



Universidad
Zaragoza

Undergraduate Dissertation
DEGREE IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND
MANAGEMENT

Strategic Analysis of Erasmus Play
Análisis Estratégico de Erasmus Play

Author

María Reis de Arteaga

Supervisor

Beatriz Domínguez Bronchal

FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND LAW

2022/2023

Author: María Reis de Arteaga

Supervisor: Beatriz Domínguez Bronchal

Title: Strategic Analysis of Erasmus Play

Name of the Degree: Business Administration & Management

Abstract

In this undergraduate dissertation, we will analyze the situation of Erasmus Play in the market. The aim or goal of this paper is to determine whether the company has an advantageous position in the market. Hence, the company will be introduced (its history, its current activity, and the industry in which it operates), then after analyzing the external environment with the help of the Pestel analysis for the general environment and the Porter analysis for the specific analysis, we will dive into its internal analysis where we will discuss the resources and capabilities of Erasmus Play and the SWOT and CAME analysis will be displayed to see how the company is doing in the market. To sum up, we will see the strategy that Erasmus Play uses to compete, and a few final remarks will be given.

Resumen

En este trabajo de fin de grado analizaremos la situación de Erasmus Play en el mercado. El objetivo o meta es determinar si la empresa tiene una posición ventajosa en el mercado. Para ello, se presentará la empresa (su historia, su actividad actual y el sector en el que opera), después de analizar el entorno externo con la ayuda del análisis Pestel para el entorno general y el análisis Porter para el análisis específico, nos sumergiremos en su análisis interno donde hablaremos de los recursos y capacidades de Erasmus Play y se mostrarán los análisis DAFO y CAME para ver la situación actual de la empresa en el mercado. Para finalizar, veremos la estrategia que utiliza Erasmus Play para competir y se harán unas observaciones finales.

Index of Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Erasmus Play	5
3. External Analysis	8
3.1. Geographical markets	9
3.2 Industry	9
3.3 Pestel Analysis: General Environment	10
3.4 Porter Analysis: Specific Environment	15
4. Internal Analysis	24
4.1 Value Chain	24
4.2 Resources and capabilities	28
4.3 VRIO Analysis	30
5. Strategy	35
5.1 Competitive Strategy	35
5.2. Corporate Strategy	36
6. Conclusions	38

Index of Tables and Figures

Table 1. List of partners of Erasmus Play in April 2023	6
Figure 1. Monthly visits of Erasmus Play vs Aluni.....	18
Figure 2. Comparison Table of Competition.....	20
Figure 3. Comparison of monthly visits between different competitors.....	20
Figure 4. Platform interface.....	26
Figure 5. Filters of the platform.....	26

1. Introduction

In this paper, the strategic analysis of the Start-Up Erasmus Play will be carried out. Thus, it is crucial to start by explaining the concept of strategy from a business point of view. In business, strategy refers to the company's long-term goals and the policies needed to meet those goals, including how it will compete in the marketplace. The main goal is to generate an advantageous position in the market over its competitors for the company.

Erasmus Play is a Spanish student housing platform that provides verified accommodation to students in more than 520 cities all over Europe. More specifically it's more active in Spain but it is also present in other European countries like Portugal, Italy, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Thus, it is an accommodation comparator, which aggregates all the verified available housing options allowing the user to compare the different options available. The main reason for choosing Erasmus Play as the company to carry out this paper is based on the growing demand of students who undertake international stays during their studies and the difficulties they encounter when looking for accommodation. Furthermore, a study from the ESN or Erasmus Student Network in Europe in 2021 revealed that more than 15% of the students interviewed have encountered lots of difficulties when finding accommodation. For this reason, Erasmus Play presents itself as a solution to this problem by providing the first student search engine, that not only provides quality accommodation in all price ranges but also wants to be the reference platform for student mobility, accompanying students throughout their experience (vision of the company).

In the different sections of the paper, we will try to take an internal and external view of Erasmus Play in order to determine the strategy used to achieve a competitive advantage over its competitors, more specifically, the main purpose of this assignment is to detect the main opportunities, threats, weaknesses, and strengths in order to give precise recommendations to the company on the strategic lines of action for the future.

This paper is structured into several sections, in which we will begin with a brief introduction of Erasmus Play, its history, and the growing need in the market for this kind of service. Then we will discuss, the external analysis of the company, regarding the industry in which it operates by developing Porter's five forces. And, those factors that affect the company with the PESTEL analysis.

Furthermore, we will also cover the internal analysis, where we will talk about the value chain and VRIO analysis which are tools for assessing a company's processes, resources, and capabilities and understanding which are likely to create the most value now and in the future.

After these points have been analyzed within the internal analysis, we will talk about the real situation of the company, through the development of the SWOT analysis. This SWOT analysis leads us to the CAME analysis, in which we will dive into the weaknesses, threats, strengths, and opportunities that this Start-Up has.

To sum up, we will then analyze, in addition, the company's competitive strategy, and its corporate strategy. This level of strategy is mainly associated with the company's growth strategies, and it will be seen in the final part of this paper.

2. Erasmus Play

Erasmus Play was born in 2020 as a response to a group of students of the University of Zaragoza participating in the Erasmus+ program who encountered serious difficulties in finding accommodation in their different destinations, even rejecting the grant. Erasmus Play operates mainly in Europe. They provide verified student housing in more than 500 European cities. Their main audience is students and young professionals who need accommodation for an amount of time and usually are not able to travel to their destination beforehand. More about the characteristics will be explained later.

Erasmus Play was launched in Zaragoza (Spain) in early 2020 by David Casanova. Born among the Spanish Universities of the G9 Group and supported by the European Union. In its first year of operation, Erasmus Play focused on cities in Spain such as Barcelona, Madrid, and Valencia. However, as the platform has grown, it has expanded to other European countries such as Portugal, Italy, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, and Greece. Currently, Erasmus Play offers accommodation and activities in more than 200 cities across Europe and continues to expand as demand for the platform grows. Halfway through the year 2020, the second partner and CTO of the company, Manuel Herrero, decided to leave his job to devote himself entirely to the cause and, finally, in December 2020, Smith Donkor, the third partner and COO of Erasmus Play, took the step of joining the initiative. The company offers a platform for finding accommodation by providing a free-to-use comparator. Its main advantage is that

students or people who use the platform can compare and choose all the verified accommodations available without having to switch to other platforms. As the name suggests, the company's main clients are "Erasmus" students. However, anyone can make use of the platform.

Now, their business model is the following: the company groups all the verified accommodation offered from their so-called *Partners*. These are online accommodation providers like HousingAnywhere or SpotaHome, who follow a verification process to post their properties on their websites. This verification process usually includes making sure that the documents about the property are correct and legal. Moreover, SpotaHome also includes videos of actual employees to verify the property. ¹In this way, Erasmus Play gets in contact with these partners and makes official collaborations to promote their accommodation on their website. Thus, the company acts as an intermediary between the partners and the students. When the student makes a reservation, the partners pay a fee or commission to Erasmus Play. In the table below, we can see a list of their partners as of April 2023, which amounts to 68.

Table 1. List of partners of Erasmus Play in April 2023

Name of Partner	Country	Name of Partner	Country
Housing anywhre	NL	Vanguard	ES
Spotahome	ES	Dove Vivo Spain	ES
Uniplaces	PT	Evo Montreal	CA
The homelike	DE	Grupo Moroval	ES
Flatio	CZ	Studapart	FR
SGR	ES	Xior España	ES
Pepehousing	PL	Xior Portugal	PT
Chez Nestor	FR	Bungalow	EEUU
Student	GB	Shared Easy	EEUU
Livin France	FR	HOEM	EEUU
Roomlala	FR	Basecamp	DE
Amberstudents	IN	Morning Croissant	FR
Casita	EEUU	Inlife Portugal	PT

¹ See more here: <https://www.spotahome.com/es/madrid/for-rent:rooms/356813>

Paris Attitude	FR	GSA-Yugo Spain	ES
Uniacco	IN	Live4life	ES
Homestay	GB	Poha House	DE
Helphousing	ES	Etuloge	FR
Coliving	EEUU	Hello Aya	EEUU
Samtrygg	SE	Room Sevilla	ES
Habyt	DE	Koliving	FR
Urban Ground	DE	LaResiBarcelona	ES
CX-Place	IT	Harrington Housing	USA
Roomless Rent	IT	Residencia One Sevilla	España
Colivys	FR	Livensa Living	España
Renthia	SE	Kamerent	Holanda
Reboutique Milano	IT	Common	EEUU
1Home	LT	Room Miklosiceva	
Coliving Hotels	ES	Erasmus Flat	ES
Kitchen 59	BR	Hybr	GB
Mi Campus	ES	University living	GB
Nido Student	GB	Be Live Residence	ES
Resa	ES	Basecamp Dinamarca	DK
Residencia My new House	ES	Colonies	FR
Valeo Liv Student granada.	ES	Quickin	ES

Source: Own Table with data provided by Erasmus Play

Three groups are present in this interaction. First, the partners who offer the accommodation and are essential to Erasmus Play. Second, the general public or students who visit the page, and third, the company itself that acts as an intermediary between both of these groups and is in charge of putting these first two groups in contact in order to contact each other and achieve the crossing of supply and demand of the specific market.

We will now talk more in-depth about its mission, vision and goals.

- **Erasmus Play's Mission**

We can define a company's mission as the identity and personality of the company, both now and in the future. The concept of mission answers the question of what the essence

of the company is, so the company's mission is part of the company's system of values and beliefs.

Erasmus Play's mission is to facilitate the mobility of international students and enhance their experience during their stay abroad. In short, Erasmus Play's mission is to make the experience of studying abroad more accessible, enjoyable and enriching for international students.

- **Erasmus Play's Vision**

The term vision refers to the questions of what the company will be like, what it wants to be like or where it wants to go in the future.

The vision reflects the mental image of the company's trajectory, so it is important for the company to establish the criteria to be used to set the path to follow.

The vision of Erasmus Play is to be the reference platform for student mobility in Europe. In addition, Erasmus Play aims to be a valuable tool for universities and accommodation owners, helping them to connect with international students and enhance their experience abroad.

- **Erasmus Play's Goals**

The objectives of Erasmus Play are as follows:

- Facilitate the search for accommodation for international students in study destinations in Europe.
- To provide useful and up-to-date information on study and accommodation destinations in Europe, and therefore improve the experience of international students during their stay abroad.
- To foster collaboration between universities, accommodation owners or partners, and international students.
- Contribute to education and culture in Europe and in the global context.

3. External Analysis

At this point, we are going to study the external forces that may affect the market position and performance of Erasmus Play. These external forces may be generic to a particular geographic market (i.e., factors of the general environment) or industry-specific (i.e., factors of the specific environment). To properly analyze both types of environments

from a strategic point of view, the general and specific environment of Erasmus Play must be defined. On the one hand, we will study the current situation of the accommodation market in Europe. On the other hand, the development of the PESTEL analysis will allow us to study the factors that affect the entire market. Finally, the analysis of Porter's five forces will be explained, where the rivalry of competitors, the threat of substitute products, the threat of new competitors, and the bargaining power of suppliers and customers will be discussed.

3.1. Geographical markets

Erasmus Play operates in several European countries, including Spain, Portugal, Italy, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Ireland, Austria, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Greece, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Serbia, Slovenia, and Lithuania. It should be noted that the Erasmus Play platform is constantly expanding and may be available in more countries in the future. As it was mentioned before, Erasmus Play started developing its activity in Spain, and therefore the available number of rooms in Spain is significantly higher than in other European countries where it operates. Moreover, the number of strategic alliances that the company has in Spain is also greater than in other European countries. Therefore, we will focus our analysis more in depth on the Spanish market.

3.2 Industry

Erasmus Play is a platform-based company that operates in a specific niche of the accommodation sector: it offers accommodation for young people who are staying in a foreign country for training or work purposes. This sector has seen significant growth in recent years as more and more people go abroad to study or work for a limited period of time. For instance, in the last couple of decades, the number of people participating in higher education programs has increased drastically and this is expected to keep growing. Just in 2021, 648 640 people participated in an Erasmus+ Program.² International student enrollments are increasing all over the world. The forecast assumes that the number of international students will increase from 5 million in 2019 to 8 million in 2025. In Europe

² See more here: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ff16650b-7b6e-11ed-9887-01aa75ed71a1>

itself there are more than 2 million international students, most of them from India, and China. Europe presently attracts roughly 45% of the world's international students. (Chaves, 2021)

The medium-long-term rental market is in continuous growth, due to several factors. On the one hand, globalization: international movement is becoming more and more common, both for employment reasons (companies are becoming more and more global), as well as for the search of young people for international experience during their first years in the labor market.

On the other hand, consumer habits have changed rapidly since the appearance of the Internet and consumers now demand these types of services.

3.3 Pestel Analysis: General Environment

After defining the general and specific environments of Erasmus Plus, we will analyze these environments from a strategic point of view. The first step is to analyze the general environment by carrying out a PESTEL analysis. The PESTEL analysis allows companies to discover and assess the factors that could affect, both positively and negatively, their businesses not only now but also in the future. It evaluates the political, legal, economic, social, technological, and environmental factors that might influence the firm's economic activity.

Political-Legal Factors

Regarding the political and legal factors that might affect the company, we must stress the fact even though Europe is politically and economically stable, the housing laws for rental services are different for each country, and Erasmus Play depends on people who list their apartments on their Partner's websites, for example on *SpotaHome* or *HousingAnywhere*. Tenants who do not stick to the regulations of the country could face legal consequences, which would then impact the supply of the accommodation offered in Erasmus Play.

If we focus on the Spanish regulation, the accommodation offered falls under the category of temporary rental, which is regulated in the Urban Leases Law or *Ley de Arrendamientos Urbanos* (LAU).

In this case, the parties are free to agree on aspects such as rent, duration of the relationship, extension, updating of amounts, works to be executed, etc. Regarding the

duration of this type of contract, it will have the duration agreed upon by the parties (lessor and lessee). The regulations do not establish a specific minimum or maximum duration, but it will be for the time that the tenant needs to carry out the activity that motivated his need: studies, master's degree, employment, etc. (Serrano, 2020)

This regulation will be an opportunity for the company as the number of tenants who decide to post their houses increases if the regulation to do so is favorable.

The increased importance of security and privacy can also represent a threat: With growing concerns about online privacy and data security, Erasmus Play must ensure that it protects the personal and financial data of its users and complies with data privacy regulations in different countries (The General Data Protection Regulation or GDPR).

Regarding other political factors, the war in Ukraine has also affected student mobility in several ways. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the war in Ukraine has forced more than 220,000 children and young people to flee their homes and communities. Many of these children and young people are university students who have had to abandon their studies and seek refuge in other areas of the country or abroad. (Silina, 2018)

Some direct consequences are:

1. Closure of universities: Many universities in war-affected areas have had to close due to violence and political instability. This has affected thousands of students who have had to look for other education options.
2. Decline in international students: Political instability and the perception of risk have deterred many international students from traveling to Ukraine to study. According to the State Education and Science Service of Ukraine, the number of international students studying in Ukraine has decreased by 40% since 2014.
3. Limitations in transport services: Travel restrictions and limitations in transport services have made it difficult to access universities and schools in some war-affected areas. This has affected students' mobility and made it difficult for them to attend classes and academic activities.
4. Forced displacement of students: The war has forced many people to leave their homes and communities, including university students.

In short, the war in Ukraine has had a significant negative impact on education and student mobility in Europe. It has created challenges for national and international students seeking to study in Ukraine and has affected the quality and accessibility of education in conflict-affected areas. Student mobility programs with Russia and Ukraine are from now on suspended (which represents a threat to the industry as the number of students who undertake studies there will decrease).

Economic Factors

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the European economy. In the first half of 2020, the eurozone economy contracted by 15%, the largest quarterly decline since records began in 1995. However, in the second half of 2020, the economy started to recover, however at a slower pace than expected.

Tourist countries such as Spain, Italy, and Greece have suffered a drop in tourism and hospitality, which has had a negative impact on their economies. Since the onset of the pandemic in 2020, Spain's GDP has fallen exceptionally, both historically and by international standards. Moreover, this decline was more accentuated in Spain than in other European economies due to the weight of the GDP in the tertiary sector. Economic activity picked up strongly in the third quarter, but the recovery process came to a halt in the last quarter of the year 2020 and the first quarter of 2021.

Overall, to address the economic crisis, the European Union has adopted a package of aid measures, including loans and grants for the most affected countries. In July 2020, the EU agreed on a €750 billion economic recovery package, called "Next Generation EU", to be financed by EU debt issuance. (Presupuesto de la UE a largo plazo para 2021-2027 y paquete de recuperación, 2023) . Moreover, The European Union will allocate 26.2 billion euros to the Erasmus+ program over the next five years. This is a funding package that almost doubles the previous program (2014-2020) and that will be managed by the governments of each country. (Castanyer, 2022)

This represents a big opportunity for Erasmus Play as student mobility is being incentivized and with the increased budget, it is expected that more students, trainees, and teachers will be able to participate in the Erasmus program and other education and training activities in Europe. In addition, the increased budget is expected to boost the internationalization of educational institutions and promote cooperation and exchange between European countries in the field of education and training.

To sum up, today, the European economy is still in the process of recovery, at an uneven pace across countries and sectors, and this context of economic crisis favors the creation of companies that offer traditional services but with an easier system of acquisition and a lower cost.

Social Factors

There are various social factors to keep in mind. First, let's see the impact the pandemic had on student mobility. In the first half of 2020, the number of students participating in mobility programs abroad decreased by 43% compared to the previous year, according to European Commission data. In some countries, such as Spain and Portugal, the decline was even greater, falling by 70% and 66% respectively. Now, in terms of job mobility, the number of participants in employee mobility programs, such as internships and traineeships, decreased by 38% in 2020 compared to the previous year, according to the European Commission. The pandemic has also had an impact on Erasmus+ international cooperation programs. In 2020, the number of participants from non-European countries decreased by 58% compared to the previous year, according to the European Commission. (Erasmus+ annual report, 2020)

Overall, there was a significant decrease in the number of student mobility during 2020, which had a negative impact, not only on the accommodation sector but overall on the whole economy.

Moreover, as it was mentioned before, buyer habits have changed rapidly since the appearance of the Internet. People want to buy and book any kind of services online and this new necessity has given rise to the birth of companies that offer accommodation tailored to the consumer's needs and preferences. This can be also reflected in the way people book accommodation nowadays. A study from *Idealista* showed that when looking for a home, two-thirds of Europeans (81%) use the Internet as the best way to find their desired home. 44% of them also use the contacts of friends and family to find a place to live. The success rate in finding a new home via the Internet is 76% of respondents, while friends and family are 29.2%, and only 20.7% find a home through advertisements in the print media.³ This change in consumers habits will also be an opportunity for Erasmus Play.

³ See more here: <https://www.idealista.com/news/inmobiliario/vivienda/2015/12/17/740347-internet-es-el-medio-preferido-para-buscar-casa>

Technological factors

Nowadays, every business must be up to date with the newest technologies to keep up in the market and with its competitors. Erasmus Play depends on technology to carry out its business. To run the business an internet connection is always needed. People who visit the site also need a stable and secure connection to make a reservation. And therefore, secure software must be used. Another important factor is the increased use of mobile devices: With the increased use of smartphones and tablets, more and more people are using mobile devices to search for and book accommodation. It also must consider the increased use of artificial intelligence and automation: AI and automation are increasingly being used in the tourism and hospitality industry. And the use of these technologies will improve the efficiency of all booking processes and provide more accurate and personalized accommodation recommendations to its users.

The use of 5G has also had an impact on the industry and represents an opportunity. Firstly, 5G could improve the speed and reliability of internet connectivity, which could improve the user experience when searching for and booking accommodation on the platform. Users would be able to access the platform faster and upload images and accommodation content more quickly.

In addition, 5G could also improve the functionality of the platform in terms of virtual and augmented reality. For example, users could have a virtual preview of accommodations before booking. This could improve the user experience and help users make more informed decisions about where to stay.

Moreover, as it only operates online a strong social media presence is also fundamental to creating brand image and social awareness. The company is active through its various social media channels, but especially active on YouTube and Instagram where content is created on a weekly basis regarding all kinds of concerns that Erasmus Students may have.

Ecological Factors

The growing concern for the environment is forcing companies to develop business models with the environment in mind. Environmental laws are increasingly restrictive for companies to carry out their main activities with minimal impact on the surrounding environment.

This business idea makes it possible for students and young professionals to move to new cities without having to alter the landscape with new housing constructions. It is a way of doing business with what is already built without impacting the environment negatively.

In a way, they take advantage of the available resources available to achieve responsible consumption and therefore this represents an opportunity for the company.

3.4 Porter Analysis: Specific Environment

Porter's model allows us to assess and discover opportunities and threats in a given industry. The attractiveness of an industry is determined by the action of five competitive forces: (1) competition in the industry; (2) the threat of substitute products, (3) the threat of entry of new competitors, (4) the bargaining power of suppliers and finally and (5) the bargaining power of buyers. The main objective of this analysis is to look for opportunities and identify threats for firms already in an industry and for those planning to enter. In this way, their profit-making capabilities are determined (Santander, 2023)

3.4.1 Competition in the Industry

In this first force, the level of competition between the current competitors in the accommodation industry will be analyzed. It is relevant to study this competitive force because if the number of competitors is high, the average returns of companies in this sector will be lower. As well as if the number of competitors is low, the sector is more attractive, and this means greater opportunities for the company.

Erasmus Play faces six main competitors in the industry. In the following paragraphs, we will examine each of these competitors in more detail.

Nestpick

Nestpick is the competitor most similar to what Erasmus Play does. Launched in 2014 in Rotterdam, Nestpick is the largest platform for furnished apartment rentals. It is an accommodation comparator that can search more than one million properties from over 200 providers such as Spotahome, Zeus, Homelike...

Nestpick is a 100% free tool, just like Erasmus Play. Their business model is the same and Nestpick only adds verified housing to their platform to avoid fraud.

However, there are some differences that we can highlight. First, their target audience is wider. While Erasmus Play mainly focuses on accommodation for students, and this can also be seen in the content created on their social media channels, Nestpick doesn't have

a specific target audience and offers accommodation to whoever needs it. The content they create aims to facilitate the relocation process in every way and to help their users to have the best possible quality of life wherever they go. In this way, they share their internal knowledge of the market providing relevant research for students, families, and expatriates wishing to move abroad so that they have all the information they need beforehand to make any decisions.

Moreover, they are present in a wider geographical area. They have around 3 million rental properties and rooms around the world. This includes Europe, Asia, Australia, North and South America, and Africa.

University Living

Established in 2015, it aims to be the global student housing marketplace. It started just providing accommodation in the UK and Australia and later expanded to Ireland, Europe, the USA, and Canada.

They provide verified accommodation to students and services related to the whole experience facilitating the entire student journey and making it a smooth experience. From personalized accommodation search help to an international pick-up service or a health insurance comparator. They also have a blog where they write about all the things that could be valuable to students: costs of living in a specific city, what to keep in mind when preparing for your studies abroad etc.... All these add a lot of value to potential customers. However, one disadvantage of UniversityLiving, is the extremely overpriced accommodation offered in some cities. For example, in Amsterdam, the most affordable studio is around 2500€ a month, while the average price of a studio in that city should be around 700-1500€⁴.

In 2022 they reached a GMV (Gross Merchandise Value) of 300M USD. The GMV is a metric that measures the total value of the sales of a company over a specific period.

Erasmusu

Erasmusu is a Spanish company that was founded in 2008 with the idea of a social network platform for Erasmus students. In the beginning, it did not have any revenues up until 2014 when it became a platform for booking and renting housing. A year later, it

⁴ See more here: <https://www.amsterdamtips.com/cost-of-living-amsterdam>

started to grow. And it was between 2016 and 2017 when revenues increased significantly.

In 2016, according to the accounts of the Mercantile Registry, they closed with 320,000 euros in revenue compared to 244,000 euros a year earlier. They had 650,000 registered users and traffic that grows between 30 and 40% annually (in August 2017 they reached 1.3 million sessions).

They have over +100.000 thousand flats all over the world, but their main market, as Erasmus Play, is in Europe. Moreover, they verify their housing offer by sending their employees to take pictures and videos and make sure that it looks like it should look. However, not all their offers are verified by the employees and this can lead to potential fraud as no one from the organization has made sure that the property exists.

One key advantage of Erasmusu is, that besides offering housing, they try to meet the needs of Erasmus students. On their website, students can read the experiences of other students that have participated in an Erasmus Program. You can filter by country and by city. And interact, ask questions, and find students that are going to the same destination. Finally, Erasmusu also offers a student “match” service system and helps those who are looking for roommates.

Aluni

Since 1998 Aluni has managed the accommodation of more than 30,000 university students and young professionals looking to rent rooms in shared apartments. They are present in Spain in cities like Madrid, Barcelona, Alcalá de Henares, Valencia, Granada, and Sevilla. Their business model works just as Erasmusu, a landlord that is interested contacts Aluni and they sign a contract in order to have the right to promote that accommodation on their site. From then on, Aluni makes sure that the student or young professional has everything he or she needs during the stay. It not only markets student apartments but also, in most cases, manages the rentals.

Aluni also has some important advantages. On one hand, it allows the user to search for apartments and apply filters, not only by city and faculty but also by sex, so that if you wish to only share an apartment with women, you can search for that specifically. Moreover, you can see the ratings of each accommodation from prior tenants. This review system is something unique for all the accommodation platforms and offers future tenants the possibility of getting a feeling of knowing really what they are booking from past

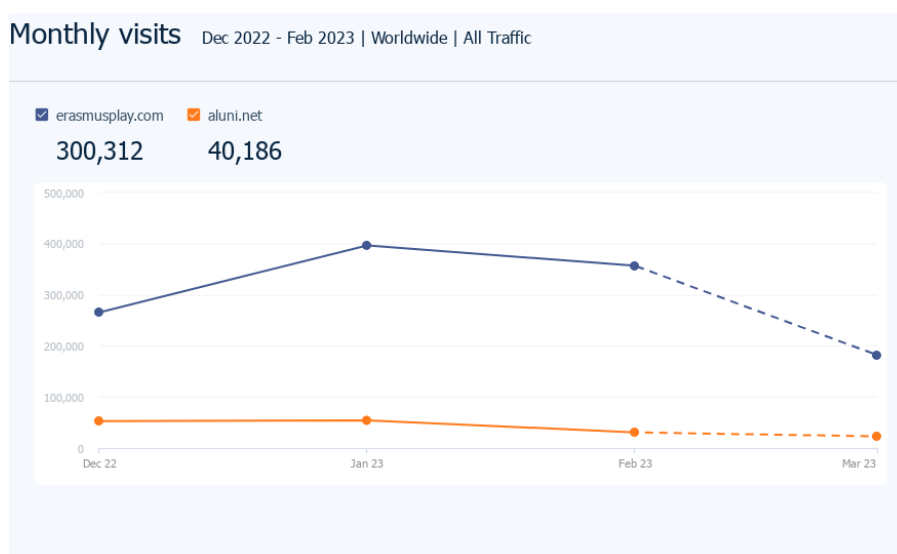
experiences from students. This rating goes from 1 star to 5 stars, being 5 the best. On the other hand, their price range is very wide. From their own study that they conducted with over 9000 students, they concluded that the price was the most relevant factor when choosing accommodation for their studies.⁵ Therefore, they make sure to offer accommodation affordable for everyone.

Aluni also wants to make sure that students feel welcome when they arrive at their new accommodation place, by organizing weekly social events in their major cities.

Furthermore, they collaborate with universities and institutions, mostly through backlinking, the University sets the Aluni link on their homepage for the Erasmus Students, so that Students can find it easily and they give them a discount for students (which is between 20-40%).

In the graphic below, we can see a comparison of the monthly visits from the last three months (December 2022 until February 2023).

Figure 1. Monthly visits of Erasmus Play vs Aluni



Source: Prosimilarweb

HousingAnywhere

Founded in 2009, HousingAnywhere is the world's largest housing rental platform for young professionals and international students. With more than 50,000 active offers and

⁵ See more here : <https://www.aluni.net/es/universidades-e-instituciones-vinculadas/preferencias>

around 8 million users in more than 60 countries, the platform enables tenants to contact landlords directly to agree on medium-term rental contracts. The company founded in Rotterdam currently employs 100 people and is a leader in the market.

SpotaHome

SpotaHome is an online booking platform that has over 120.000 thousand flats, and 13.000 thousand active tenants in over 90 cities in Europe. The platform allows tenants to book properties instantly and securely, without the need to view them in person. It is therefore targeting the rental market for medium and long-term stays, thus covering all non-holiday rentals longer than 30 days. Moreover, one of the advantages of their service is that they verify the properties themselves. A member of their team visits the apartment and takes professional photographs and videos of the apartment. This is the only platform that makes these professional videos and posts them on their site. They also make a questionnaire to the owner where all the information that a tenant needs from the apartment before renting it will be reflected. They want to be as transparent as possible to ensure trust in the tenant.

In recent months, SpotaHome has embarked on a business expansion process that has culminated with its entry into 28 countries, surpassing pre-Covid revenues and reaching profitability in this third quarter of 2021 for the first time since its inception, surpassing 2019 revenues and tripling those recorded in 2020, a difficult year for the startup.

Their performance since 2019 has been very positive despite the economic climate. Compared to other startups and competitors, they have done better in terms of profitability.

In 2018, SpotaHome merged with Erasmusu and created SpotaHome Group. With this transaction, the inventory of properties that can be rented and paid for online exceeds 115,000 in 450 cities in 65 countries.

In the table below we can see a comparison of the competitors regarding the monthly visits to each of the pages for three months (from December 2022 until February 2023), the number of unique visitors, the visit duration, the pages per visit, and the bounce rate which is the percentage of visitors who only view one page on the website before leaving.

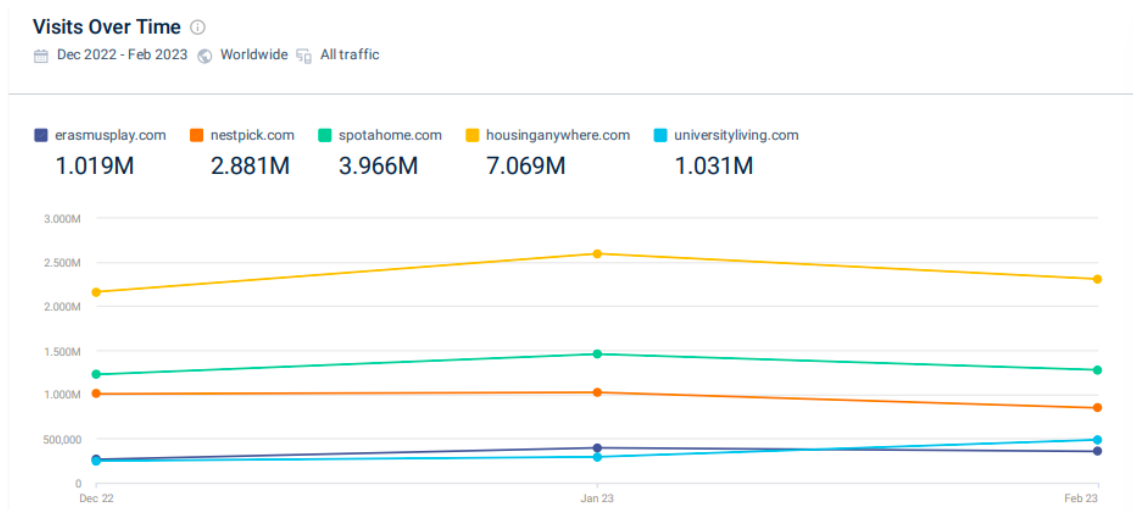
Figure 2. Comparison Table of Competition

	ErasmusPlay	Nestpick	Spotahome	Housinganywhere	Universityliving
Monthly Visits	333,699	960,637	1.322M	2.356M	343,676
Visits/Unique visitors	181,608	588,144	699,931	1.274M	169,464
Visit duration	0:04:00	0:02:47	0:04:28	0:03:51	0:04:28
Pages per visit	3,87	3,39	8.97	5.42	3,81
Bounce rate	36,51%	37,23%	44.21%	46,37%	49,40%

Source: Own elaboration with data from Prosimilarweb

As we can see, the most visited site is HousingAnywhere. However, this is not the only factor we must take into account, because the visit duration of each page gives us also an idea of how consumers value what they see. In this regard, UniversityLiving is at the top.

Figure 3. Comparison of monthly visits between different competitors



Source: Prosimilarweb

Overall, the competition in the industry signals a high threat for Erasmus Play, as the number of competitors in the market is high and some of them are really strong in the industry.

3.4.2 Threat of Substitute Products

This force refers to products or services that satisfy the same needs as those of the sector's products. The number of substitutes in the market and their level of attractiveness will determine the level of the threat.

Airbnb is a community marketplace for publishing, advertising, and booking affordable accommodations to individuals and tourists in more than 190 countries. Airbnb was born in 2007 in San Francisco, USA. It has grown a lot since then and currently has more than 4 million hosts who have shared their accommodations with 1.4 billion people in almost every country in the world. You can book a room in an apartment, a whole house, or even a motorhome. Moreover, since Airbnb started it also allows booking longer stays, not just for vacation periods. Its major advantage is the large number of places in the platform and their wide price ranges which makes Airbnb especially attractive for consumers.

Other substitute services are Hotels. Especially, after the Covid Pandemic Hotels have had to adapt to the new circumstances and come up with new ideas to compete in the market. One of these ideas is renting rooms long term. And the main idea behind this initiative is to offer very high-quality accommodation to anyone who needs a flexible and at the same time affordable accommodation option, as renting them long-term will lower their tariffs. Moreover, it will be even easier to rent a room because, in most of them, a contract won't be even necessary.⁶ The ease of being able to rent rooms in hotels at competitive prices, in addition to the ease of not having to sign documents that can lengthen the process of renting a place to live, make the attractiveness of hotels as a substitute product for other accommodation platforms high.

Overall, the threat of substitute products in the market is high. The simplicity of being able to rent rooms in hotels or apartments on Airbnb at competitive prices, in addition to not having to sign documents that can lengthen the process of renting a place to live, make the attractiveness of substitute products over other accommodation platforms high.

3.4.3 Threat of entry of new competitors

The threat of new competitors refers to the possibility of new companies wanting to enter the industry, in this case in the accommodation platform industry.

⁶ See more: https://www.hosteltur.com/140655_puy-du-fou-espana-reabrira-en-marzo-como-un-parque-para-todo-el-dia.html

The existence of new companies that want to enter the accommodation sector is a threat for the company because it may lead to losing its attractiveness since the current competition will intensify. The entry of these new competitors will depend on mainly two factors. First, on the attractiveness of the market in which it operates through its level of profitability and its future growth projections, and second on the barriers to entry that exist, which can emerge as a result of different factors such as technological factors, consumer loyalty to existing products, government regulations or costs to start-up a business.

Established companies in the accommodation sector have more knowledge of the industry, know what consumers demand and some achieve customer loyalty. Nevertheless, loyalty should be related to the costs of switching from one platform to another. In this sense, it is very easy for the user to switch from one platform to another and therefore loyalty in this industry to platforms is not usually high. Therefore, the additional services offered by some platforms, such as providing information about the cities, how to prepare an Erasmus suitcase or what documents are required if I am going to live in another country, can make the user choose one of the platforms, as it provides more value than others that provide less information.

The investment cost of setting up a business such as Erasmus Play or HousingAnywhere, can vary widely depending on several factors. Moreover, the following elements have to be considered:

First, the web development. This cost of development can vary depending on the platform that is chosen and the complexity of the platform. Then, marketing and advertising. To promote the platform and attract consumers, marketing and advertising will be key. This can include online advertising, social media and events. And the cost can vary, depending on the budget of the platform. Thirdly, staff to keep the business running. A customer service team, as well as staff to manage the day-to-day operations of the business will be necessary. Also, regulations and permits must be considered. The company will have to comply with regulations and laws in Europe. This may include obtaining licenses and permits, as well as complying with privacy and data protection regulations (such as GDPR). The costs associated with complying with these regulations may vary.

Regarding the loyalty that young generations have toward brands, an article in Forbes Magazine stated that young consumers expect, not only a good service (like older generations) but a personalized service that fits their necessities. Moreover, they value that brands are transparent, sustainable, and socially engaged. In short, they are much

more critical, demanding, and volatile. In fact, 86% of today's consumers state that they would stop doing business with a company because of a bad customer experience. And, negative digital experiences online have a higher negative impact than on other age groups. (Gutiérrez-Rubí, 2014)

Moreover, price and offer can have a significant impact on the loyalty of younger consumers. Younger consumers often have tighter budgets and are willing to shop around and look for deals to get the best value for their money. Moreover, 29% of Millennials admit that they would not join a loyalty program unless the brand had a good incentive plan. Financial benefits, in all their forms, are the main attraction to retain these customers. (Generación Millennial, ¿Fieles o infieles a las marcas?, 2014)

In this sense, a brand offering competitive prices and discounts can attract young consumers and increase their loyalty. In addition, offers and promotions can be an effective way to attract new customers and encourage repeat purchases.

However, it is important to keep in mind that price is not the only factor that influences the loyalty of young consumers, as we have seen above. An essential factor is also the number of rooms and accommodations that we can find on the site. A wide range of accommodation offers will make consumers, especially young people who are very price sensitive, stay and compare the prices of all the accommodation on the site and will not go to other competitors who have a smaller offer available. As was mentioned before, users will choose to stay at the platform that provides them the most value, with information or a large supply of rooms to choose from.

In this sense, we can talk about network effects, which emerge when the value of a product or service to a user depends not only on the product itself but also on the number of users using that product or service. So that the more accommodation offered we have, the more value the platform will have for a user and also the loyalty will be higher (Domic, 2022)

Overall, the cost and effort of setting up a business like this is medium, but it will depend on the specific characteristics that the platform has. And therefore, the threat of new competitors entering in the market is medium.

3.4.4 Bargaining Power of Suppliers

In our case, the suppliers are the partners of the platform. All these partners depend on the landlords who offer rooms or homes for rent and it is thanks to them that the business is developed. The landlord provides the main basis for offering a service to guests. The power of each of them is high, each one can set their own rental conditions, prices and cancellation policy. Moreover, all the landlords decide on the conditions of their hosts, always under certain rules, but at the end of the day it is the landlord that decides whether to accept a booking or to change the price at a certain time of the year and not the platform where they are being announced.

3.4.5 Bargaining Power of Buyers

The customer has little bargaining power, this is due to the fact that the purchase volume of each guest is small in relation to the total bookings. It should also be noted that it is also possible, but not usual, that the host may make an offer on the original price so that the guest decides to book earlier. The possibility of price haggling on the part of the guest could be considered, although it is not usual and therefore the bargaining power of buyers is low.

4. Internal Analysis

Now, the internal strategic analysis will be carried out where, unlike the previous analysis, the focus is no longer on the outside of the company but on its interior. The idea is to understand what resources, capabilities and activities make this company capable of creating value and can help us understand its competitive position in the market (which will be studied later). For this purpose, different tools can be used, such as the value chain or VRIO analysis.

4.1 Value Chain

The value chain is a concept defined by Michael Porter in which the activities of a company create a series of relationships or links that aim to create the greatest possible value. Moreover, the value chain is a tool that splits the company into different activities (primary and secondary) to understand how the company creates value. The value created is the difference between the perceived benefit (what the consumer believes the product is worth, what he would be willing to pay for it) and what it costs the company to manufacture it, hence, all the costs to produce the product or service.

It is a strategic analysis tool to identify the competitive advantages of a business in the market (Malherbe, 2017)

The value chain distinguishes between primary activities and secondary ones. Primary activities are those that add value to a product or service. These include inbound logistics, operations, outbound logistics, sales, and marketing and service. Then, we have the secondary or support activities which are needed to support as the name indicates the primary activities. These are procurement, infrastructure, technological development, and human resource (HR) management.

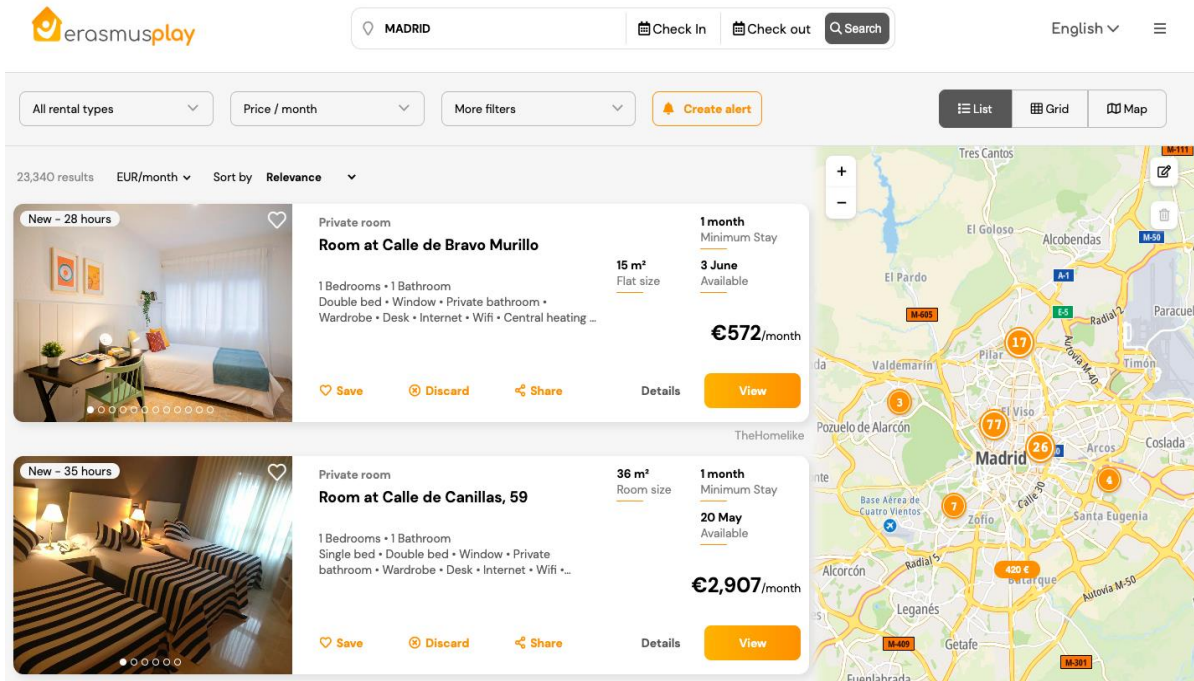
We are going to focus on the outbound and inbound logistics, marketing, and service activities as these are the ones that create more value for the company.

- **Primary activities**

Inbound Logistics: The number of partners that have registered tenants, who are the ones providing the accommodation, and the number of registered hosts. This is directly related to the number of partners the platform has. The higher the number of partners, the more accommodation will be available to users and the more value is created. These relations with partners are strategic alliances that are part of their corporate strategy.

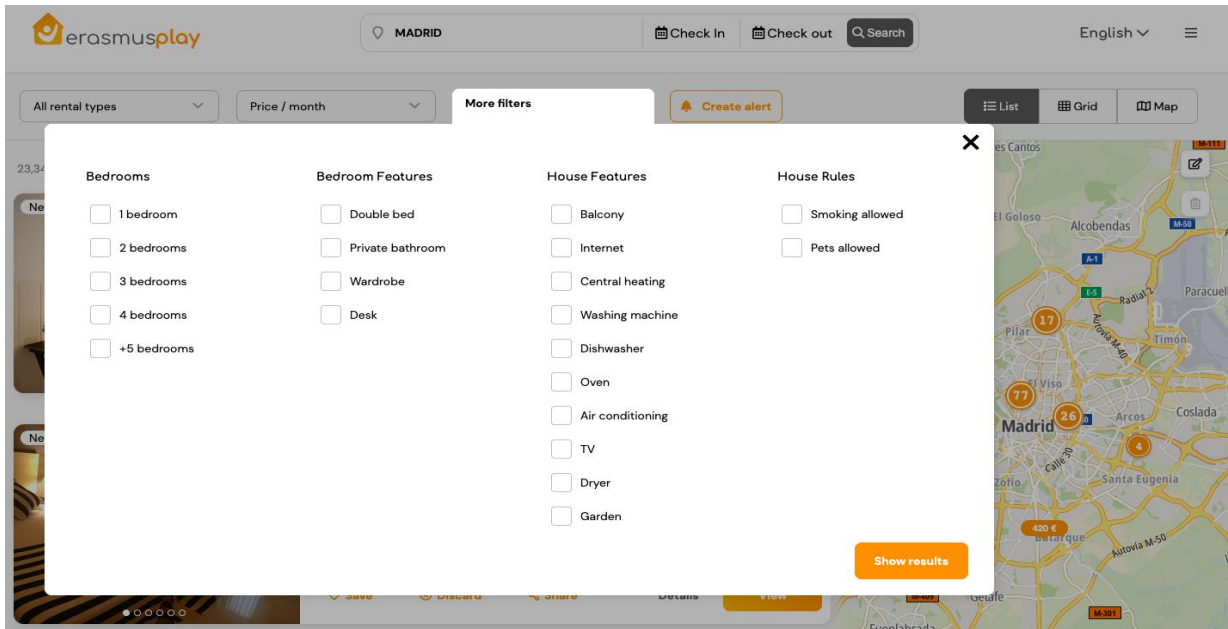
Outbound Logistics: This includes all the activities Erasmus Play does to make the service available to the customer. This includes the online platform that they provide, with a modern and friendly use system that is more focused on young consumers who know what they are looking for when booking accommodation. In this way, they are able to filter by prices, set a maximum budget, by the type of rental property (studio, shared room, private room, entire place or residence) by house features, such as a balcony, internet, TV, Dryer... and also by the house rules (if pets or smoking is allowed). Another important feature regarding the innovation of the platform is, that you can see on the map where the different places you can rent are located in the city. This represents an important advantage for a student looking to book a room near the place he or she is studying. In figures 4 and 5 the interface of the platform and the different filters you can apply are showed.

Figure 4. Platform interface



Source: Erasmus Play Website

Figure 5. Filters of the platform



Source: Erasmus Play Website

Sales and Marketing: Regarding the marketing of the platform, Erasmus Play is very active on social media channels (Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok). In this way, the platform makes itself known to its users. Especially Instagram is where the platform is more active. Among the content they upload, the most outstanding are the posts in which they give advice on how to find accommodation safely, solve doubts and also upload information and photos of cities and Erasmus destinations. Finally, their Instagram also features a way of reaching out to students through memes and "Erasmus" jokes. Thus, the platform manages to create a close relationship with the consumer who feels identified with the content on the website.

Service: People who are looking for something more specific or want help to find accommodation can directly contact Erasmus Play on Instagram or through their email. In this way, an employee of the company will quickly reply with all the accommodation available that covers the client's needs. Regarding the after-sale service of the company, Erasmus Play, wants to make sure that the tenants that booked accommodation on the platform are happy with what they have. In this regard, they send questionnaires and have an E-Mail contact available for all kinds of concerns that can arise. For example, if someone is not comfortable with the room they booked, they can contact Erasmus Play, and although the partners are the ones who have to look for another room in case that person is not satisfied with what they got, Erasmus Play has more direct contact with the partners and therefore make the process of looking for a solution quicker. Moreover, its good service is also reflected in all the positive reviews and satisfied people on the internet.

- **Support Activities**

Procurement: includes all those activities whose aim is obtaining the good or service. In this way, it can include, among other things, sourcing, negotiating terms, or making purchases (Jenkins, 2021). As Erasmus Play is not a registered accommodation provider they have to establish relations and negotiations with those who are. This includes the search for partners who follow their standards. In this regard, Erasmus Play also screens

out those providers who do not offer verified accommodation, which is one of the characteristics of the company. To provide a verified service.

Technology development: These can include all the efforts the company makes to stay up to date. This is essential for any company, in any sector, as the market is constantly evolving and it is, therefore, necessary to make these investments to prevent the company's main competitors from overtaking them in this area. One example of this in Erasmus Play is the “*Erasmus community report*” This report consisted of infiltrating as an Erasmus student in different chats (WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook, Discord...) for approximately 9 months, with the aim of finding out first-hand what they are doing and how they are behaving and also knowing the difficulties that a student goes through and how he/she is solving them nowadays. This research allowed them to see where the company is in relation to the whole mobility roadmap and also will make them realize if there are any gaps or needs in the industry not yet covered where we can enter and that will help to generate the “Erasmus community”.⁷ In this way the company recently launched an App to facilitate student mobility and connect students even before they arrive at their destination.⁸

4.2 Resources and capabilities

The study of a company's resources and capabilities shall be analyzed to see what type of differentiation it has with respect to its competitors. In this section, an analysis of the different types of resources, capabilities and finally the VRIO analysis of Erasmus Play will be carried out to see if it has any competitive advantage in the market in which it operates.

We can differentiate between tangible and intangible resources. Both will be discussed in more detail below.

⁷ See more here: <file:///Users/mariareis2001gmail.com/Downloads/Informe-Comunidad-Erasmus-Play.html>

⁸ See more here: <https://www.eleconomista.es/actualidad/noticias/12299572/05/23/erasmus-play-lanza-su-app-con-mas-de-500-destinos-en-europa-para-facilitar-el-alojamiento-a-los-estudiantes-.html>

4.2.1 Tangible Resources

Tangible resources are those that are material, which allows them to be quantified and measured. We can highlight the material resources and financial resources:

Material resources: those that are needed to develop their business activity. These include their headquarters at the Ceminem in Campus Río Ebro or their digital equipment among other things.

Financial Resources: Erasmus Play closed an investment round worth 200,000 euros last May.⁹ This will allow Erasmus Play to do several things. First, they will continue with the development and technological improvement of the platform to provide a better experience. Also, the main goal is to optimize the relationship with the actual partners because "there are more and more of them and they are more diversified. We want to improve the relationship between students and the platform" said David Casanova, CEO of Erasmus Play.

This will also allow Erasmus Play to strengthen its national and international operations, moreover their focus will be on four countries: Spain, France, Italy, and Germany.

Overall, tangible resources play an important role in the development of their activity.

4.2.2 Intangible Resources

A company's intangible resources are those that have no physical appearance and cannot be measured or quantified but have an indisputable influence on its value. In this case, we can talk more in-depth about their human resources and brand recognition.

Human Resources: Within this type of resource, we could include the continuous training of its workers, which is then reflected in the quality of the services provided by Erasmus Play. Another important factor within human resources is the degree of motivation or incentives for improvement, which could be reflected, for example, in the company's level of remuneration, since the more the workers earn, the better they will do their job.

⁹ See more here: <https://www.eleconomista.es/actualidad/noticias/11773934/05/22/Erasmus-Play-cierra-una-ronda-de-inversion-de-200000-euros-para-optimizar-e-impulsar-su-plataforma-de-alojamiento-para-jovenes.html>

Recognition and Brand Name: Over the years Erasmus Play has been operating in the market, it has gained some recognition in the industry of student housing. Especially, with its internationalizing strategy in Europe, where they make efforts in European Universities to be a reference for their student mobility. They make sure, Universities know what they do and how they act. A differentiating factor is, that they get invited to partner Universities ¹⁰ to give information to students on how to book accommodation safely when they are doing an Erasmus, what they have to keep in mind to avoid fraud, and also information about the specific rental processes in European countries.¹¹

4.2.3. Capabilities

The resources and capabilities of a company study the firm's own potential to achieve a competitive advantage based on the idea that it is the firm's own resources that lead it to select the opportunities, yet to be exploited, for which it is best equipped, for which it is best equipped. (Arranz, 2000)

One of Erasmus Play's greatest strengths is the great potential for growth in the industry, which as we have seen above is set to grow strongly in the coming years. Another capacity, which is focused on the same line of growth, is to know what students want, what they do, and how they move when it comes to doing an Erasmus, in short, to know what consumers demand to be able to adapt the service to them and make it indispensable.

4.3 VRIO Analysis

Following the naming of Erasmus's Plays resources, through VRIO analysis we will study whether any of these are valuable (V), rare (R), inimitable (I) or organised (O).

Valuable. Given that Erasmus Play's core business resides in the accommodation sector, the products or service is standard and quite similar in companies of the same sector.

¹⁰ See list of partner Universities: <https://erasmusplay.com/es/players.html>

¹¹ See an example here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDgBMFLAA_g

Thus, Erasmus Play tries to add value to its service by improving processes like giving a more personal service and more information for consumers to be able to take a more conscious decision. They could offer student assistance services, such as advice on visas, insurance, transportation, and other issues related to living abroad. This could help students solve any problems or difficulties that may arise during their stay. Also, a student community of international students could create value in Erasmus Play by allowing students to share information and experiences about their time abroad. This could include discussion forums, chat groups, and other communication tools. This is also part of their goal by creating the Erasmus Play App.

Rarity. Due to the main characteristic of the products mentioned in the previous paragraph, it is difficult to find many unique resources. However, concerning the marketing strategy of the company, we can see that it sets itself apart from what the competitors are doing. Their social media influence with their presence on TikTok, YouTube, or Instagram giving all types of information to students is unique. Not only do they talk about necessary documents or bureaucratic arrangements students must comply with when participating in a mobility program, but also interesting content, such as “Best Cities in Germany to do an Erasmus” or “Erasmus in Rome: Guide for students”.¹² Regarding its strategic alliances with universities and organizations, we can highlight one of them. For example, the student app “*Studo*” an Austrian Start-Up that develops digital solutions for German and Austrian universities.¹³ Up to this moment, it’s the most used App among students in those countries. Lastly, Erasmus Play has an extensive network of providers and a database of verified accommodations and activities that is also rare.

Inimitability. As we have seen previously, competitors are numerous in the market. The Erasmus Play platform is costly to imitate due to the complexity of the technology required to create and maintain a database of internationally verified accommodation. In addition, the extensive network of providers and the trusted relationship they have built with them are difficult to replicate. Moreover, Erasmus Play is the first student accommodation comparator that works hand in hand with Universities all over Europe,

¹² See more content here: https://www.youtube.com/@erasmusplay_es

¹³ See more here: <https://studo.com/en/>

and this characteristic of being there where the students are and knowing their needs firsthand and thus satisfying them is something more difficult to simulate.

Organisation: This is a difficult characteristic to achieve, as there are many companies offering similar products and services. Overall, we can say that Erasmus Play's platform is well organized and has a professional team in charge of supplier management and customer service also the company has a clear and well-defined strategy to expand into new markets and improve its service offering.

In summary, we can conclude that Erasmus Play doesn't have a clear sustainable and valuable competitive advantage in the international accommodation market. It is still very new in the market and even though, they have some rare and inimitable resources, the platform overall doesn't achieve this advantage over its competitors. Nevertheless, the company has a well-structured organization and a clear strategy to expand and improve its service in the future.

4.4 SWOT Analysis

The development of the SWOT analysis, where we will explain the strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T) of Erasmus Play, will allow us to see how the company is performing at this moment. Moreover, its main goal is to increase awareness of the factors that make business decisions or develop business strategies (Bigelow, Pratt, & Tucci, 2023)

Strengths

- As mentioned before, Erasmus Play has an extensive network of providers and a database of verified accommodations and activities, providing confidence and security for students.
- The platform offers a one-stop solution for international students looking for accommodation and activities abroad, saving time and effort for students, due to the fact that students can easily compare all the verified options without having to worry about fraud. Another important point is, that students are able to read a lot of information about their Erasmus destination.¹⁴

¹⁴ See more here <https://erasmusplay.com/en/madrid/erasmus-in-madrid.html>

- The company has a professional and well-organized team that takes care of supplier management and customer service.
- Erasmus Play has a clear and well-defined strategy to expand into new markets and develop new ways to satisfy students' needs by staying up to date with all the news in the market. Moreover, their vision of being the reference platform for student mobility, accompanying students throughout their experience is what sets them apart from its competitors.

Weaknesses

- Erasmus Play's platform is relatively new to the market and may be less well-known compared to other established options.
- The company may face challenges in expanding into new markets due to cultural and regulatory differences in each country.
- As a student-focused accommodation platform, students will be looking for accommodation in the months leading up to the start of the university year, so there is a seasonality in the demand for accommodation.

Opportunities

- The international student market is large and growing, providing opportunities for expansion and growth for Erasmus Play. This expected increase will be a response to the European Commission's proposed increase in the Erasmus program budget of €14.7 billion for the period 2021-2027.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the digitization and adoption of online solutions, which may increase demand for Erasmus Play's platform.
- The company can explore new business opportunities, such as offering additional services or expanding into new emerging markets.

Threats

- Erasmus Play may face fierce competition from other platforms offering similar services. As we have seen before, consumers are not loyal to these kind of accommodation platforms.
- Regulations and cultural differences in each market may present challenges to the company's expansion.
- Economic uncertainty and the COVID-19 pandemic may negatively affect the demand for Erasmus Play's services and its ability to grow and expand.

4.5 CAME Analysis

After the SWOT analysis has been developed, we must study what processes or decisions Erasmus Play should take to correct its weaknesses, face its threats, maintain its strengths and exploit its opportunities, which is why we will now develop the CAME analysis.

- **Exploit opportunities:**

- As it was mentioned before, Erasmus Play can leverage its extensive supplier network and verified database to expand into new emerging markets. They aim to have accommodation all over Europe but their main markets are Spain, France, Italy, and Germany, in which they want to focus.
- The company can enhance its service offering by adding new services to improve the user experience, such as organizing events and cultural activities for international students. These features can be exploited especially in the new app, where international students can “match” with other Erasmus students to find roommates in their Erasmus destination and get the important information they may need.

- **Maintain strengths:**

- The company can defend its market position by improving its online presence and implementing new marketing strategies to attract more international students. They can attract more international students by providing more value to them, e.g giving them information that they deem useful for their mobility (costs of living in their Erasmus destination, what bureaucracy they have to go through in that country, if there are any local discounts for students, what regions of the city are best for students...)

- Erasmus Play can improve the quality of its services and establish stronger relationships with its suppliers to compete effectively against other platforms offering similar services.

- **Face threats:**

- The company can improve its market presence by identifying new business opportunities and expanding into new emerging markets. Their financial situation puts them in a position to do this.

- Erasmus Play can improve its service offering by adding new features and benefits that will attract more international students. As mentioned before, by giving them more information.

- **Correct weaknesses**

- The company needs to address its weaknesses, such as lack of market recognition and economic uncertainty, to remain competitive in the market.

- Erasmus Play can improve its ability to compete by improving the quality of its services.

In summary, Erasmus Play can leverage its extensive network of providers and verified database to expand into new emerging markets and improve its service offering to attract more international students. The company needs to address its weaknesses, such as lack of market recognition and economic uncertainty, to remain competitive in the market. In addition, Erasmus Play can improve the quality of its services and build stronger relationships with its providers to compete effectively against other platforms offering similar services.

5. Strategy

5.1 Competitive Strategy

Now that we have analyzed all the aspects regarding Erasmus Play, we can say that the company follows a differentiation strategy in the industry. It sets itself apart from its competitors by providing personalized service to students. Moreover, it not only provides the accommodation that students need when doing mobility but all the aspects that evolve around it. By having over 110 partner Universities in Europe, they know what students demand and are there to cover their needs.

5.2. Corporate Strategy

Corporate strategies are closely related to the growth and development of the company. There are two main issues to analyze, first, the growth direction where we can study the degree of vertical integration of the company, its product diversification, and its geographical diversification. Secondly, the growth method: where we could see whether the company has used its own resources and capabilities to optimize their business process (internal growth or development) or whether it has opted for an external growth method (where we find, mainly, strategic alliances and mergers/acquisitions).

Erasmus Play's corporate strategy focuses on several key aspects: Regarding its growth direction, the company focuses on its geographical expansion. Erasmus Play seeks to expand to new study destinations in Europe and worldwide, to become a reference platform for global student mobility. As was mentioned before, in its first year of operation, Erasmus Play focused on cities in Spain such as Barcelona, Madrid, and Valencia. However, as the platform has grown, it has expanded to other European countries such as Portugal, Italy, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, and Greece. Currently, Erasmus Play offers accommodation and activities in more than 200 cities across Europe and continues to expand as demand for the platform grows. The geographic expansion of Erasmus Play has enabled more university students to enjoy and enrich their international experience. Moreover, regarding product diversification, this is seen with the new launching of their App, by creating a new app to connect international students and help them find roommates, meet people before they arrive and read information about their Erasmus destination before they leave. This new app expands the company's offering beyond its original offering of accommodation booking for international students. In addition, Erasmus Play ensures that the new app is easy to use and well designed to provide an enjoyable user experience. This helps attract and retain users. To further implement their corporate strategy, Erasmus Play focuses on promoting and marketing the new app, through their partner universities or their social media channels.

Moving on, Erasmus's Play's growth method growth direction is also relevant to mention when talking about its corporate strategy. Regarding its external growth, its collaboration with universities and other partners enhances the international student experience and ensures that the platform responds to market needs. Moreover, they allow Erasmus Play

to pursue an opportunity more quickly by making use of the other party's resources and knowledge. Fewer resources are needed than if the company pursues an opportunity on its own.

These strategic alliances include reputable European universities including among others, the *Université libre of Bruxelles*, *Università di Catania* or the *Universidad de Navarra*. Overall, it sums up more than 110 Universities all over Europe. Other institutions and associations play an important part in their corporation strategy. These associations provide value to students' life, such as *Santader SmartBanks*, *Recruiting Erasmus*, *Aiesec* or *Studo*.¹⁵

Now, regarding its internal growth, in which Erasmus Play uses its own resources, strives to constantly improve its platform, incorporating new functionalities and services to meet the needs of international students, universities, and accommodation owners. This also includes their investments in marketing and promotion to increase its visibility and attract more international students, accommodation owners and universities to its platform. Finally, Erasmus Play is also attentive to the needs and demands of its users and ensure that they meet those needs. This includes keeping information about Erasmus destinations up to date and providing a safe and reliable platform for international students to connect and find roommates.

In short, Erasmus Play's corporate strategy focuses on its geographical expansion, its product differentiation, its collaboration with key partners and universities, and on the continues improvements of the platform and the social media channels.

5.3 Social Strategy

Erasmus Play's social strategy is focused on fostering social inclusion, cultural diversity, and environmental sustainability. To achieve this, Erasmus Play focuses on different key aspects. First, they try to promote social inclusion. Erasmus Play works to ensure that all international students have access to high-quality accommodation and services, regardless of their socio-economic background. In addition, the platform promotes

¹⁵ See more here: <https://erasmusplay.com/es/players.html>

integration and cultural exchange between international students and local communities. Moreover, they encourage cultural diversity and strive to provide information and resources to help international students understand and appreciate different cultures. Also, they seek to minimize its impact on the environment by promoting sustainable practices on the platform and working with accommodation owners and other businesses to encourage sustainable practices in their operations.

Lastly, they actively engage with the international student community and work to support and enhance the student experience abroad.

In short, Erasmus Play's social strategy focuses on promoting social inclusion, cultural diversity, and environmental sustainability, while actively engaging with the international student community to support and enhance their experience abroad.

6. Conclusions

The evolution of Erasmus Play in the international market will depend on several factors, such as student demand, competition in the market, and changes in the preferences of consumers.

Hence, with the analysis carried out, we can highlight several things about the evolution of Erasmus Play. First, its growth opportunities. If demand from students seeking accommodation and internships abroad continues to increase, Erasmus Play could expand into new markets and increase its service offering to meet the needs of users. Moreover, as we have seen, the conditions for this to happen are met: strong financial support of the public organisms to increase mobility and to give financial aid.

Secondly, if new competitors appear in the market or existing competitors improve their offerings, Erasmus Play could face increased pressure to remain relevant and competitive in the market. In this case, it may be necessary for the platform to invest in new technologies or in improving its service offering to stay ahead of the curve. This means, providing more value to consumers so that they prefer Erasmus Play over other accommodation platforms. A new technological innovation (such as the Erasmus Play App) could give the company an advantage to attract new business opportunities and increase its revenues (also by reinforcing its existing strategic alliances and forming new ones). It is relevant to stay up to date with students' needs and be there for them (by

conducting market research and user surveys to understand their needs and preferences and adapt its service offerings accordingly.) As the vision of the company said “ to be the reference platform for student mobility, accompanying students throughout their experience”

Thirdly, diversifying its service offering, for example, by offering services related to labour mobility or online training courses (this is also related to their strategic alliances)

In summary, the evolution of Erasmus Play in the international market will depend on several factors, but the platform can take steps to anticipate and adapt to changes in the industry, such as monitoring trends, investing in new technologies, establishing strategic alliances and diversifying its service offering.

7. Bibliography

- Arranz, D. S. (2000). *El potencial competitivo de la empresa recursos, capacidades, rutinas y procesos de valor añadido*. Retrieved from Dialnet: <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=187780>
- Bigelow, S., Pratt, M., & Tucci, L. (2023, February). *SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis)*. Retrieved from TechTarget: <https://www.techtarget.com/searchcio/definition/SWOT-analysis-strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-and-threats-analysis#:~:text=SWOT%20analysis%20is%20a%20framework,or%20establishing%20a%20business%20strategy>
- Bouchrika, I. (2023, May). *Research*. Retrieved from 10 Student Housing Trends: 2023 Data, Preferences & Insights: <https://research.com/education/student-housing-trends>
- Castanyer, G. (2022, June 21). *Educaweb*. Retrieved from 35 años del programa Erasmus+ en cifras: <https://www.educaweb.com/noticia/2022/06/21/35-anos-programa-erasmus-cifras-20957/>
- Chaves, R. (2021, November 5). *International Students Is Growing And All Property Owners Should Know About This!* Retrieved from Student Room Flat: <https://student-room-flat.com/host-post/the-number-of-international-students-is-growing-and-all-property-owners-should-know-about-this/>
- Erasmus+ annual report*. (2020). Retrieved from Publications Office of the European Union: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/36418>
- Domic, T. (2022). *Efectos de red ("Network effects")*. Retrieved from Centro Competencia: <https://centrocompetencia.com/efectos-de-red-network-effects/>
- Generación Millennial, ¿Fieles o infieles a las marcas?* (2014, June 12). Retrieved from PuroMarketing: <https://www.puromarketing.com/88/22392/generacion-millennial-fieles-infieles-marcas>
- Gutiérrez-Rubí, A. (2014, December 22). *6 rasgos clave de los millennials, los nuevos consumidores*. Retrieved from Forbes México: <https://www.forbes.com.mx/6-rasgos-clave-de-los-millennials-los-nuevos-consumidores/>
- Jenkins, A. (2021, March 24). *What Is Procurement? Types, Processes & Technology*. Retrieved from NetSuite:

<https://www.netsuite.com/portal/resource/articles/accounting/procurement.shtml#:~:text=It%20includes%20a%20range%20of,are%20received%20and%20maintaining%20records>

Luna, J. (2021, May 7). *Normativa de alquiler de casas en España*. Retrieved from Leialta: <https://www.leialta.com/blog/alquiler-casas-espana/>

Malherbe, D. (2017, June 6). *¿Qué es la Cadena de Valor de una Empresa?* Retrieved from Teamleader: <https://www.teamleader.eu/es/blog/que-es-la-cadena-de-valor-de-una-empresa>

Peiro Ucha, A. (2015, September 2015). *5 fuerzas de Porter*. Retrieved from Economipedia: <https://economipedia.com/definiciones/las-5-fuerzas-de-porter.html?nab=1>

Presupuesto de la UE a largo plazo para 2021-2027 y paquete de recuperación. (2023, March). Retrieved from Consejo de la Unión Europea: [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/es/policies/the-eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget-2021-2027/#:~:text=e%20marco%20financiero%20plurianual%20\(MFP,750%20000%20millones%20de%20euros](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/es/policies/the-eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget-2021-2027/#:~:text=e%20marco%20financiero%20plurianual%20(MFP,750%20000%20millones%20de%20euros).

Samsukha, A. (2023, March 30). *How To Develop An App Like Airbnb: Cost, Features & Tech Stack*. Retrieved from Emizentech: <https://www.emizentech.com/blog/develop-an-app-like-airbnb.html>

Santander. (2023, February 17). *5 fuerzas de Porter: qué son y para qué sirven*. Retrieved from Becas Santander: <https://www.becas-santander.com/es/blog/5-fuerzas-de-porter.html>

Serrano, M. (2020, April 15). *¿Alquiler de temporada o alquiler turístico?* Retrieved from Adeitur: <https://adeitur.com/alquiler-turistico-o-alquiler-de-temporada/>

Silina, Y. (2018, June 20). *Football and gunfire: Childhood on the frontline of the conflict in Ukraine*. Retrieved from Unicef: <https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/en/stories/football-and-gunfire-childhood-frontline-conflict-ukraine>

WEBS CONSULTED

- <https://concepto.de/estrategia/>
- <https://www.esn.org/news/esn-esu-launch-survey-analyse-challenges-finding-accommodation-international-students-abroad>
- <https://www.universityliving.com/>
- <https://www.eleconomista.es/aragon/noticias/11193612/05/21/Erasmus-Play-el-comparador-de-alojamiento-para-estudiantes-que-crece-en-Europa.html>
- <https://www.eleconomista.es/aragon/noticias/10956612/12/20/Erasmus-Play-incia-su-expansion-internacional-en-Europa-para-ayudar-a-los-estudiantes-a-buscar-alojamiento.html>
- <https://publuu.com/flip-book/100196/273258>
- <https://research.com/education/student-housing-trends>
- <https://www.muypymes.com/2018/03/16/spotahome-compra-la-plataforma-estudiantes-erasmusu>
- <https://marketing4ecommerce.net/spotahome-compra-erasmusu-se-posiciona-lider-europeo-del-alquiler-residencial-online/>
- <https://housinganywhere.com/>
- <https://www.spotahome.com/es>
- <https://www.aluni.net/es/>
- <https://www.universityliving.com>
- <https://erasmusu.com/es>
- https://www.savills.com/research_articles/255800/334907-0#studentnumbers
- <https://www.emizentech.com/blog/develop-an-app-like-airbnb.html>