

Tsiseb Cultural Center Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Case Description: The case takes place in a nature conservancy in Namibia. A local villager wants to open an attraction displaying local customs, traditions, art, and dance for tourists. This case can be used as an introductory strategy case study in at least three types of classes, strategic management, entrepreneurship, or hospitality management. The case presents many opportunities for students to analyze various business topics, including start-up financing, competitive and industry analysis, questions of pricing, product, and promotion, government relations, tourism development, and even ethics. Further, students can be required to put together a practice business plan in an entrepreneurship class as part of a problem based learning approach. It is designed to be taught in either a 1 hour class or a 1.5 hour class with student preparation taking between 2 and 3 hours depending on the questions assigned.

Case Synopsis: Lanny Matsuib hopes to open his own culture center representing the Damara culture of Namibia. Due to his work ethic and skill Lanny has become an assistant manager at the White Lady Lodge learning how to manage people and something about the tourism industry. As a local villager, Lanny also has the cultural knowledge and social networks needed to create and operate such a center.

In his work at the Lodge, Lanny has found a need to provide tourists with an activity during the evening hours. On the Tsiseb Conservancy and in the nearby town of Uis there is nothing for the tourists to do during the evening. They come to this area in Namibia to view historical rock art as well as the local wildlife. There are no restaurants, shopping areas, or entertainment venues near the lodge and those that operate within Uis offer little more than an evening meal. This dearth of activity combined with Lanny's experience preparing and putting on cultural shows of songs and dances of the tribes in the area suggest a possible marriage of opportunity and skills to craft a solution of benefit both to the increasing numbers of tourists and the local villagers. However, he has to find the necessary funds to launch the venture and he has to navigate the complexities of starting a business in rural Namibia where business opportunities are heavily influenced by personal and government relationships.

Careful discussion of this case will provide students with insights into the analytical tools entrepreneurs use in their strategic decision making. It also has the potential to introduce students to a context where much of what they have been taught about business will apply but where some contextual differences may affect how things get done.