €
	Mulhouse	376	3 hours 34 min	60 €
<b>Milano Malpensa</b>	Milano Linate	67	53 min	10 €
	Bergamo	92	1 hour 10 min	13 €
	Torino	138	1 hour 38 min	26 €
	Genova	206	2 hours 9 min	30 €
<b>Bologna</b>	Treviso	170	2 hours	30 €
	Venice	154	1 hour 45 min	25 €
	Florence	118	1 hour 42 min	45 €
	Pisa	170	2 hours 10 min	28 €
<b>Roma FCO</b>	Roma CIA	36	57 min	3 €
	Napoli	240	2 hours 58 min	35 €
	Bari	450	5 hours	64 €
	Brindisi	560	6 hours 10 min	74 €
<b>Catania</b>	Palermo	208	2 hours 24 min	19 €
	Trapani	314	3 hours 30 min	29 €
<b>Olbia</b>	Alghero	137	1 hour 42 min	14 €

	Cagliari	274	2 hours 53 min	26 €
<b>Bastia</b>	Ajaccio	148	2 hours 45 min	15 €
	Figari	163	3 hours	16 €
<b>Marseille</b>	Nice	200	2 hours 16 min	35 €
	Montpellier	170	2 hours 5 min	25 €

**Exhibit 19: Insurance prices and policies, 2017**

Features	Basic Insurance	Extended Insurance	Premium Insurance
Excess (maximum amount to be paid in case of vehicle damage)	1999 €	749 €	399 €
Unlimited Kms			
Road assistance			
Windows insurance			
Tire insurance			
Nr. of drivers	1	2	3
	Free	15.00€/day	20.00€/day

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **1. Small business growth and International Expansion**

Churchill and Lewis (1983), while supporting the perspective of business life cycle, see growth as natural evolution of a company. On the other hand, other scholars approach small company growth as a strategic choice made by its owner (Stanworth and Curran, 1976; Sexton and Bowman-Upton, 1991). This strategic choice may have different reasons such as economies of scale, surpassing small business limitations, more efficient usage of resources or the will to generate revenues (McKenna and Oritt, 1981; Sexton and Kasarda, 1992). In small businesses, it also happens that owners choose to expand due to personal and emotional reasons (McKenna and Oritt, 1981).

Brush et al. (1992) noted that a group of institutional, industry and organizational factors drive start-up firms to engage in internationalization.

Growth is a decisive factor for start-up firms and geographic expansion is an "alternative strategy for start-up firms to seek growth" (Chung et al., 2005). Even though geographic expansion is an option comparing to other types of growth strategy - like diversifying products, acquisition or franchising - it normally requires "launching a new operation in an unfamiliar location". (Chung et al., 2005)

Expanding geographically presents unique challenges when comparing to other forms of company growth. In addition to the demanding task of developing a new operation in a different location, there is the difficulty of "putting a new management team into place in each new location" (Greening et al., 1996). This fact does not happen when expanding internally or through acquisition. In the case of franchising, it is usually the franchisee's responsibility. Greening et al. (1996) took into consideration the related requirement when geographically expanding that is to find the "optimal balance between autonomy and control while the new management team is progressing through the start-up phase of the business in the expansion location". This is more demanding to small firms, given that they might not have the resources to simplify tasks like training and management supervision.

## **2. The Self-Drive Tourism Market**

Prideaux et al. (2001) defined drive tourism as "tourism that centres on travelling from an origin point to a destination by car that is either privately owned or rented, and engaging in tourism-related activities during the journey". Olsen (2002) developed the concept by adding time conditions, stating that drive tourism is the act of "travelling away from home for at least one night, on holidays or visiting friends and relatives, in their own rented or borrowed vehicle as the primary mode of transport."

Shih (2005) stated that drive tourism could also be understood in the way "in which it incorporates several destinations rather than just one."

Lue, Crompton, and Stewart (1996) enumerated four reasons for multi-destination trips:

- First, trips with individuals with different interests that, for that reason, want to experience more than one activity during the entire trip;
- Second, the fact that there are different people deciding the trip plans;
- Third, the choice of multiple destinations reduces the disappointment individuals might have with one of the facilities;
- Fourth, "it is cost and time effective".

Hardy (2003) enunciated different factors for people to choose to drive on holidays. On one hand, there is the sense of "freedom and independence", and the construction of a self-image of a "traveller" rather than a "tourist". Other reasons point to the drive tourism infrastructure and the visit to iconic routes.

Researches on drive tourism show that "the drive market is large but not homogeneous" (Shih, 2005). Hardy (2003) condensed three different ways to segment the drive market:

1. Lifestyle
2. Behaviour - Olsen (2002) divides three segments according to behaviour:
  - a. Touring - those who do not have a clear route and stop whenever and wherever they want;
  - b. A to B with stops - those who stop for short periods of time;
  - c. A to B - those who drive directly to the destination without any stops.
3. Length of the trip - Tourism Queensland (2001) segmented on length of trip in four groups:

- a. Short break - one or three nights
- b. Short tour - four to seven nights
- c. Big tour - eight to 21 nights
- d. Grand tour - more than 22 nights

Olsen (2002) considered segmenting the market and analysing it based on these groups as a beginning to the recognition of the potential of exploring drive tourism.

Prideaux et al. (2003) pointed to the fact that there is indication that self-drive tourism is more common in locations where there are diverse options of accommodation as well as in longer vacation sites. Self-drive tourism may be hard to explore analytically because there is the need to distinguish between "self-driving touring routes" and "consumer-selected itineraries" (Prideaux et al., 2003).

### **3. Fleet Management**

During the 1990s, the improvement of economic conditions raised the demand for automobiles, which led manufacturers to increase the price for rental companies. The conditions in the market as well as inefficient management made by companies led to a crisis in the industry. In order to face this crisis, car rental companies started to "apply revenue management in a service environment with high equipment and labour costs". (Pachon et al., 2006)

Car rental companies recognize the complexity of fleet management and planning function (Sherali and Tuncbilek, 1997).

Scholars define revenue management as the practice of using both booking policies and data information systems in order to increase revenues by matching capacity with demand (Belobaba, 1987; Weatherford and Bodily, 1992; Gallego and Van Ryzin, 1997).

Pachon et al. (2006) summarized car rental companies' process to maximize yield by matching capacity in fleet management into three decision-making phases:

1. Dividing the different car rental locations into pools. The locations within one pool will share a fleet with a specific number of vehicles - "the clustering of locations into pools improves fleet utilization since shortages in one location can be filled with

another location's slack." (Pachon et al., 2006)

2. Deciding which types and which quantities of vehicles will be acquired or returned to the car manufacturer and the distribution of these vehicles among pools in a long-term basis. This phase also includes decisions related to inter-pool movements that come from seasonality or events that originate high demand.
3. Daily tactical operations, which involve the distribution of the fleet among the different locations in each pool. The fact that different locations may have high demand on different times of the week, managing fleet movement wisely leads to a more efficient usage of vehicles and increased revenues for the pool (Lev et al., 1997).

### **The tactical fleet planning**

Pachon et al. (2006) considered daily vehicle planning as a decisive dimension for car rental businesses. Planners need to address different concerns: guaranteeing that vehicles are adequately available to match demand and, at the same time, assuring that each car in the fleet has a high degree of usage. Pool managers have to pay attention to forecasts and make decisions to match demand (like offering discounts) as well as control the daily inventory of vehicles. Each field car rental has its particular business patterns and issues. "Proper planning and execution of vehicle deployment can have a very significant impact on corporate success." (Pachon et al., 2003)

### **4. E-Business**

Timmers (1998) defined E-business as "an architecture for the product, service and information flows, including the various business actors and their roles; a description of the potential benefits for the various business actors; and a description of the sources of revenues".

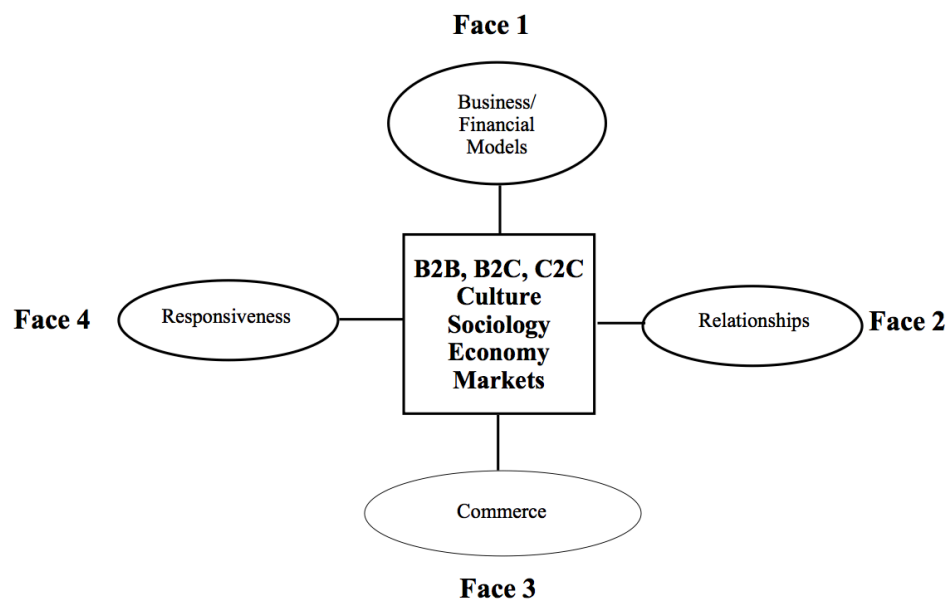
Rust and Kannan (2002) defined e-service as "the provision of service over electronic networks such as the internet" which holds "the service product, service environment, and service delivery that comprise any business model, whether it belongs to a goods manufacturer or a pure service provider".

Anderson and Srinivasan (2003) defined e-loyalty as "the customer's favorable attitude toward an electronic business, resulting in repeat purchasing behavior".

Scholars have defended that loyalty might be of special importance in e-commerce, given that customers do not deal directly with the company or with its staff. (Papadopoulou et al., 2001; Urban et al., 2000)

Since the beginning of the century, E-business has been seen as something mandatory to be pursued rather than a return on investment decision. This is due to the fact that dimensions like customer communication or new sales channel appear as the focus of decision. (Damanpour and Damanpour, 2001)

There are four faces initially developed by the Gartner Advisory Group in 1999 (Damanpour and Damanpour, 2001). Those are based on the opportunities and risk of a company:



1. Face 1 - The Business/Financial Models Perspective - it focuses on financial considerations, such as cost reduction and efficiency.
2. Face 2 - The Relationship Perspective - it is centred on interactions with customers, suppliers and business.
3. Face 3 - The Commerce Perspective - it deals with buying and selling in the most effective way.
4. Face 4 - The Responsiveness Perspective - it is about giving the fastest response to a business request.

Intel Corporation considered 6 main benefits of moving to E-Business (Damanpour and Damanpour, 2001):

1. Better Management Information
2. Better Integration of Suppliers and Vendors
3. Better Channel Partnership
4. Lower Transaction Costs
5. Better Market Understanding
6. Expanded Geographical Coverage

Damanpour and Damanpour (2001) considered that Expanded Geographical Coverage "is especially beneficial to small businesses to extend their reach far beyond traditional boundaries." (Damanpour and Damanpour, 2001)

Berst (2000) enumerated three business areas that mostly benefit from e-commerce: automobiles, online lending, and travel.

## **5. Relationship between Customer Satisfaction and Productivity**

Commonly, both Customer Satisfaction and Productivity appear as main factors that companies take into account in their strategic and tactical efforts. For managers, to excel at both would be a top priority. However, they may not always be compatible (Anderson et al., 1997).

According to Anderson et al. (1997), there may be a trade-off between "quantity" and "quality" which firms must keep in mind and manage carefully, especially if customers' needs demand service customization by personnel.

### **Customer Satisfaction**

Customer Satisfaction is the perception of a received benefit where the benefit is equal to the perceived service quality compared to price. (Hallowell, 1996)

By analysing the relationship between customer satisfaction and economic performance, there are reasons to assume that higher quality sustains increased returns to a company (Anderson et al., 1994)

Increased customer satisfaction leads to higher customer loyalty (Anderson and Sullivan, 2003). By increasing loyalty, future revenues are more assured (Rust et al., 1994). Satisfied customers might generate word-of-mouth and allow savings on communication (Anderson et al., 1994). Also, customer satisfaction helps to reduce costs with defective goods and complaints (Garvin, 1988).

## **Productivity**

A firm's productivity, in goods and services, is assumed to be the efficiency with which a company is able to transform inputs into outputs. (Anderson et al., 1997)

## **Relationship between Customer Satisfaction and Productivity**

The relationship between Customer Satisfaction and Productivity generates disagreement (Huff et al., 1996, Anderson et al., 1997):

- The general thought in operations management is that this relationship is positive. By achieving increased levels of customer satisfaction, a firm is able to lower costs with complaints, return management, warranties and, consequently, improve productivity (Juran, 1988).
- In economics, the relationship between customer satisfaction and productivity is seen as being negative. Pursuing customer satisfaction generates extra costs and a reduction in productivity. As customer satisfaction is approached as a function of product attributes - which can be the quality of raw material for manufacturing or personnel effort for services -, the improvement of those attributes requires increased operational costs (Lancaster, 1979).

## **Customization vs. Standardization**

Juran (1988) defined quality as a two-fold dimension:

1. Quality that meets the customers' needs - it refers to the characteristics of a product. Anderson et al. (1997) refers to this type of quality as customization quality.
2. Quality as freedom from deficiencies, which is related to the degree to which the product is reliable. Anderson et al. (1997) denoted this type of quality as standardization quality.

Anderson et al. (1997) defended that when customer satisfaction is more dependent on standardization, it is more likely to be compatible with productivity. However, when

customization is what determines customer satisfaction the most, it will require extra effort in operations and, therefore, will have negative impact on productivity.

## **6. Employee and Customer Satisfaction in the Service Industry**

### **Customer-oriented service employees and Customer Satisfaction**

Schneider and Chung (1994) defended that the most appropriate criterion to evaluate performance in the service industry is Customer Satisfaction. "The customer orientation of service personnel is often regarded as a main determinant of service firms' success." (Hennig-Thurau 2004)

According to some scholars, the judgment of a service made by customers is, a lot of times, based on the behavior and perception that clients have of employees. Therefore, they defend that the level of customer-orientation from employees affects a company's performance (Bitner et al., 1990; Bowen and Schneider, 1985; Sergeant and Frenkel, 2000).

Brown et al. (2002) defined Customer-oriented Service Employees (COSE) as an "individual's tendency or predisposition to meet customer needs in an on-the-job context".

Hennig-Thurau (2004) defined COSE as "the extent to which the employee's behavior in personal interactions with customers meets those customer needs" and considered that four dimensions need to exist for the employee to behave in a customer-oriented way:

1. Technical skills - know-how in order to address customer's needs
2. Social skills - the employee's ability to understand the customer's point of view
3. Motivation to serve customers - "Motivation is essential for the employee's transformation of social and technical skills into customer-oriented behavior." (Hennig-Thurau 2004)
4. The employee's perception of his or her own authority to make decisions on "issues that concern customers' interests and needs." (Hennig-Thurau 2004)

### **Service Environment and Employee Performance**

According to Schneider et al. (1992), service provided from employees is more likely to be excellent if the organization maintains a good climate and applies policies that ease service delivery.

Schneider and Bowen (1995) defined climate of an organization as being the dimensions employees perceive as being the most important in that same organization. This perception is built on their job experience and what they perceive as being management's expectations. According to the same scholars, hiring employees with the will to deliver excellent service, training them in diverse aspects, and recognizing them when they perform excellent service would enhance service climate.

### **Employee Satisfaction and Customer Satisfaction**

According to Lam et al. (2001), due to the character of the service industry, employee level of satisfaction is a crucial dimension. Spinelli and Canavos (2000) suggested that employees are an important factor when measuring customer satisfaction.

Several scholars agree that the relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction is positive (Bernhardt et al., 2000; Tornow and Wiley, 1991; Wangenheim et al., 2007).

Matzler and Renzl (2007) see employee satisfaction and retention as one of the most decisive factors in the industry of hospitality and tourism. Bitner et al. (1990) defended that due to the dimensions of heterogeneity and inseparability of hospitality and service products, the involvement and interaction of employees plays a significant role when it comes to quality perceptions from the customers.

### **Employee Satisfaction, Customer Satisfaction and Financial Performance**

According to the concept of "the service profit-chain" (Heskett et al., 1994, 1997), a superior internal working environment leads to more satisfied employees who are more able to provide customers with an excellent service experience. This excellent service experience will be acknowledged by customers and, in the long-term, will present loyal behaviors. Customer loyalty will generate increased profitability and market share for the company, leading to greater financial performance.

On the contrary, some scholars question if employee and customer satisfaction relate to companies' performance (Bernhardt et al., 2000; Zeithaml et al., 1990). Gursoy and Swanger (2007), for example, defended that in sectors like hospitality and tourism, service and customer satisfaction is perceived as an unquestionable dimension. Companies in this sector cannot survive without satisfied customers, while satisfied customers are no guarantee of

these companies survival. So, these companies must make the effort to excel competitors in the experiences they supply - both to employees and customers. Additionally, some dimensions might be masking the relationship between customer satisfaction and economical performance: the fact that the company might be spending a lot of money investing in customer satisfaction, may result in increased customer satisfaction while having lower profits. On the same line of thought, a company might cut costs in employee training, for example, and, for that reason, seem more profitable in a specific period, while customer satisfaction is decreasing.

## **IV. TEACHING NOTE**

### **1. LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

The main purpose of the Indie Campers' case study is to help students to develop knowledge on the subjects of expansion, operations and companies' value proposition and competitive advantage. The case relies on a van rental start-up that, as expands, starts struggling on its operational activity.

The main learning objective of the case study is to understand how the strategic substance, which in the case of Indie Campers is based on service with flexible conditions and a free image, can enter in conflict with the process and affect its efficiency and implementation.

After analyzing the Indie Campers' case study, students should be able to:

- Understand the importance of strategic goals and positioning with a clear value proposition;
- Assess the specific operational challenges of vehicle rental companies;
- Understand the reasons for companies to expand, especially geographically;
- Explore the trade-off that sometimes needs to exist between scale and efficiency and the reasons for that;
- Understand the effect of employee satisfaction within a company;
- Perceive the effect of customer satisfaction for the development of a company's strategy;

### **2. ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS**

- A. Describe the strategy followed by Indie Campers.
- B. What are the main difficulties the company is facing?
- C. What recommendations would you make to the company?

### **3. CLASS PLAN**

- 1) Analyze the Structure of the camper van Rental Industry.
- 2) Analyze Indie Campers Strategy.
- 3) What were the main drivers for the company's growth?
- 4) What are the characteristics of the Customers of Indie Campers? What do they value?

- 5) What are the main problems Indie Campers has to address?
- 6) What are the opportunities and disadvantages of Indie Campers activity being online?
- 7) How should Indie Campers keep expanding?
- 8) What would you recommend for Indie Campers?

#### **4. ANALYSIS**

##### **1) Analyze the Structure of the camper van rental Industry**

It may be important to notice that before the beginning of Indie Campers' high growth in 2016, the camper van rental industry in Europe had been marked by a considerable number of small players that acted mainly locally. An analysis of the industry should take into account that the company has changed the industry in some critical dimensions:

##### **Underlying forces in the industry - Porter's 5 Forces:**

###### **I. Threat of new entrants - MEDIUM**

By the time Indie Campers entered the market, it was not difficult to do so - the market was characterized by a lot of small businesses with a low growth rate; it took a relatively low investment to match competition, since companies did not have a lot of depots and vehicles and did not enjoy economies of scale; in order to match the rivals' performance, it would not be necessary to have a specialized knowledge, since the scale was not very high and the service conditions were not difficult to match.

In October 2017, when the case occurs, the story is different and it may be considered that the Threat of New Entrants is medium. The market includes a big player - Indie Campers - and several other small van rental companies. Indie Campers introduced new barriers for entering the market: economies of scale; service conditions like depots all around Europe, pickup at the airport and easy schedules; specialist knowledge to manage a large operation. However, a new company does not face substantial legal barriers and may start a business by positioning differently and attracting other customer segments - like retired people who want to explore natural landscapes, for example. Additionally, other vehicle rental companies may use their structure to start penetrating the market by diversifying their services.

###### **II. Bargaining Power of Suppliers - MEDIUM - to analyze the suppliers' power, three different groups of suppliers are selected:**

- a. Van producers - MEDIUM - The automotive industry is a competitive one, defined by big players in the market. Camper van rental companies may have a considerable number of suppliers to choose from. As vehicle manufacturers form an oligopoly, they will want to make the deal and sell the vans. However, most of the times, sales conditions are not easily negotiated. It will depend on the size of the client they are dealing with.
- b. Van transformation services - HIGH - Specialized services in this area are somewhat unique and the ones that exist have small works sporadically. For a client to order the transformation of a considerable number of vehicles, it will demand extra effort from the part of these companies - they will have to hire extra employees and work extra hours to do the job and will not have the capacity to accept other orders. So, clients of these companies will have to offer very good conditions for the work to be worth it for the supplier.
- c. Other suppliers - LOW - In the van rental industry, examples of other suppliers are: mechanics and plumbers; drycleaners; furnishing companies. These suppliers are usually small companies competing against a high number of other small companies in the market. Their service is not difficult to find and the ability to substitute is high. Also, the cost of changing supplier is low. So, the supplier power of other suppliers is considered to be low.

In conclusion, considering the different factors mentioned above, we can consider the overall Bargaining Power of Suppliers as medium.

### **III. Buyer Power - MEDIUM**

The camper van rental Industry is still small in most countries and it may be easily substituted by other services. Also, the vehicle rental industry is one in which companies constantly struggle to match supply and demand and have to make an effort to attract clients. However, clients in the camper van rental industry tend to be a small number of people travelling, not large groups of clients. Thus, they normally do not have a strong negotiation capacity. So, Buyer Power is considered to be medium.

### **IV. Threat of Substitution - HIGH**

There are a lot of substitutes to the camper van rental industry. The camper van rental industry is only a part of self-drive tourism. Thus, clients who want to enjoy a self-drive tourism experience may do it in other ways - with a rented or owned motorhome, car, motorcycle, etc.

On another level, air travel and home rental (with services like airbnb) industries have become less expensive and, consequently, an easy substitute for customers who want an affordable way of spending the holidays.

Moreover, choosing one of these substitutes relative to Indie Campers does not represent any switching costs for consumers.

## **V. Rivalry among competitors - LOW**

The camper van rental industry is formed by a high number of small firms and a big one - Indie Campers. Even though the entrance of the company might act like a motivator for other companies to start matching performance, the truth is that other companies act in specific locations and attract certain types of customers relating to a theme - like surfing or mountain tracking. So, companies compete and differentiate from one another by stressing what makes them unique - locations and market segment by theme (see **Exhibit 10**). Indie Campers differentiates by its service conditions on flexibility and on a big range of location choices.

Indie Campers entered the camper van rental industry at an ideal time, in which long and spontaneous travelling was growing as a form of tourism and there were not big camper van rental companies in the market. Additionally, this trend still stands in 2017, so the company continuous growing makes sense, due to the industry attractiveness. However, it is especially attractive for Indie Campers, not for new ventures, because it already has its operation settled, the know-how and the dimension that make it difficult for others to match its performance. Indie Campers' main potential competitors may be vehicle rental companies, since they already have some success factors like the structure to operate the business (depots, know-how and online platforms, etc.). However, it would be necessary to make it gradually, not progressively, in order to complicate Indie Camper's response and start gaining market share. The fact that Indie Campers continues expanding is important to start building an image in countries where these companies could have an advantage.

All in all, camper van rental industry has been, from the start, an attractive one for Indie Campers and it will continue to be. Yet, the company is being wise in developing the broadest geographical market possible in order to avoid allowing an advantage - the greatest number of locations - for a vehicle rental company that decides to penetrate the sector.

## 2) Analyze Indie Campers' Strategy

Indie Campers' core focus has been, since the beginning, to reinvent the concept of the traditional motorhome and add a dimension of adventure to its travelers' journeys.

In 2013, in Europe, the camper van rental industry was not a profitable one. The company entered a market composed by small companies with a small market share. This could work either as a threat or an opportunity - it could have been only because there was not a market for the industry or because no company had yet responded to the clients' needs.

As a long-term goal, Indie Campers needed to generate a strong network of clients. In order to complete this goal, the company had to create value relative to competitors and, at the same time, attract new customers. For these two to happen, Indie Campers opted for a benefit advantage while performing affordable prices. In addition to this, the company had to always pay attention to costs.

In order to illustrate the Strategy of Indie Campers, one can opt by describing its **Resources and Capabilities** that lead to a course of **Activities** to generate the desired **Value Proposition**.

### **Resources and Capabilities:**

For the beginning of Indie Campers' activity, the Tourism Industry in Portugal was growing and the country was well known abroad for its beautiful seashore during the summer. It was a valuable resource for the implementation of Indie Campers. Another resource for the company beginning and development was the Internet: it revolutionized the physical boundaries of business and the company was able generate increased customer reach. Furthermore, the nature of the business did not demand a beginning with a high investment: they could start with a small fleet and manage relationships online.

### **Activities:**

- **Marketing and Communication:** Indie Campers developed all its communication activities online - advertising, booking and customer communication. It allowed the company to attract customers from all around the world. Working with Google for advertising online, Indie Campers could target specific groups. The Company wanted to

provide a young and free image, so its vans' design was appealing, with a lot of colors and trendy decoration. (see **Exhibit 5**).

- **Operations:** Indie Campers bought and owned its own vehicles. Vehicles were distributed around their depots, considering demand needs. Most of depots served more than one location. Each depot had a team of 2 to 6 people who were responsible for welcoming customers; delivering and receiving vans (in the depot or in a remote location); making updates in the booking system; managing inventories and external suppliers.
- **Customer Relationship Management:** It was the core of Indie Campers strategy. The company offered flexible service conditions - pick up of customers at the airport; availability of extra services; different locations in several countries; flexible schedules for pick-up and drop-off - at an affordable price, relative to competition. Also, when hiring, Indie Campers paid special attention to the level of customer orientation from employees, especially those employees who would have direct contact with clients.
- **Expansion:** In terms of geographic expansion, the company worked with Google and crossed data on motorhome searches and locations. Besides meaning revenue creation, expanding geographically represented a new option for customers to choose from. Using remote locations allowed the company to be more present online and to offer more location options. However, these locations were, most of all, an opportunity to test new markets and expand in a more controlled way, with a lower risk level.

### **Firm Value Proposition:**

Considering the dimensions mentioned above, the company developed its activity with the value proposition of providing experiences of fun and freedom, with flexible service conditions at relatively affordable prices.

"Driven by a deep passion for traveling and bold living, our keen desire is to restore authenticity and add a dimension of adventure to our travellers' journeys. We are committed to delivering an outstanding customer service, and a memorable experience."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Indie Campers website - Mission and Drive

### 3) What were the main drivers for the company's growth?

Indie Campers' growth was mainly due to its customer-oriented service. Indie Campers has always developed its activity aiming to fulfill all its clients needs. In the beginning, it meant coping with clients' personalized wants - like in the story we can read on the case where André talks about a client who wanted a shovel to do some gardening. By the time Indie Campers had reached a considerable growth, the company would not engage anymore in this type of customized service but it responded to customers' wants by having flexible conditions. It happened with Indie Campers' pick-up and drop-off policies (in terms of schedules and the possibility to mix locations), picking customers up at the airport or another central location (like a railway station) and extra services available by paying a certain amount (see **Exhibit 6**). The customer-orientation of staff was also an important dimension to generate customer satisfaction, as we can see from customer reviews (**Exhibit 12**). By personalizing its service conditions and customer treatment, the company generated customer satisfaction, which lead to customer loyalty and word-of-mouth.

Strategically, remote locations were an important factor when it comes to expanding geographically in a controlled way (see **Exhibit 8**). Even though presenting their limitations (when it comes to distance and time travelling to deliver a van), these locations allowed for overcoming entry barriers as well as exit barriers in foreign markets - as it happened with the first location in Spain. If it was not for this format, Indie Campers might have thought twice before starting expanding and could have delayed the whole process. Another benefit of remote locations is that these tackle the greatest difficulty of new ventures when geographically expanding as presented in the Literature Review section - "launching a new operation in an unfamiliar location" (Chung et al., 2005). This model of stretching the operations was a main factor in the success of the geographical expansion. And expanding to foreign markets was a major driver for the company's growth.

Another dimension that conducted to the fast growth of Indie Campers was the fact that the company developed most of its activity online. According to the information in the previous Literature Review, expanded geographical coverage appears as one of e-business and e-services main advantages. This helped the company to attract both local and foreign customers. Additionally, online activity works hand-in-hand with excellent customer service - a good review and rating online can go a long way when it comes to build a community of

customers. Reviews present not only good impressions on the company but advise new travellers as well (see **Exhibit 12**).

It is also important to take into consideration that, in the case of Indie Campers, geographical expansion works both as an opportunity to increase revenues because of wider coverage (as it happens with any other business), but also as an additional strength in its service conditions. In consonance with what is said about self-drive tourism in the Literature Review, in a business where customers appreciate multi-destination travelling and the self-image of a "traveller" rather than a "tourist", adding more and more locations is always better. So, it is natural that the company's growth turns out to be exponential - the more it grows the more attractive it will be.

#### **4) What are the characteristics of the customers of Indie Campers? What do they value?**

The clients of Indie Campers are mostly young people who want to engage in adventurous trips. While travelling alone or in small groups, the company's customers are keen to new experiences and new people to meet.

According to the Literature Review, there are several reasons for self-drive tourism: multi-destination trips; sense of freedom and independence; visit to iconic routes; access to sites that otherwise would not be accessible. This given, customers who choose to spend their holidays travelling pay special attention and value to being independent and to the opportunity of seeing what otherwise they would not see. They want to feel more like a "traveller" rather than a "tourist".

Considering these characteristics, Indie Camper's staff familiarity and friendly treatment account as important factors. Also, the employees' advice on which places to visit gains special importance: by valuing this sense of freedom and independence, customers will relate their good experiences in these "local secrets" to the company, and increase their satisfaction.

It is also important to note that, while appreciating adventurous experiences, the company's customers may be price sensitive - they are not looking for a premium product, on the contrary, a little discomfort and mystery may already be part of their expectations before the trip. This fact may be also the reason why most of them do not activate insurance packages, leading to the company's high percentage of customers having to pay for damages.

## **5) What are the main problems Indie Campers has to address?**

As shown in the previous point of the Class Plan, Indie Campers has sustained its growth on a customer-oriented service. The company's benefit advantage is expressed in the flexibility of service conditions. In fact, this highly contributed to the success of the company. However, in just one year, the number of vans went from 96 to 413 (**Exhibit 3**), as the number of locations increased from 14 to 62 (**Exhibit 2**). It began to be difficult to provide the services that differentiated the company while expanding so quickly.

Indie Campers reached a dimension that may no longer be compatible with the type of service conditions and productivity it once had.

The analysis of operational problems may be done in class by dividing through the following topics:

### **Absence of schedules**

The fact that Indie Campers wants to give a sense of freedom to its customers, from the beginning to the end of their trips, led to the decision not to have a fixed schedule to pick-up or deliver the vans. Customers pay a daily price and may deliver the vehicle at what time they want (paying only a fee after 6 pm). This makes most of customers to deliver vans in the afternoon and to pick them up in the morning. It becomes an issue especially in periods of increased demand. Employees may have to work long hours at night because the morning after there are vans to deliver and the previous customers have only delivered them in the end of the afternoon. This measure is clearly aligned with the company's image and mission and drive. However, it makes employees much more tired. It is highly related to the topic in the Literature Review about the compatibility between Customer Satisfaction and Productivity: when customization is what determines customer satisfaction the most, it will require extra effort in operations and, therefore, will have negative impact on productivity (Anderson et al. 1997).

### **Mixed check-in/check-out**

This service advantage of Indie Campers addresses many self-drive customers characteristics (according to the Literature Review): willingness to perform multi-destination tourism and feel more like a "traveller" rather than a "tourist", stopping wherever they want. It is the greatest differentiator relative to competition in Europe, since other camper van rental

companies do not have the scale to provide it. However, as vans work as mobile inventory, it requires a lot of van relocations throughout the year.

It is a common problem in the vehicle rental sector, as stated in the Literature Review. These companies will have to be constantly making the effort of matching supply and demand, which is fluctuating regionally.

### **Remote Locations**

Remote locations are all the locations the company has available without having a depot there. As developed in the analysis of question 3 of the Class Plan, these presented great advantages while accelerating growth and provided an opportunity to explore new markets. However, to deliver a van in a remote location, a member of staff has to drive there in the van and return by public transports. It requires a member of staff to be away practically for the whole day and it is extremely tiring for him or her and the other members of the team. Additionally, these locations require extra costs for Indie Campers.

It is important to understand that these first 3 topics represent both advantages and disadvantages. What externally (for customers) constitutes a big advantage requires a cost for the company. Indie Campers is struggling to find the optimal point between service conditions to provide and the costs that these conditions represent.

### **Employee (dis)Satisfaction**

Human Resources Management is a core issue for any business, especially in the service industry. As shown previously in the Literature Review, the better the climate kept by the organization to ease service delivery, the more likely it is that employees provide an excellent service. In the case of Indie Campers, as people from operations are the only ones that customers see throughout the whole process, this issue gains greater dimension.

Employees were tired but the management did not think that it was necessary to hire more employees - all vans were being delivered as they were supposed to be. However, this allows for customers to wait or feel distress or tiredness from employees. This constitutes misalignment with the strategy the company has been pursuing so far - a customer-oriented strategy.

## **6) What are the opportunities and disadvantages of Indie Campers activity being online?**

Nowadays, pursuing e-business is seen as something mandatory for companies, either they have physical stores and channels or not. So, conducting online activity will always be a benefit for any company, especially in terms of customer communication and engagement.

As a start-up, Indie Campers has a lot to benefit from developing its activity online, especially: having a better understanding of the market; better management information and, above all, expanded geographical coverage. Damanpour and Damanpour (2001) considered the latter to be particularly beneficial for small businesses.

Before the Internet, it would have been really difficult for a company like Indie Campers to develop so fast. Even though it is spread throughout different locations, information is much more available for the management and for the employees than it would have been some decades ago. Furthermore, advertising and after-sales service can be targeted and the company can keep reminding customers of the good experience they once had or can have with Indie Campers.

With the proliferation of social network and online reviews, a good experience with a company will more easily generate new sales. An online rate of 4.8/5 is a great advantage for Indie Campers.

Indie Campers also benefits from online activity because of the sector in which it operates. According to the information in the Literature Review, both online lending and tourism are sectors that especially benefit from Internet usage. As tourism accounts, most of times, for an experience abroad, it is natural that customers will use online platforms to do their research and make their reservations, since they do not have physical access to the place they will visit. Customers are usually searching for the best deal and do it online to compare more easily. Additionally, the Internet is a great tool to simplify all the booking systems.

On the downside, with the fast environment of the Internet, loyalty might be an issue. With Indie Campers, customers are not dealing with the company and its staff personally, until the moment they arrive to the depot. Thus, the moment of the pick-up gains increased importance and must go really well. Employees must pay attention not to show tiredness or being less friendly. As stated in the Literature Review, trust is something difficult to develop online, so

great part of the perception of the customer about Indie Campers will be built in that specific moment.

## **7) How should Indie Campers keep expanding?**

Even though it represents a challenge for start-ups, because it requires a new whole operation in an unfamiliar place, for Indie Campers, international expansion works both as a form of expanding the business and a new benefit for customers - who have another available location and more km's to travel.

Until now, Indie Campers has been following a strategy that allows tackling the difficulties for the new operations by using remote locations as a form to enter the market with lower risks. It diminishes the number of entry barriers and, mainly, exit barriers (since there is no need to remove a whole fleet and a depot from a place, if it does not work out as expected).

The problem is that this model was developed according to the scenario in 2015, when Indie Campers had three remote locations in Spain (which were not very popular) and three depots in Portugal (see **Exhibits 8 and 14**). Since then, the company added 14 depots and 42 remote locations. The number of clients is much higher and depots start not to be responsive as the company wishes. On the other hand, not expanding is risky. The company is starting to be trendy and to build a strong brand.

So, Indie Campers needs to focus on expanding while stabilizing its operation at the same time.

In 2017, 45 out of 62 locations are remote locations. As previously stated, these locations were extremely important in order to allow the company to grow so quickly and an important step to test the market and expand more confidently. However, they are so many that they have gained a primary role in the company's activity. In my opinion, they are important as a middle stage in the expansion strategy rather than the main way of handling operations. Average revenues are 1140 euros and average operational costs are 120 euros per rental - 10% of total value. This means that it is not probable that even a rental in the farthest and most expensive of remote locations will have negative direct results, but it may have two days of the rental with zero margins for Indie Campers (see **Exhibit 18**). Yet, given the dimension remote locations acquired and assuming they continue this way, they developed to be more of a problem than an opportunity. What this means is that these locations are beneficial only if

they account for an intermediate stage between the beginning of penetrating a new market and the mature settlement in that new market.

So, Indie Campers should transform remote locations with high demand into depots, like Ajaccio, Biarritz, Brussels, Cagliari, Florence, Geneva, Napoli, Nice, Santiago, Seville, Toulouse and Venice (see **Exhibit 14**). Some of these locations are so close from each other that they allow defining a depot halfway from them and preferably on the way to airports as well. Factors like rent and wage prices and distance to present depot should be taken into account - locations that are so close to the present depot, like Paris airports and Rome Ciampino, should stay as they are and only start having a depot if they grow a lot to compensate for travel costs.

A considerable number of remote locations have very low demand - like Bergerac, Figari Sud, Genova, La Rochelle, Pau, San Sebastian, Treviso. These locations had less than 20 reservations and altogether account for less than 2% of total revenues during high season (see **Exhibit 14**). This means that the company is using resources on markets that are not responding with growth. Taking this into account, there are two options: either to group them if they are relatively close and in areas with potential - like the case of Bari and Brindisi - or to discontinue the activity in these locations. Leaving locations with less potential allows the company and its employees to focus on the locations that economically matter.

Indie Campers should keep expanding geographically, and start implementing the operation in the new planned locations for 2018 (see **Exhibit 16**). As the company starts operating in these new countries, the need to use remote locations may appear, once again, especially in new markets. It should be done in an integrated and compatible way with long-term goals. That is, the use of remote locations should be seen only as a middle term for the introduction of a new depot location.

Considering the new locations planned for 2018, Indie Campers has to pay attention to the control it will be able to have over them. Culturally, these countries are different from the ones the company has operated on, so far. A middle manager between André, the COO, and country managers, for a group of 2 or 3 countries may be beneficial.

Another option would be to engage in a Franchise arrangement. However, it does not appear as a good option for Indie Campers because it may not have the dimension and status required to have high bargaining power for a franchise agreement as the company wishes. Additionally, the company may not have the control it needs to build a brand in the way it

wants. Factors like the choice of employees and customer-treatment are important for the brand to be in full control in these first years of expansion. This option would also raise the issue of who would pay for the vehicles as well as the problem to manage the use among owned and franchised units.

### **8) What would you recommend for Indie Campers?**

Considering the pros and cons of tactical choices in specific customer service policies, the course of action that Indie Campers should take does not appear as something straightforward, as different approaches could be followed. Even so, my recommendations to the company would be:

- **Absence of schedules** - even if customers enjoy freedom and want to live the day without thinking about constraints, it appears that, for next summer, it will not be possible for Indie Campers to keep up with the same schedule conditions. My suggestion would be to, as a rule, change the drop-off schedule to a more intermediate hour that does not feel like morning - 2 pm - and allow pick-ups from noon onwards. It allows staff to have much more time to prepare the vans without making customers who arrive to the airport in the morning to wait a lot of hours. Management could also advise employees to, in days when demand is not high, tell customers that they could deliver the van later than 2 pm, until, for example, 5 pm. This could transmit a sense of trust between employee and customer and show that the company is flexible when it can be. It can make the client feel special.
- **Remote Locations** - Considering what was said in the previous number about this issue, my view is that the company should reduce drastically the number of remote locations. However, on a more tactical basis, if remote locations are needed, I would recommend, in order to ease the working environment, having one or two part-time employees (depending on demand) per depot, responsible only for remote locations. The difference to other employees is that these people would start their job already aware that they would pass most of the time on the road. As they are not employees who work on the depot on a daily basis, the other members of staff would not feel the effect when they were not present and would have a more stable environment while working. It has the downside of not always be possible to foresee when they will need to work. However, it would be possible to schedule on a weekly basis.

- **Mixed check-in/check-out-** In my opinion, allowing customers to pick-up vans in one location and leave it in another is one of Indie Campers' main advantages. Thus, in my view, it is unquestionable that the company should allow for it. Also, the inter-zone fee looks reasonable to me. The problem is that mobile inventory requires a lot of relocations (see **Exhibit 17**). This constitutes a challenge for any vehicle rental company, as seen in the Literature Review. In my opinion there are two factors that are complicating the task: the absence of pool segmentation (as illustrated by Pachon in the Literature Review) and the fact that there are 7 models available in every location (see **Exhibit 9**). In my opinion, Indie Campers could restrict certain pools to 4 models. This would reduce the probability of having to switch vans because a client wants a model in one specific location.
- **Employee satisfaction** - Depots have between 2 and 6 employees during the summer (see **Exhibit 13**) and some teams and location managers argue that it is not enough. First of all, there is the need to visit depots and understand the necessity of each one in terms of new employees. Additionally, as shown in the Literature Review, when managers give employees a sense of responsibility and autonomy, employee satisfaction generally increases. Additionally, training staff and recognizing their work when it is well done appears as something of most importance. This given, in resemblance to the suggestion offered on the issue of remote locations, my opinion would be to train and specialize each employee to a specific task. In practice, it would not be possible to have each employee performing just one task, but specialization would technically accelerate the process of operations and the responsibility for one area of the depot daily work would give a sense of belonging and the motivation employees may need.
- **Pick-up at the airport** - This policy causes breaks in the depot's daily activities. Having a pick-up at the airport for free is already a great service policy. In my view, Indie Campers has already reached the dimension to start, during high season, scheduling fixed shuttles to the airport. The company could settle for 4 shuttles a day. This way, they could pick up more than one customer/van at a time. Similarly to the measures I previously suggest in the "Absence of schedules" topic, it does seem reasonable that if one day has less movement, staff can customize the service and pick the customer at what time is best for the client. Once again, it gives the client a sense of importance.

Having already mentioned my views on strategic growth in the previous number, my assessment regarding the remaining dimensions of Indie Campers' strategy is the following:

Indie Campers should maintain the positioning it has developed so far. The company has already built its activity around a free and relaxed identity. Considering the proliferation of the culture of spontaneity in traveling behavior, related to shares in social networks, the company should continue to do so in order to have a consistent growth and to create value to customers.

In 2017, the company sets different prices for different areas: Portugal and Spain, remaining locations and islands (see **Exhibit 7**). In the continuing growth of the company, a more localized pricing could be developed, by understanding competition and supply in each market - countries like Germany have a more competitive motorhome industry, for example.

## V. CONCLUSION

While developing this dissertation, I was able to better understand the factors a company needs to take into account when developing its strategy and, especially, when deciding to expand geographically. Furthermore, I became aware of the complexity of managing a day-to-day activity in the vehicle rental industry and the need to have a fully integrated strategy.

It is clear that Indie Campers entered the market at an ideal time, when the kind of trip it provided started to be trendy among young people. However, its customer-oriented service was the main driver to its success. While speaking to the staff members, one cannot ignore their availability to provide the best service.

In order to continue growing in this market, and given that the company has developed its activity this way, differentiation is the best strategy. The company plans to continue to build on its free image and is aware that it needs to improve stability on its operation, using vehicle rental operational tools and increasing the number of its depots.

With the theoretical framework presented in the Literature Review, I was better able to understand the impact of factors like customer and employee satisfaction, logistics and the global network in companies' activity. With these tools, I was able to develop more coherently my strategic views for Indie Campers' improvement and performance.

To conclude, Indie Campers has already built its image consistently among consumers. Its strategy has been effective so far and, now that the company is reaching a large dimension - 9 countries -, it is time to invest in its internal consolidation as well, especially in human resources and operational infrastructure. If I had more time, I could have given more targeted recommendations, distinguishing existent and future markets and defining which could be more attractive. It would be interesting to understand the effects of positioning and pricing in the different markets in which the company operates.

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