

SeaWorld Marketing Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Amusements Parks are vital part of the tourism industry in today's world. SeaWorld is one amongst many of these parks. The company has been around for quite a while but has recently experienced loss in revenue and customers, if marketed properly it has great potential in making a come back and generating ROI. Attendance at the top U.S. theme parks in 2016 grew less than 1%, the slowest rate seen in 5 years. (*Orlando Sentinel, 2017*). In the next year's upcoming marketing plan will be focused on the goal of aiding SeaWorld's current situation. The company shares common ownership so marketing is undertaken on a group basis.

The marketing objectives we aim to address, execute and accomplish are to increase revenue in through pricing strategies and to increase target market that will include the families, youth and millennial leisure travelers. With the two competitors such as Universal Studios and Disney World that serves more likely in all segments will be challenging but with SeaWorld's unique zoological concept will attract more travelers across the globe especially those who requires level of promotions that are budget friendly.

In order for SeaWorld to remain competitive we have decided future direction must focus on marketing and advertising the new attractions, changes in exhibits, and their values on animal conservation. The company has faced loss of customer trust due to changes in the perception of keeping wild animals in captivity, because of this they will be dedicating a large portion of their resources to a strong marketing plan that aims to rebuild customer relationship. The company will continue to showcase zoological concepts as part of its educational program.

SeaWorld is targeting families and children that aims educational and environmental experience with group packages available, current pricing strategy for online daily deals is proving to be effective in attracting more visitor attendance. They will also lay the foundation for interacting amongst their community by asking for feedback on what new attractions to implement. This marketing plan will also encourage existing customers to return and give them a second chance with exclusive offers just for them. In order to spread the word about all of their efforts they will be using advertising mediums including media, prints, collateral, brochures and internet. This will provide SeaWorld with an opportunity to leverage its core competencies as regards to servicing families and their children for educational experience as well as leisure travelers for a much needed getaway. These opportunities will take place with schools in all levels encouraging them on environmental field trips showcasing special packages.

The promotional collaboration with environmental channels will impact our customers in building interest to visit. A prompt update on websites and social media featuring different promotional packages will create traffic and make customer engagement be seen. SeaWorld will be looking to be aggressive increasing 15% stock by the end of the year and 20% increase in revenue. With all the interesting feature and active social media practices, the company is looking into creating web traffic with potential growth in social media followers mainly Instagram and Facebook. Overall, we are driving to outperform the competitors in 2018 through the execution of the marketing plan.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

- **Market:** SeaWorld has contributed to the country's economic health and is a revenue generating business in the industry. It has been highly competitive in its market. Encountering political issues from the past and present has also brought impact to the growth of revenue. It capitalizes on human fascination with sea creatures, as well as a desire to preserve nature. Admissions, amusement parks, dining facility derives majority of revenue in ticket sales.
- **Customer:** The company appears to be broad in demographic target market and have to adjust accordingly not to limit the target market. The focus is targeting young audience that are dependent to their parents by offering an educational and enriching environmental concept experience. This will not only limit its market but also includes leisure travelers mainly the millennials. While anyone can enjoy the attractions at SeaWorld, the intention is to appeal to those interested in marine life and those seeking to gain a greater understanding of marine life. Because of SeaWorld's unique feature of amusements and parks families and their children will be more engage in looking into the promotional packages and ticket rates. With a vast target audience, the company ensures that they attract all state and territories as number of visitors differ on season. We have to diversify, spending major component in our target market. It is also remaking its image into highly-branded, family friendly, education related similar to the competitors. It would seem that the SeaWorld's seeks to engage those that are interested in a more immersive experience than a typical local zoo, while also providing a more academically

stimulating experience than purely entertainment-centric competitors, such as the Disney parks or Universal Studios.

- Competition: The company competes directly with branded amusement and theme parks in which the 2 major competitors are Walt Disney Company and Universal Studios in which have increased revenue in the first quarter of this year. Although, Disney offers the magical experience and Universal Studios offers ultimate Hollywood experience as seen through movies and televisions. Universal studios performed the best of the 2016 opening of the Wizarding World of Harry Potter resulted into a double-digit gain. (*Orlando Sentinel*, 2017). SeaWorld aims to be unique as it features zoological and conservation of animal concept. 2
- Property: SeaWorld Entertainment is a leading theme park and entertainment company that blends imagination with nature. For more than 50 years in the industry, it became one of the known company that collaborates with zoological concepts. The entertainment destinations in the U.S. comprise theme, water, zoological parks with various rides and attractions. The company offers a diversified entertainment for all ages. Rides, games, themed parks, parades, special events, children's area are available for the customer's enjoyment and leisure time. Among its many distinguishing attractions is the ability to interact on an up-close and personal level with a variety of sea creatures. The combination of this and the aforementioned attractions create an experience that is beyond that of a typical zoo or amusement park. SeaWorld's marketing and business model comprised primarily in driving revenue through ticket sales, in-park dining, and merchandise sales.

SWOT ANALYSIS

- **Strengths:** Offers one of the most affordable ticket prices in comparison to its other theme park competitors. A one day ticket for Seaworld is \$79 where as its competitors Disney and Universal both sell one day tickets for over \$100. It appeals to several different markets including schools, camps, and children for its educational experience and teenagers, families, and couples for its rides and unique excursion experiences. SeaWorld also has multiple locations that allows them to target different parts of the country.
- **Weaknesses:** Competes with globally recognized companies. Without the live animal component it loses its main attraction point. They receive criticism for their trained animals and captivity practices. One of their greatest weaknesses is due to the public relations hit they experienced with the release of the Netflix film *Blackfish*, a documentary that bashes many aspects of the company. In addition, the park has far fewer rides and are not as commonly recognized in comparison to its competitors.
- **Opportunities:** They can easily form relationships with schools and summer camps as a field trip location. Now that they are stopping the orca shows they can create a new main point of attraction. They have the opportunity to rebrand, including a new emphasis of animal conservation and ethical animal practices.
- **Threats:** Changes in environmental beliefs has led to different perceptions in what is right or wrong. Many people now view the experiences provided by SeaWorld as “wrong”. These changing views threaten the company's image and sales. Eliminating the “live animal” shows causes them to solely be a theme park with few rides.

MARKETING OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

- **Company's Mission Statement:** “To apply basic physiological research efforts and state-of-the-art reproductive technologies toward wildlife species management and conservation” (SeaWorld).
- **Values:** Caring for the animals and inspiring its customers to care as well.
- **Focus:** Provide a unique experience, different than any other theme park. Combine entertainment and education into one affordable, family friendly activity.
- **Goals:** “ To consider the impact of our decisions, operations and investments; create measurable and continuing value for key stakeholders; and to build trust within our communities.”
 - Get 10,000 customer votes as to what they want the new main attraction to be by April.
 - Sell out of the 2,000 discounted Groupon tickets by June.
 - Reach 300,000 Instagram followers and 15,000 likes on Facebook by December first.
 - Have an updated Website by May 1st.
 - Reach a 15% stock increase by the end of the year.

ACTION PLAN

- Calendar of Events:
 - January: Begin rebranding right as the new year begins

- March: Run a marketing campaign to get customers to vote on what they would like the new main point of attraction to be.
- May: Run promotional discounts on tickets in order to re-encourage sales.
 - Promotions can include discounted Groupon tickets
 - Discounted annual pass
 - Bundle deals for multiple day passes and combinations of SeaWorld with Busch Gardens tickets.
- July: Start implementing new point of attraction
- September: run a social media campaign
- November: Work with community to promote environmental consciousness.
- December: Build relationship with nearby companies and plan next year's marketing efforts.
- Promotional Plans
 - Engage guests with promotions that emphasize environment and social consciousness
 - Collaborate with other limited time engagements, such as Discovery Channel's Shark Week, to offer timely, unique promotions and experiences
 - Create special promotions and engagements emphasizing contemporary environmental issues, such as global climate change
 - Promote the brand as a steward of the environment and sea life, thereby countering the fallout of *Blackfish*
- Ticket rates

- Have accessible ticket prices
 - offer exclusive discounts for return customers
 - have sales if ticket sales drop significantly
- Create a pricing matrix that offers guests strong value and creates the illusion of special pricing opportunities
 - Potential customers are more likely to purchase tickets if they feel like they are taking advantage of a unique opportunity or special rates
 - Implement a top-down approach to ticket sales by offering the most premium tickets and packages first, as prospective guests will likely reject the first offer but be more enticed by successive offers
- Incentivize ticket sales for SeaWorld employees
 - Create an upsell program similar to those found in resorts and hotels
 - Utilize consulting firms such as Frontline Performance Group to enhance sales techniques and implement incentive-based sales solutions
- Packages
 - Create packages that offer opportunity and value, while also driving revenue for SeaWorld
 - Collaborate with nearby businesses, such as hotels/resorts and even competitors, such as Disney, Universal Studios, and Busch Gardens
 - Create all inclusive packages that include lodging and food/beverage
- Advertisements, Media

- Create engaging advertisements that appeal to both new consumers and prior guests
- Utilize social media, which has become pervasive across generations
- Utilize the metrics, analytics, tracking features of tech-based advertising
- Diversify advertising approaches--engage in informative advertising, persuasive advertising, reminder advertising, and reinforcement advertising
- Website update
 - Streamline information, offering simplicity and accessibility
 - Optimize the website especially for use with smartphones and mobile technology
- Budget
 - Budget funds towards both precision and holistic marketing
 - Commit to a marketing budget equivalent to 20% of revenue
 - Cut extraneous positions and funnel that payroll towards marketing spending
 - SeaWorld has cut 320 jobs across its 12 locations to end duplication of functions as part of \$25 million in potential cost savings (Palmeri, 2017)
 - This will help the funding of marketing, which will ideally help offset the 35% decline in stock value (Palmeri, 2017)
 - Consider the 5 factors affecting budget decision
 - Stage in the product life cycle

- SeaWorld is an established brand, yet faces an uphill marketing battle, similar to that of a new product, due to the backlash from *Blackfish*
- Market share and consumer base
 - SeaWorld has a unique market share because of its amusement park/aquarium hybrid model, yet the consumer base has dwindled due to *Blackfish*
- Competition and clutter
 - Competition is steep due to entertainment stalwarts such as Disney and Universal Studios
 - Clutter is also due to the attraction of local zoos and aquariums
- Advertising frequency
 - Advertising frequency has dwindled due to budget constraints and needs to expand
 - Elimination of jobs should help expand the funds available for advertising
- Product substitutability
 - SeaWorld is easily substituted by either giants such as Disney or Universal Studios, or well-funded local aquariums

PROJECTIONS AND LONG-TERM GOALS

- Projections
 - A change in marketing

- Rise of holistic marketing
- Rise of ROI marketing
- Rise of marketing science
- Rise of both automated and creative marketing
- Rise of precision marketing
- Saturation of the market by competitors
 - Competition from purely entertainment driven products, such as Disney and Universal Studios
 - Disney also features animal exhibits and rides at their renowned Animal Kingdom
 - SeaWorld also faces competition from higher-end local zoos, which not only provide premium aquatic exhibits, but also other apparatuses which pique zoological interest
- Disinterest due to a stagnant product
 - Exhibits do not change often enough
 - The product fails to adapt to differing generational interests
 - SeaWorld does not captivate enough interest to precipitate frequent return visits, like Disney and Universal do
- A greater incorporation of technology
 - Mobile technology, such as smartphones, is the one of the most effective and pervasive ways to captivate today's consumers

- Mobile technology provides a consistent platform that can be readily streamlined and optimized to changing marketing demands
- Smartphones offer numerous levels of engagement, including apps and seemingly omnipresent internet access
- “Four distinctive characteristics of a mobile device: (1) It is uniquely tied to one user; (2) it is virtually always ‘on’ given it is typically carried everywhere; (3) it allows for immediate consumption because it is in effect a channel of distribution with a payment system; and (4) it is highly interactive give it allows for geotracking ad picture and video taking” (Kotler, 2015)
- Growth in social responsibility
 - “Effective internal marketing must be matched by a strong sense of ethics, values, and social responsibility” (Kotler, 2015)
 - “Raising the level of socially responsible marketing calls for making a three-pronged attack that relies on proper legal, ethical, and social responsibility behavior” (Kotler, 2015)
 - “The most admired--and most successful--companies in the world abide by high standards of business and marketing conduct that dictate serving people’s interests, not only their own” (Kotler, 2015)
 - “Marketers must exercise their social conscience in specific dealings with customers and stakeholders” (Kotler, 2015)
- Long-term goals

- Drive internal marketing
 - “...requires that everyone in the organization accept the concepts and goals of marketing and engage in identifying, providing, and communicating customer value. Only when all employees realize their jobs is to create, serve, and satisfy customers does the company become an effective marketer” (Kotler, 2015)
- Grow social media presence
 - “Social media allow consumers to become engaged with a brand at perhaps a deeper and broader level than ever before” (Kotler, 2015)
 - Social media consistently garners more followers, allowing for greater penetration of seemingly countless markets
 - Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat offer consistent connections between brand and consumer
 - Consumers can be wholly immersed by a brand
 - Social media platforms create a way to quantify the popularity of a brand, namely through the number of followers that a brand has
 - Just as social media was a major domain for the outcry precipitated by *Blackfish*, it can also be a medium for SeaWorld’s rebound
- Adapt to new generations
 - Millennials are increasingly becoming the dominant consumer force
- Incorporate social responsibility and ethics

- Become synonymous with companies such as P&G, Whole Foods, Coca-Cola, Johnson & Johnson, and Google
- Emphasize not only present social responsibility, but a message of sustainability--the ability to meet humanity's needs without harming future generations
- SeaWorld is unique because it can incorporate ethics and sustainability on three levels--human, animal, and environmental
- Engage in substantial corporate philanthropy--this will make people feel good about spending larger sums of money at SeaWorld
- Embrace cause-related marketing
 - "...links the firm's contributions toward a designated cause to customers' engaging directly or indirectly in revenue-producing transactions with the firm" (Kotler, 2015)
- Encourage existing business to increase return visits
 - Long-term financial viability cannot be achieved solely through reliance on one-time visitors
 - SeaWorld must continuously captivate consumers, prompting them to return time and time again
 - SeaWorld must keep an eye to the future--engage children with the hopes that they will one day bring their children to SeaWorld
- Avoid major marketing weaknesses--the "deadly sins" that a marketing program is in trouble (Kotler, 2015)

- The company is not sufficiently market focused and customer driven
 - Solution: use more advanced segmentation techniques, prioritize segments, specialize the sales force, develop a clear hierarchy of company focus, foster more customer consciousness in employees and company agents, and make it easy for customers to reach the company and respond quickly to any communication
- The company does not fully understand its target customers
 - Solution: Do more sophisticated consumer research, use more analytical techniques, establish customer and dealer panels, use customer relationship software, and do data mining
- The company needs to better define and monitor its competitors
 - Solution: Establish an office for competitive intelligence, hire competitors' people, watch for technology that might affect the company, and prepare offerings like those of competitors
- The company does not properly manage relationships with stakeholders
 - Solution: Move from zero-sum thinking to positive-sum thinking; and do a better job of managing employees, supplier relations, distributors, dealers, and investors
- The company is not good at finding new opportunities
 - Solution: Set up a system for stimulating the flow of new ideas
- The company's marketing planning process is deficient

- Solution: Establish a standard format including situational analysis, SWOT, major issues, objectives, strategy, tactics, budgets, and controls; ask marketers what changes they would make if they were given 20 percent more or less budget; and run an annual marketing program with prizes for best plans and performance
- Product and service policies need tightening
 - Solution: Establish a system to track weak products and fix or drop them; offer and price services at different levels; and improve processes for cross-selling and up-selling
- The company's brand-building and communications skills are weak
 - Solution: Improve brand-building strategies and measurement of results; shift money into effective marketing instruments; and require marketers to estimate the ROI impact in advance of funding requests
- The company is not organized for effective and efficient marketing
 - Solution: Appoint a strong leader and build new skills in the marketing department, and improve relationships between marketing and other departments
- The company has not made maximum use of technology
 - Solution: Use the internet more, improve the sales automation system, apply market automation to routine decisions, and develop formal marketing decision models and marketing dashboards

EVALUATION

The effectiveness of SeaWorld's marketing plan is contingent upon its ability to rebound from the remaining consumer sourness caused by *Blackfish*. Once this level of damage control is achieved, and SeaWorld can market towards a fresh future, the marketing strategy will be greatly supplemented by the influx of funds created by the elimination of a substantial number of jobs. SeaWorld must maximize its marketing strategy in the areas of mobile technology and social consciousness. These are prevailing norms in terms of modern consumerism, especially among the newest booming segment of the market--the Millennials. If SeaWorld can achieve a unique platform as an immersive hybrid aquarium and amusement park, it will garner significant attention--enough to truly impact both the market and the larger necessity of sustainability. It can use its notoriety to collaborate with other major brands as well as take a stand on environmental issues, such as climate change and sanctioned whaling in countries, such as Norway and Japan. As a whole, the preponderance of any marketing evaluation would consider both SeaWorld's success in a presently uphill battle and its ability to adapt to a modernized, tech-driven marketing apparatus.

CONCLUSION

_____ SeaWorld Entertainment will have potential growth in the industry year over year with millions of visitors annually. From the above analysis, the market, its target segment, the innovative marketing plan and strategies created with unique zoological concept it is projected that the company will gain advantage and increase sales in the market. By following the marketing plan, the company will meet its goals. Thus, it is recommended that the channel of

Sales and Marketing should be holistic, creative and incorporates technology. The strategies and implementation, we found the company's success with unlimited growth potential. With 50 years of standing still in the industry combined with all the attractions, equipped with media information, social media presence, customer engagement, internal marketing innovations, packages and exclusive offers, SeaWorld Entertainment is poised to claim the top spot in the market. The promotional and advertising initiatives taken creates awareness and social consciousness. While SeaWorld's proven track record speaks for itself, the park must continue to brand itself according to current trends and anticipate future trends. It must also collaborate with other brands and integrate itself with complementary brands. Likewise, it is worth noting that the aforementioned strategies and potential for success is overshadowed by the backdrop of *Blackfish*, which proved to be extraordinarily detrimental to SeaWorld's brand image. The unflattering insight into the treatment of orcas at SeaWorld skewed the reputation of the brand, causing the public ridicule and severe backlash. The public and celebrities alike took to social media as part of a significant outcry. As part of a corresponding effort to funnel a substantial amount of funds to marketing, SeaWorld has cut 350 positions this year (Palmeri, 2017). Ideally, with this increase in resources for advertising, SeaWorld is prepared to drive more revenue and can achieve the goals that are set to boost. This is essential in a highly saturated entertainment market, which is as booming as ever in the post-recession economic climate.

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