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Thomas Consolino

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Impact of Tourism in Developing Nations

by

Thomas Consolino

Advisor: Dr. Amy Farmer

An Honors Thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in Finance and Accounting.

**Sam M. Walton College of Business
University of Arkansas
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Introduction

Dangriga, a place known as the “Culture Capital of Belize”, is the largest town in its region of Belize yet fails to receive the large amounts of tourist traffic that occur in the smaller Belizean towns. Dangriga is often only used by tourists as a transfer hub to get their final destination because of its location on the coast of central Belize, easy access to an airport, and availability of many charter boats. This absence of tourism in Dangriga could be a symptom of the local business owners not understanding how to use the internet as a marketing tool as well as cultural aspects of the town. If these business owners were to gain knowledge on marketing online to grow their online presences, there is a possibility of bettering the tourism industry in Dangriga.

Background

Belize is a country that is heavily dependent on its tourism industry. Pre-pandemic, Belize averaged around 1.7 million tourist visitors in 2018 and 2019 (Word Data, 2021). Additionally, the tourism industry accounts for roughly 40% of the Belize’s total employment and makes up around 15 percent of the country’s GDP (Chow, 2019). Furthermore, the Belizean tourism industry has lots of influence on other industries within the country and has been found to affect 41.3 percent of the total GDP (Neufeld, 2020). However, the amount of tourist traffic is not spread evenly throughout the country. Islands like San Pedro and Caye Caulker as well as the town of Palencia and the Cayo District simply seem to attract most of the tourists going on vacation in Belize. From my experience of working in Dangriga and visiting the very popular tourist towns, the difference in popularity has a lot to do with the amount of marketing to attract tourists, the infrastructure in place meant for tourism, and the commitment by the locals to being a tourist town.

If you were to search “Dangriga” on Google, you would be met by a few images of a town that seems a little worn down, a Wikipedia link about the town’s history, and a few links to tourist websites with unhelpful information. What does not come up on the Google search are links to the restaurants in the town that serve delicious cultural dishes, links to all the shoreside hotels, or decent pictures that would draw tourists to Dangriga. When doing Google searches of the popular tourist destinations, these things appear. Most of the businesses in those favored places have a website or social media pages where they show off the product they make/sell, inform the public about their special deals, or give out information that would make a tourist want to go to their business. The knowledge of using the internet and social media as marketing tools just isn’t very common in Dangriga.

Another factor that keeps Dangriga from being more successful in the tourism industry is that it’s not a town built for tourism. Instead, it is a genuine Belizean town with a very intertwined community of locals who have lived in Dangriga their entire life. If you were to go to San Pedro or Caye Caulker, the most popular tourist destinations in Belize, your experience would be way different than Dangriga. San Pedro and Caye Caulker are islands full of large resorts, tourist trap restaurants/shops, and a bunch of other amenities for purchase, such as golf carts, swimming pools, etc. Because it offers all of these things for tourist, it is in turn more crowded with large amounts of tourists. On the contrary, in Dangriga, all the restaurants are there because that’s where the locals eat. The shops and vendor stalls spread throughout town are there because that’s where locals buy their drinks, food, and produce. Everything in Dangriga has the purpose of serving the locals, not outsiders. Nonetheless, tourists are still more than welcomed to the town, and I would recommend going for the authentic Belizean experience. Dangriga just

isn't built to offer the touristy things that people look for in vacation spots and can be found in other places in Belize.

Another factor that has contributed to the slow development of tourism- and relates to the previous factor- is whether the residents even want more tourism in Dangriga. Of course, the people who own/work hotels, taxis, and charter boats want to grow the tourism industry because there would definitely be lots for them to gain economically. But after meeting many different people living Dangriga, it seems as though they really enjoy the current state of Dangriga. If you were to go down any of the three main streets in the town, there is an extremely low chance of spotting a single tourist. Instead, the streets are full of locals riding their bikes, buying groceries from stalls on the side of the road, or standing around talking to one another. I am unsure if Dangriga residents would be happier with a higher volume of tourists because it would completely change the face and functionality of Dangriga. With tourism growth, there is a possibility of locals believing that their town has become tainted by the large amounts of tourist traffic and seeing Dangriga lose its authenticity.

If the tourism industry in Dangriga were to grow, the money from the growth in tourism could help with issues resulting from town's poor economy. In Belize, there are high levels of malnourishment, unemployment, and food insecurity. The prevalence of child undernourishment and stunting are higher in Belize than any other country in Central America or the Caribbean. Most of these issues correlate with the fact that 40 percent of Belize's population live in poverty and 15 percent live in extreme poverty. (Stevenson, Reznar, Onye, Bendali Amor, Lopez, DeFour, 2021). With only weak, ineffective efforts being done by the Belizean government to improve the situation, these issues are still very apparent all over Belize and in Dangriga. However, if Dangriga could bring more tourists into their town, the money brought in would grow their economy, resulting in improvements to these economic issues. What's more, the people of Dangriga wouldn't necessarily be taking a risk or gamble. In many small countries and communities around the world, tourism has been a way for them to lower food insecurity and unemployment.

Literature Review

Research conducted over the tourism industry has found that growth in tourism generally has a more positive and greater impact on economic growth in small Latin American and Caribbean countries than in larger, more developed countries (Eugenio-Martin, Morales, Scarpa, 2004). Tourism has become one of the largest contributors to economic activity over the past several years, and the Caribbean is the region in the world where tourism's contributions to economic output exceeds that of any other (Cannonier, Burke, 2019). It has been discovered that a growth in tourism in Caribbean countries results in bettering a country's development as well as having positive effects on a country's money supply and quality of life. The past few years has provided many studies and literature showing a positive relationship between tourism and economic growth in less developed countries where tourism acts as a tool to create economic growth. In many small Caribbean countries like Belize, tourism has provided solutions to overcome insufficient market demand, increase competition through new entrants in the marketplace, and raise the standard of living, thus, allowing the small countries to overcome their size (Cannonier, Burke, 2019). In communities, like Dangriga, that are poor in material wealth but rich in culture, history, and heritage have used their unique characteristics as an income-generating comparative advantage (Gilpin, Honey, 2009). Tourism has also created many complex and varied supply chain networks that have increased the labor market, creating

jobs such as tour guides, cooks, truck drivers, hotel managers, and more. In addition, the economic growth has resulted in development of a variety of infrastructure that benefits the people living in these communities. The construction of health care centers, roads, and other multi-use buildings have had major positive impacts for the people living in underdeveloped areas that have seen a growth in tourism.

The factor that has allowed Belize to successfully develop its tourism industry is its location in Latin America and on the Caribbean Sea. Belize's location has provided it with a multi-cultural heritage and rich biodiversity. The mixture of the Garifuna, Mayan, Creole, and Mestizo cultures have all brought diversity that is spread and can be found throughout every town in Belize. This diversity has contributed to the different types of food, music, and activities relating to each of the cultures that are available to tourists that choose to go to Belize. The country's rich biodiversity provides a unique experience for tourists. Because the country is small in size and offers easy access to its tropical wilderness, tourists are able to experience beautiful beaches with crystal clear water, mountainous rainforests with breathtaking waterfalls, and large reefs filled with aquatic wildlife without having to do an excessive amount of traveling within the country. In addition, these tropical ecosystems not only provide a wide variety of fresh seafood, fruit, and vegetables for tourists to enjoy, but they also create activities like fishing, snorkeling, hiking, etc. for tourists to partake in.

When compared to other Caribbean destinations, Belize's tourism industry is still considered to be "emerging" rather than a "mature" sector (Chow, 2019). Despite Belize having already established itself as a popular tourist destination, there is still lots of potential for tourism growth. Much of this unfulfilled potential is contributed to the concentration of hotspots in Belize. The towns/district of San Pedro, Belize City, Cayo District, Placencia, and Caye Caulker receive 84.19 percent of all tourists that visit Belize, leaving the other nine towns/districts to share the remaining 15.81 percent. This concentration of hotspots has created infrastructure and institutional gaps that are negatives for both the popular destinations and the areas with low amounts of tourist traffic. San Pedro, an island that alone receives 35.76 percent of all tourists, suffers from overcrowding during peak periods, insufficient waste disposal/sewage systems, and water shortages. Because Belize focuses on supporting the hotspots, lack of financing has caused an insufficiency in infrastructure in less visited towns/districts. This neglect has caused problems, such as low levels of accessibility and uncontrolled levels of waste. Further leading to uneven distribution of tourism flow. If Belize were to utilize and evenly distribute the tourism throughout the country, not only would these problems subside but the tourism industry could become a mature sector.

In the "Dangriga Tourism Destination Development Plan", the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) describes Dangriga as "one of the most underdeveloped destinations" in Belize (Belize Tourism Board, 2019). The organization blames this underdevelopment on the community's lack of tourism education and awareness, the businesses' inability to market themselves, and an "insufficient community buy-in about tourism potential/benefits" (Belize Tourism Board, 2019). All of the organization's claims are true. However, in the development plan, there are no solutions that pertain to educating the community about the importance of tourism or on how to market their businesses. Instead, the BTB suggests the completion of projects, such as by building a museum, making "improvements to the access road into an all-weather road", and doing "improvements to several monuments and historical buildings" (Belize Tourism Board, 2019). All of these suggestions range from \$20,400 to \$5 million. However, it is impossible for a town like Dangriga to gather these funds, making the BTB's ideas for development unobtainable.

What is completely obtainable and necessary for the community of Dangriga are simple workshops or counseling that teaches marketing and the importance of tourism growth.

My Project

I carried out my thesis as a part of the “Special Projects with Peacework in Belize” program. This opportunity was first brought to my attention in the latter months of 2021 when the faculty leader, Dr. Farmer, came to one of my classes to share about the experience. After showing interest in participating, I had a Zoom meeting with Dr. Farmer and was given more details about the program. I was made aware of the low levels of tourism in a Belizean town called Dangriga and that there were some local business owners who showed interest in making the industry grow. For the eight-week period of the project, I would be living and working with a small team of other University of Arkansas students. Our team would be working alongside the Belize Tourism Board (BTB)/ Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA) to help small business owners in Dangriga. In addition, Dr. Farmer also asked us to do some research about the tourism industry in Belize to look at the existing problems, to figure out how our team could help improve the situation, and to gain more knowledge on Belize before arriving.

After doing a few Google searches of Dangriga, it became very apparent why the town’s tourism industry wasn’t performing well. There was a noticeable absence of information on the internet about the town, so it must make it difficult for tourists to find reasons to go to Dangriga. Except for a couple outliers, I couldn’t really find any restaurants with photos of their food/drinks or what their storefronts looked like. There were no websites links that came up for hotels, snorkeling/fishing guides, etc. located in Dangriga. After doing a dozen or so searches, it became very clear that Dangriga’s lack of an online presence could be one of the major reasons for having a low level of tourism. Once I recognized this correlation, I started thinking of ways in which I would be able to help grow their online presences. My first idea was to hold workshops for business owners on how to use the internet and different social medias as marketing tools. My second idea was to do one-on-ones with the business owners to discuss and try to fix marketing problems that were specific to each of their businesses. What I really liked about these two ideas is that they were very simple and didn’t require much effort or time, yet they would make noticeable improvements to the situation that was at hand. Because I felt that these were strong ideas, I kept them in mind for when we arrived in Belize.

On a Sunday in mid-May, we arrived in Belize and wasted no time getting started on our project. The day after our arrival, my team and I had a meeting with our boss, a women named Carlene Sanchez who works at two local hotels/resorts in Dangriga and is the head chairperson for the Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA) Dangriga Chapter and the BTB representative of Dangriga. Carlene started off the meeting by explaining that her role throughout the project would be to manage our team’s weekly activities, help coordinate meetings with local business owners, and look at/keep track of our progress during the eight weeks. She then moved on to discuss what her expectations were from our project. Carlene had come up with four main objectives for my team and I to finish by the end of the eight weeks:

1. Provide business development training and mentoring for start-up or existing small businesses. Conduct individual evaluations of the business and provide mentoring based on their specific needs.
2. Provide business development training and mentoring for development of a Digital Marketing Agency that would provide digital technology-based services to small businesses. This would range from Logo creation to social media postings and everything

in between. This would benefit all, especially the “old school” small business owners who either do not have the skills and knowledge or an aversion to all things online and technology based.

3. Enhance the online presence of small businesses in Dangriga on Google Maps so that visitors to Dangriga, both local and foreign, would know what services are available and where to access those services. Assist small business entrepreneurs in establishing Facebook and Instagram accounts.
4. Develop story-telling content for local attractions (Dangriga Cultural Trail Sites and nearby tour attractions) with pictures and blogs.

After listing these off, Carlene said that she felt that each objective was essential in helping grow the tourism in Dangriga, but she also wanted to know what our team’s opinions were on her objectives. I said that I specifically thought objectives #1 and #3 were really excellent ideas and that I had come up with similar suggestions prior to my arrival in Dangriga. After the rest of my team shared their opinions, everyone in the room agreed to focus on and complete these four objectives. At the end of the meeting, Carlene shared a folder with us on Google Drive that contained documents, graphics, etc. from a prior group of students who had worked on the same project, thinking that my team and I could get started where the former group had left off. However, everything in the folder was outdated and/or inaccurate because it was all from before the COVID-19 pandemic. So, for rest of the first week, a team member and I spent our time updating the Google documents. We did this by analyzing the online presence of local businesses in Dangriga and keeping track of what we found. For the analysis, we took into consideration whether a business had contact information, business location, photos, and social media accounts. While we did the analysis, my other team member looked at the BTIA Dangriga Chapter’s website from the back end to see what changes needed to be made in order to put together a more functional and helpful website for the local business owners and tourists. To finish off our first week, we had a meeting with Carlene to discuss the work we had completed, to which she was very satisfied. We also discussed what she would like us to do the following week. She wanted us to continue analyzing the online presences of businesses in Dangriga and to begin making updates to the website that we saw fit.

On Monday of week two, we continued where we left off on updating the Google documents and began creating a list of businesses that we needed to gather the correct contact information and pictures of for the BTIA website. Once we completed our list, a team member and I decided to dedicate the Tuesday of that week to riding our bikes around Dangriga to get what we needed for the website. When we went to the businesses on Tuesday, the response and reactions we received were definitely not what I had expected. It seemed as though most of the business owners did not want to give us their information or for us to take pictures of their property. There was definitely a very strong sense of hostility and suspicion from them towards us. There was a hotel that asked to see a form of ID to see where I was from, and another hotel owner rushed us off their property. For my team and I, it was a strange reaction from the people we were trying to help. Especially since we had clearly identified ourselves as workers with the BTIA and said all the work was free of charge. However, amongst the hostility, there were some owners that really appreciated the work we were doing, and one hotel even gave us a large bag of fresh fruit off of trees at their hotel. After Tuesday, I returned to analyzing the online presences of local businesses and updating the Google documents, and my team member began adding the up-to-date contact information and photos we had collected to the BTIA website. We met with Carlene on Thursday of this week. I showed her the Google document that I had completed with

all of the updated analysis of the online presences of the businesses, and our team told her that we began updating contact information and photos for the BTIA website. We also mentioned to Carlene the sense of hostility we faced when going to the businesses. She said that most business owners, especially those who own hotels, are very skeptical of outsiders because many foreign people come to Belize and ruin businesses of the locals. After her explanation, our group thought that their hostility was justified. Carlene continued by saying she really appreciated the amount of work that we had done in such a short time and said she would meet with us at the beginning of the following week to discuss what we would be doing next.

Our team met with Carlene on Tuesday of the third week to discuss the workshops with local business owners. She told us to create workshop proposals and send them to her by the end of the week for her approval. Meanwhile, she would coordinate a venue where the workshops would take place and what businesses we would invite to attend. Carlene also told us that we would be presenting these workshops over the span of four days during week six. Then, just as I thought our meeting was coming to an end, Carlene shared that she wanted to add some new objectives to the ones that were already in place. These new objectives included helping an offshore resort with their human resources and meeting with one of her employees to show him how to run his computer business. As she was discussing the details of the new objectives, I couldn't stop thinking that these new additions didn't make any sense. It was the beginning of the third week, and our team hadn't even finish any of the existing objectives yet. In that moment, I realized that the purpose of our project was starting to become unclear. Our boss was trying to do too much all at once instead of focusing on and completing the four objectives already at hand. Although I had these feelings, I did not share my thoughts on the new objectives. Rather, I, along with the rest of my team, agreed to do the objectives by the end of the eight weeks because I didn't want to disappoint Carlene. She was very happy that we were willing to do them and told us that she would give us more information in the weeks to come. After the meeting, my team members and I had a conversation on what topics the workshops should be about. We settled on Google Maps/Google Business Accounts, Facebook, Instagram, and TripAdvisor. We split the work and began working on the proposals. On Thursday of that week, we sent out our proposals to Carlene but got no word back from her. We sent emails and messages asking when she would like to meet with us, but we got no response to these messages either. So, we ended up not having a meeting at the end of this week.

On Monday of week four, we met with Carlene. She informed us that she had fallen ill at the end of the week prior, causing her to be unable to contact or meet with us on Zoom or in-person. After a quick look at our proposals, she approved all four and told us that they were great ideas. She said that she would begin the process of searching for a venue for us to hold the workshops and creating a list of businesses for us to invite. Once our team got the go ahead from Carlene, we each began creating our assigned workshops. At the end of this week, we did not have a meeting because Carlene had too much on her schedule for her to meet with us.

Very little happened during week five. Early on in the week, each of us completed our workshops. We didn't hear anything from Carlene during the entirety of the week despite our efforts of contacting her through emails and WhatsApp messages. So, our team had no idea whether we were still planning on doing the workshops the following week because we didn't know if there was a venue booked or a list of companies to invite. Although this lack of communication was very frustrating, it's a cultural difference that comes with working in a foreign country. In Belize, it is normal for a person to respond to messages when they have time, so this was definitely a learning curve for our group. We later found out that Carlene had been

unable to respond to our messages because of the large workload put on her by the absence of her boss and co-manager.

During week six we finally got in contact with Carlene and had a meeting on Tuesday- a day after we were originally meant to have the workshops. We were told that we would now be holding our workshops Monday through Thursday of week seven, and she tasked us with creating a flyer that we would give out to businesses on Thursday of week six. Accordingly, we created a flyer containing all necessary information about each of the workshops, where and what time they were to be held, and our contact information just in case any businesses had questions. As planned, that Thursday we rode our bikes around Dangriga and gave out our flyers to around twenty businesses. During the day we had a lot of businesses that seemed very interested and even had some businesses RSVP. It was great for us to hear that some business owners were interested in our workshops, so we were excited for week seven to get started.

At the beginning of week seven, we had high hopes for our workshops because of the interest shown towards them the week prior. However, week seven did not go as we hoped. On day one of workshops, there were only two people in attendance, an employee of restaurant whose boss sent her in his place and a local Youtuber who our boss had invited. Because the workshop was about adding business information to Google/Google Maps and creating Google Business accounts, the workshop was only able to help the employee from the restaurant. We tried helping the Youtuber because he had made the effort to attend. However, we weren't much help since we didn't know how to go viral or gain popularity on YouTube. The following day we held our workshop over using Facebook as a business, and the same restaurant employee and Youtuber were the only people who showed up. What was really disappointing was that a few businesses had previously RSVPed but had decided not to come. After two days of very little attendance, we were asked to incorporate the Thursday workshop about TripAdvisor into the Wednesday workshop about Instagram marketing. On Wednesday, only the Youtuber attended our workshop. After the workshop, we sent our boss a report discussing how all of our workshops went, since she has not been able to attend. She replied two days later saying that she was disappointed that not many businesses had attended but appreciated our effort. In the same message, Carlene said that we would not be working on any more of the objectives during week eight because there was not enough time or resources for us to complete them. She asked us to write a final report to her about what we had been able to complete during the seven weeks. Carlene thanked us for our hard work and shared her disappointment that we had not been able to complete more objectives during our time in Belize.

Evaluation

I have mixed feelings when it comes to evaluating the results of my project. I truly believe that our work during the eight weeks was helpful to Dangriga, and I am proud that I was able to make an impact. In that time, we were able to improve the online presences of a handful of business as well as create analysis sheets and workshops for future groups to use. However, I do feel as though our project could have accomplished more and been more beneficial than it turned out to be. When I left Belize, I had a feeling of disappointment because there was so much that I had originally wanted to complete during our eight weeks there. Even so, I do not blame neither my team nor myself for why the project didn't fulfill its potential. In my opinion, the reasons why the project didn't fulfill that potential are lack of communication, overcomplication of the project, and unavailability of business owners.

I believe that lack of communication is the main reason our project didn't accomplish as much as I had hoped. Throughout almost the entirety of the project, unbeknownst to my team and I, Carlene was having to do the work of her boss and co-manager in addition to her own because they were out of country. Which caused her to become completely overloaded with work from her actual job and left with little to no time to work on our project. The unexpected workload put on Carlene by her boss and co-manager was completely out of her hands, and she cannot be blamed for its occurrence. However, this predicament was not communicated to my team and I in any of our meetings or WhatsApp messages during the eight weeks. Our team would go days and sometimes whole weeks without hearing from her because she would be too busy to respond or even read our messages on WhatsApp. This lack of communication on was detrimental to the success of our project because we thought that she was still coordinating and taking care of things behind the scenes that were necessary in order to begin and complete the objectives. If Carlene had simply discussed with us the situation at hand and said that she was unable to complete her part of the project, we could have gotten the information needed to take over her responsibilities. This would've allowed us to complete more than one objective during the eight weeks because our team was more than capable of doing her work. My team and I could've got in contact with the businesses we were meant to mentor one-on-one, coordinate a guide to take us around Dangriga so we could develop content for Dangriga Cultural Trail Sites, and set up a meeting with the mentees we were supposed to teach internet marketing. However, those three objectives were not completed, and I believe that poor communication is to blame.

I think that the overcomplication of our project is another factor that crippled our project. Throughout my time living and working in Dangriga, I had the opportunity to have in-depth conversations with many different business owners and managers about why they thought their businesses weren't as successful as they want them to be. After a few of these discussions, I started to notice a reoccurring theme amongst the owners. They have a serious inability to focus on one goal/objective at a time. Instead, they attempt to complete multiple things at the same time. Which then results in everything not happening or failing. Sadly, our project is a great example of this occurring. We started off our project with four objectives that we were to complete over the eight-week period. However, in third week, without having one objective completed, more objectives were added to our project that were in no way related to the ones already existing. After their introduction, It was very apparent that our project's goals and original purpose had become lost. Which would eventually result in only one of our four objectives being completed by the end of the eight weeks.

Lastly, the incompleteness of our objectives can be attributed to the business owners not being able to afford to take time off to participate in our project. Almost all of the businesses that we were meant to mentor, do one-on-ones with, and have workshops with only had a staff of two or three people, including the owner. In addition, couldn't sacrifice the hours away from their business because they rely on any amount of business they can get throughout the day. The one objective that we were able to complete were the internet/social media marketing workshops, but even these workshops did not get the results we hoped for due to businesses not being able to attend. This inability to take time off was really one of the most important factors that contributed to our objectives not getting completed.

Next Steps

After completing the project there are definitely things that I recommend changing in order to increase the number of positive results and improve productivity.

The first- and most important- recommendation is to have someone in charge who has at least two hours during the day- between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm- dedicated to working on project. If there had been someone working with us every day, having consistent weekly meetings, and/or coordinating things with business owners in Dangriga, there is no doubt in my mind that all of the objectives would be completed. Not having a boss who was available or able to work with us was definitely the largest downfall of our project.

The second recommendation I have for improving the project would be to have a set number of objectives that share similarities and to not add any more until those set objectives are almost or entirely completed. I feel that having a set number that cannot change will help keep focus on the original goal of the project, and I think that having objectives that have stuff in common will definitely boost productivity. During our project, the four original objectives had a lot of similarities to one another. However, in the middle of the project, when we started adding more objectives that were totally unrelated, the focus of our project was lost. If we had stuck to that set number of objectives, I believe that more would have been accomplished.

Additionally, I would recommend that future groups need to go to the to the businesses to complete the objectives instead of expecting the businesses to come to the future groups. Most of the businesses in Dangriga have a very small staff or can't afford to be closed during the day, so they can't leave their businesses to attend workshops or be mentored one-on-one. However, all of these activities can be done individually at the businesses if a group or even one student visited them to help.

Lastly, I would recommend possibly implementing a grade level minimum to students who have completed their junior year. Although I believe this is the least important of my recommendations, I do think that it should still be considered. And I support this recommendation with the Dunning-Kruger Effect, "a cognitive bias whereby people with limited knowledge or competence in a given intellectual or social domain greatly overestimate their own knowledge or competence in that domain relative to objective criteria or to the performance of their peers or of people in general" (Duignan, 2020). At the University of Arkansas, students typically take the business core classes up until the end of their sophomore year, meaning that all that they have only been taught lots of generalized information about a large variety of business topics, i.e., marketing, accounting, economics, etc. Additionally, lower classmen have had less opportunities to take part in internships or other experiences that grow a person's knowledge of business in the real world. Because of their basis-level of business knowledge and their restricted number of opportunities in the business world, there exists an arrogance and righteousness amongst lower classmen about their business knowledge. Throughout the eight weeks, there were many petty acts and arguments that could have been avoided if it weren't for ignorance and self-righteousness. This project requires you to work in the real world and with real people with varying ideas, so I would recommend selecting students who have taken classes that go more in depth and have had real world experience working with other people. This issue wasn't detrimental to the small business/tourism project like some of the others that occurred. However, the few instances of blatant disrespect towards people's opinions about the project did create a rift in our team that affected how we worked together during the eight weeks. Because I saw how the Dunning-Kruger related to the demographic of the person creating the rift, I recommend

considering raising the grade level requirement in an attempt to prevent this from happening in future groups.

Personal Evaluation

I believe that my performance and effort both before and throughout the eight weeks strongly met what was expected of me and exceeded that of my peers.

During the months leading up to the program, there were some things that my team and I were required to coordinate and complete together before we were able to go to Belize. The most important of those things was the IRB Approval, a process in which a participant of a project dealing with “human subjects” must submit certain protocols, consent forms, etc. to be approved or denied by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). When our faculty leader told us about this process, she recommended that someone take lead in order to get this process started and eventually completed. After a few weeks of silence amongst the group regarding the IRB Approval, I was the only one out of our eight student group who was willing to step up and take charge of this process. To get the ball rolling, I decided to have a meeting with the IRB Coordinator to discuss all the requirements of each protocol, take notes on if there were any particular ways she wanted protocols to be completed, and asked questions regarding the typical time frame of whole process. After this meeting, I planned a time for our group to have a Zoom call that fit into everyone’s schedules, and I assigned everyone a part of the application to complete. Because each part would not take too long to complete, I asked if everyone could have their parts done by the end of the week, to which everyone in the group agreed to do. However, when the time came, certain members of the group did not complete what they promised and would not respond to messages regarding their portion of the week. Which resulted in this process taking around three weeks to complete. Once I had finally received each group members’ part, I submitted our project for IRB Approval. In addition, I let all the group members know that they should be expecting an email from the IRB, and that they would have to approve their participation before IRB could even look at our application. After a few weeks of not hearing anything about our application status, I found it odd we had heard nothing back, since I was told in my meeting with IRB coordinator that the approval for our project should only take three to four weeks. So, I reached out to the IRB coordinator. After many emails and phone calls to her office, I finally got an email saying that our project was unable to be reviewed because not a single member of our group approved their participation. Once I got this news from her, I reached out to each member of the group individually to make sure they submit their approval. During the next couple of weeks, I heard nothing from IRB on whether everyone had actually approved their participation or if IRB had received our application. So, I once again sent many emails and left voicemails. Then I finally heard back from the coordinator in an email saying that some of the protocols were poorly done and needed to be fixed in order to be approved. I emailed each of those members who did their protocol wrong and had them fix it with the feedback provided by the IRB coordinator. Which ended up taking a couple of weeks to be completed. Once I had their corrected versions, I resubmitted our application and got all group members to approve their participation. Like before, a few weeks go by and there is no word from IRB, despite me calling and sending emails almost every day that passed. Because the start date of our program is starting near, I reach out to my faculty leader to see if she can get in contact with them. A few days go by, and we finally got our IRB approval.

Once arriving in Dangriga, my efforts given towards this project did not reduce. In our first meeting with Carlene, I participated and shared my thoughts on the current state of tourism

in Dangriga as well as solutions that I believed could help better the tourism. In addition, I was also an active listener when the opinions of my team members and Carlene were being shared. After they were done sharing, I gave my thoughts about their points of view and solutions. Then throughout the eight weeks, my work was consistently efficient and well thought out. When doing the analysis of the online presences of businesses, what took my team member a little over two weeks to complete, it only took me a week and a half. When creating our workshops, what took my team member over two weeks to make, it only took me two days. Then if you were to compare the quality of my peers' analysis and workshops to mine, my work would be more organized, the purpose would be clear, and the quantity of information wouldn't be overbearing or cause confusion.

Because of the effort exerted before leaving as well as my quality of work during our time in Belize, I believe I was a top performer from start to finish.

Personal Impacts

During the eight weeks in Belize, I was able to experience a culture that is drastically different from the one I live every day. The cultural difference that I believe had the most impact on me is how Belizeans value time. In Belize, it is normal for everyone to go at their own pace and not be in a rush to get anything completed. Whereas, in the United States, we view time as money, causing us to feel as though we must move and get everything done quickly. Although our fast-paced culture is great for business and has allowed us to become a financially successful country, it isn't very enjoyable as a day-to-day lifestyle. I developed a true appreciation for Belizeans not having any sense of being rushed and doing things when they want to. As an American, I feel as though our need to do things fast has caused us to not appreciate the amount of time that we have on a daily basis and overall, not enjoy life as much as we should. After this experience, I am hopeful that I am able to somehow create a lifestyle where I am less stressed about time.

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