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THE ZOO IN FOREST PARK MARKETING PLAN

Honors Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration

In the Bertolon School of Business
at Salem State University

By

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Commonwealth Honors Program
Salem State University
2020

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The Zoo in Forest Park Marketing Plan

Abstract:

Marketing is crucial for the success of any business. The goal of this thesis is to create a 1 year marketing plan for The Zoo in Forest Park, in Springfield, MA. The Zoo in Forest Park is a private non-profit zoo located in the middle of a public park. The Zoo in Forest Park opened 125 years ago and has undergone several large changes throughout their years of operation including downsizing to their current size of 735 acres ("The Zoo in Forest Park", 2020). The primary change they are attempting to currently undergo is that they would like to change their focus from entertainment to education, rehabilitation, and conservation. The marketing plan will create a strategy for rebranding The Zoo based on a situation analysis, product analysis, and competitive analysis. This plan will be used by The Zoo in Forest Park to update their old marketing materials, host new events and recreate more programs that reflect the new mission of education, conservation and rehabilitation.

Brand Analysis:

Name:

The Zoo in Forest Park and Education Center

Mission Statement:

"The Zoo in Forest Park & Education Center is a non-profit organization governed by the Forest Park Zoological Society. Situated in Forest Park, a 735-acre woodland park in Springfield, The Zoo features exotic and native animals representing a large variety of species.

The Zoo is dedicated to wildlife education, conservation and rehabilitation. Our Zoo on the Go, Close Encounter Guided Tours and Discovery Programs offer a variety of educational programs for children and adults of all age groups and interests. The Zoo allows guests to explore multiple aspects of science while having fun. Zoo Camp, during both winter and summer school vacations allows children ages 6-13 to explore nature, discover wildlife and meet exotic creatures.

The Zoo is home to over 200+ exotic and native species, almost 90% are deemed non-releasable to the wild due to injury, illness or permanent disability ("The Zoo in Forest Park", 2020).

Logo:

Shortened Logo:

Situation Analysis:

SWOT Analysis:

Strengths:

- The Zoo has been around for a very long time and is well known in the area
- Located in the middle of a very popular public park
- Only zoo in the city of Springfield
- ZAA accreted unlike some of their competitors
- Offers unique programs such as Zoo on the Go and Zoo Camp
- Has an expansive internship program
- Focused on conservation, rehabilitation and education
- Engaging events for all ages such as Wine Safari and Brew at The Zoo
- Lower admission prices than other zoos in the area

Weaknesses:

- Past Scandals: Snowball, Wally etc.
- Much smaller zoo than others in the area and not able to expand due to
- Less exotic animals than other zoos because they are focusing on getting animals that need to be conserved or rehabilitated
- Located in a public park so guests must pay for park admission and zoo admission

Opportunities:

- Several new TV shows are about the behind the scenes life of Zoos, this could create interest
- Use TV shed for an entry video that is played when guests walk into The Zoo to inform them of upcoming events, the programs The Zoo offers and some fun facts about the animals
- Online educational programs during quarantine
- Create a partnership with the café outside of The Zoo

Threats:

- Negative public opinions on zoos, people think zoos are hurting animals by taking them out of their natural habitats to live in captivity
- Cost of expensive new enclosures
- Cost of getting new animals

- Less options for new animals because they only want animals that need to be rehabilitated
- Less exotic animals due to new mission
- Covid-19 delaying zoo opening
- Cost of feeding animals while The Zoo remains closed

PEST Analysis:

Political: The Animal Welfare Act is a federal law that regulates the treatment of animals in Zoos. This Act protects zoo animals from unfair treatment such as poor living conditions including unclean and unsafe homes (Grech, 2017). In order to comply with these rules, all zoos must be inspected to ensure that they are up to code. The Endangered Species Act was created in order to protect animals that are considered to be endangered or threatened (Grech, 2017). This act aims to protect the natural homes of animals and to support conservation efforts.

Economic: Due to the current pandemic, the United States has experienced a lot of economic changes in a very short time. Zoos and other businesses have been closed to the public until at least May 18th. This can be a struggle for businesses that make their money from in person visits such as zoos. In order to combat the hardships businesses are facing, the government has increased funding to the U.S. Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) (Walsh & Winfield, 2020). The PPP program is to help small businesses and nonprofits continue to pay their employees (Walsh & Winfield, 2020). Since zoos are closed to the public, utilizing the PPP is a reality for many zoos in

the United States. The CARES Act is another resource for small businesses to use in order to receive financial assistance during the pandemic (Walsh & Winfield, 2020). In Massachusetts, many zoos and museums are asking the state government for extra funding to help zoos and other nonprofits cover their operating costs (Mohl, 2020).

Sociocultural: Sociocultural changes in the macro environment directly correlate to changes in business. There is a clear trend of consumers caring more about animal welfare. In the past, zoos and circuses mistreated their animals and there was not a public uproar. Now, consumers want to see conservation and rehabilitation efforts in zoos. Netflix released the docuseries Tiger King which showed audiences the inhumane actions of the G.W. Zoo (Yahr, 2020). This docuseries caused outrage from fans and animal rights groups because it exposed the practices such as inhumane breeding, mistreatment of baby tigers, improper feeding and euthanizing healthy animals (Yahr, 2020). The uproar associated with the release of Tiger King proves that public opinion is shifting towards caring more about animal rights and fair treatment.

Technological: Technology plays a large part in very business including zoos. The changes in technology used by customers offers an opening for zoos to market themselves. The majority of people have smartphones and many businesses are developing apps as a way of keeping up with the technological innovations.

Product/ Service Analysis:

Information found on The Zoo in Forest Park & Education Center website

Season Duration:

April 1st- October 31st

Hours:

10am-4pm Daily

Admission Prices:

- Adult: $10.00
- Military & Senior: $7.00
- Children (Ages 1 – 12): $5.00
- Children (Under Age 1): Free
- Forest Park Parking Cost: $3 for in state vehicles, $5 for out of state vehicles

Membership Program:

All Memberships Include:

- "Unlimited free admission for the 2019 season
- 4 animal feed coupons
- 10% discount at the gift shop
- Zoo Camp & Zoo Party discounts
- Special event discounts
- Access to guest speakers
- Discounts to local and non-local zoos
- For Family Exclusive membership holders: 1 Close Encounters guided tour during the 2019 open season" ("The Zoo in Forest Park", 2020)

Pricing Options for Memberships:

- Exclusive Family Membership:
    - Cost: $150
    - The membership extends to two adults, three children and two guests. This membership also includes a guided tour.

- Family Plus Membership:
    - Cost: $85
    - This membership extends to two adults, three children and two guests

- Adult Couple Membership:
    - Cost: $60
    - This membership covers two adults

- Senior Couple Membership:
    - Cost: $50
    - This membership extends to two adults 62 years and older

Current Event Offerings:

- **Beautiful Zoo Donations:** This event helps The Zoo collect some very useful items to spruce up The Zoo. Some of the items that people donated were flowers, mulch and plants

- **Big Y Community Bag Program:** The Big Y in East Longmeadow, MA partnered with The Zoo to fundraise. When customers buy a reusable bag at Big Y, a portion of the proceeds goes to The Zoo
- **Brew at The Zoo:** Brew at The Zoo is an annual event hosted at The Zoo where customers 21+ buy tickets that allow them access to the beer tasting. This event features several local breweries, live music, food trucks and lawn games.
- **Celebrity Bartending**: Is a fundraiser where local celebrities bartend for the event goers in order to raise tips to donate to The Zoo.
- **Eggstravaganza:** The Zoo celebrates Easter with an Easter Hunt around The Zoo.
- **Father's Day:** On Father's Day every year, fathers who come to The Zoo are offered free admission.
- **Make-It A Zoo**: An event where guests get to learn about how enrichment items are made for the zoo animals
- **Memorial Day**: All veterans are given free admission to The Zoo on Memorial Day as a way to thank them for their service
- **Mother's Day**: Mothers are given free admission to The Zoo on Mother's Day
- **Night of Networking with YPS**: The Zoo partners with the West River Chamber and the Young Professionals Society of Greater Springfield to host a networking event
- **Red Robin**: A fundraising event where when customers present a coupon and a portion of their bill gets donated to The Zoo
- **Spooky Safari**: Is a Halloween celebration where children come in costume and trick or treat

- **Teacher Appreciation Day**: Teachers who bring their valid ID will receive half priced admission to The Zoo.
- **Texas Roadhouse**: Guests who bring The Zoo's coupon to Texas Roadhouse on the scheduled day, will have 10% of their bill donated to The Zoo.
- **Wine Safari** : An event that allows guests to enjoy a glass of wine and interact with several animals.
- **Zoo Night**: An event in partnership with Bright Nights where guests can stop by The Zoo while making their way through the lights show.

Current Product Offerings:

- **Zoo on the Go:** This program is a traveling educational experience. You can reserve either a 30 minute or a 60 minute presentation, where the Zookeeper's will bring animals and educational materials.
- **First Encounters:** Teaches children 5 and under about different animals while allowing them to interact with the animals.
- **Zoo Camp:** Is a program where children ages 6-13 can spend their school breaks learning about and interacting with animals.
- **Keeper-in-Training (KIT):** Allows teens ages 14-17 to learn about the world of a zookeeper and animal care.
- **Counselors-in-Training (CIT):** Is a new program where teens 16 and older help The Zoo's educational department with Zoo Camp and other educational related activities

- **Keeper Internship**: Allows college students in related science fields to gain hands on experience in animal care.

Target Market:

Our target market is segmented into three groups: schools, businesses and families in the Hampden Country area.

Our ideal customers are families located in the Western Massachusetts area. We hope to target families looking for an activity that the entire family can enjoy. Ideally, our customer would like to get involved in other aspects of The Zoo such as birthday parties, Zoo Camp, CIT program and other events. The age range of our ideal customer ranges from child to senior which is shown in the child friendly offering, the 21+ only events and in the senior membership program. According to the Census the median income in Hampden County is $53,403 ("Hampden County", 2018). The total population is 469,116 people with a majority of the population being over the age of 18 ("Hampden County", 2018).

Another large group of our target market is schools in the Western Massachusetts and North West Connecticut area. Ideally, we are targeting schools that are looking for field trip opportunities and in class demonstrations. Below is the map of school in the immediate area that are potential customers ("Schools Near The Zoo", 2020).

Lastly, the last target market is businesses in the area. The zoo relies on businesses for donations and for partnership programs. According to the 2012 survey of Business Owners there are 30,995 firms in Hampden County ("Hampden County", 2018). Hampden County has several local businesses as well as national companies such as Six Flags and Friendly's.

Competitive Analysis:

Lupa Zoo:

Information found on the Lupa Zoo website

Location:

Ludlow, MA (25-30 minutes from The Zoo in Forest Park)

Hours:

10am-5pm

Season:

April 4th-Weekends in November

Size of the company?

They are a 20 acre zoo with 500 animals

Features:

Educational programs, special events, and space to host birthday parties

Membership Options:

- Family Membership: $125
- Grandparent Membership: $125
- Individual Membership: $75

Daily Admission Prices:

- Adults:$15,
- Seniors:$13,
- Children(2-13): $10

What forms of communication do they use?

Facebook and their website

Southwick's Zoo:

Information found on the Southwick's Zoo website

Location:

Mendon, Massachusetts (1hr and 20 mins from The Zoo in Forest Park)

Hours:

10am-5pm

Season:

April 6th- October 31st

Size of the company?

They are on 300 acres and have 850 animals.

Features:

Rides, Zip Line, Adventure Maze, Pony Rides, Camel Rides, Express Train, Sky Ride, On-site restaurant and "keeper talks" featuring animals (Southwick's Zoo).

Membership Options:

- One adult: $102
- One child: $72
- One Senior: $72
- One adult and one child: $174+
- Two adults: $182
- Two Adults and One Child: $252
- Two Adults and Two Children: $322
- Two Adults and Three Children: $382
- Two Adults and Four Children: $422+ $22 extra for each additional child after four children

Daily Admission Prices:

- Adults: $28
- Children: $24
- Seniors: $22

What forms of communication do they use?

Facebook and website

Porter's Five Forces:

Threat of New Entrants: For The Zoo in Forest Park, the threat of new entrants is low. There are already several zoos in a relatively small area which would not make the Western Mass area attractive for new entrants. The barriers to entry are also very high which makes entering the zoo industry unattractive.

Threat of Substitutes: Southwick Zoo and Lupa Zoo are both in the Western Massachusetts area so they are possible substitutes for The Zoo in Forest Park. These zoos also have educational programs such as school field trips so they are able to act as a viable substitute for The Zoo in Forest Park.

Bargaining Powers of Buyers: The bargaining power for buyers, in this case the would be The Zoo buying new animals, varies. In some situations such as conservation or rehabilitation centers looking for a permanent home for animals, the bargaining power of the buyer is high because they have the ability to say no. However in other cases, the buyer may be looking for specific animals and in smaller zoos such as The Zoo in Forest Park, that are more price sensitive, they have less bargaining power.

Bargaining Powers of Suppliers: The bargaining power of suppliers is high in the zoo industry. Places such as other zoos, conservation centers and animal rehabbers hold more power than the buyer. It is possible that the suppliers could find other zoos to do business with. It is not uncommon for animals to be shipped across the country so if zoos are

looking for a specific animal, they may face challenges if their supplier does not want to comply.

Rivalry Among Existing Competitors: The level of rivalry between competitors is high. Lupa Zoo and The Zoo in Forest Park are only 11 miles apart so they share the consumers in that area. These two zoos have their differences; however, they have several of the same animals and feature many of the same events such as discounts for mothers on Mother's Day and a Halloween celebration.

Marketing Objectives:

- Increase donations by 5 % over the next year
- Increase educational visits by 5% over the next year
- Increase number of zoo visits by 5% over the next year

Market Strategy:

Price*:*

- Maintain prices and maintain position as cost leader in area
- Find cost-effective ways to increase value
- Due to Covid-19 outbreak reassess membership pricing for partial year memberships

Product:

- Maintain current product offerings
- Focus on only accepting non-releasable animals, animals needing rehabilitation and conservation efforts
- Expand event offerings to appeal to all age groups and target markets

- Place emphasis on rehabilitation, conservation and education in branding

Promotion*:*

- Expand promotional offerings
- Increase amount of social media advertisements

Place:

- Increase amount of distribution channels
- Expand online presence if The Zoo cannot be open for guests

Schedule:

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak the schedule is subject to change. The Zoo is currently not open and does not have a set reopen date so at this time I am unable to produce a thorough schedule for the marketing plan.

Sales Promotions:

Learn something new every day at The Zoo!

This summer long campaign seeks to push the message of education to its customers while providing them with an interactive experience. This promotion rolls out a new program called the Keeper Card. This Keeper Card (pictured below) is a stamp card that the guests hold onto each time they come. They pay a onetime fee of $7 for the Keeper Card and a Zookeeper Hat. Once they buy the hat and card, they pay $3 for each activity after. The activities are to be completed in The Zoo so each time they visit they feel like they are getting a new and unique experience. For example a drawing scavenger hunt (pictured below) around The Zoo, a fact finder worksheet, a word search or a map worksheet (pictured below). Each time they visit The Zoo, they can complete an activity and get a sticker to put on their hat and a stamp for their Keeper Card. Once they get 5

stamps on their Keeper Card, they can cash it in for a free children's admission ticket or a small gift from the gift shop. Purchasing five activities and the Keeper Card would cost a total of $22 and if they get one free trip to the zoo or a small gift that would only cost $5. The Keeper Cards and activities and activity pages could be printed cheaply. The hats and stickers can be bought in bulk for a low cost and could be used for other events such as Zoo Camp or birthday parties at The Zoo, making this a cost effective promotion. This promotion has the potential to get families to do repeat visits and gain more revenue.

Name: **Date:**

ANIMALS AROUND THE WORLD

The Zoo in Forest Park

Directions: Walk around The Zoo and use the signs to fill in the blanks with animals that live in that part of the world!

Drawing ScavengerHunt

Directions: Walk around The Zoo using the signs to find and then draw animals that match the descriptions

Draw an animal that is endangered	**Draw an animal that is being rehabilitated**
Draw an animal that is native to New England	**Draw your favorite zoo animal**

Donations and Celebrations

In order to attract more donations from local businesses, I suggest creating a sales promotion where if businesses donate to The Zoo, they are given the chance to host a staff outing at The Zoo. The size of the gathering will determine how large of a donation they need to make. Many companies like to host staff bonding activities as well as participate in charity programs so this promotion allows both parties to benefit. The Zoo could also benefit from the exposure by advertising their upcoming events to the companies which can help boost ticket sales.

Partial Season Membership

Once The Zoo is able to reopen, instead of keeping the regular membership fees the same, create a sales promotion where guests are able to purchase a discounted membership for the shortened season. Doing this will create more membership sales because people will see this as a better deal than paying full price for a shortened season. Offering a discounted option will also appeal to the price sensitive buyers. As a part of this promotion, you can also give guests the option to pay full price for the membership and add extra perks to the offer to make it worthwhile. For example, provide the option to pay full price, but also add the perk of some VIP Zoo experiences such as naming a baby animal, a special animal interaction or a guided tour.

Zoo on the Zoom:

Since schools have had to switch to online schooling, many teachers are scrambling to find ways to teach from home. Offering an online version of The Zoo's Zoo on the Go program may be a cost-effective way to earn extra revenue. In order for this program to be executed, The Zoo would create an online Zoom meeting with the schools and host the program entirely over video chat. The same lesson could be taught and this would allow the keepers to showcase some of the larger animals that in the past they could have never shown on a traditional Zoo on the Go. The travel fee would be removed, offering a cheaper option for the program. This would also be a good way for schools to keep students entertained and engaged while learning from home. This promotion could also be used to honor the Zoo on the Go reservations that were made prior to quarantine.

Marketing Channels:

Social media:

Social Media is a very lucrative marketing channel. The Zoo in Forest Park has 1600 Instagram followers, is liked by 9,500 Facebook users and has had over 17,000 people

check in on Facebook. By continuing to post behind the scenes content about what goes on at The Zoo, the audience will stay interested. Social media is also a great way to advertise upcoming events and promotions. A suggestion of how to expand The Zoo's social media presence is to create Snapchat and TikTok accounts. Animals are very popular on TikTok and many large zoos such as San Diego Zoo have very large followings. Creating a permanent Snapchat geotag for The Zoo would help remind park goers to stop by The Zoo. At last Summer's Brew at The Zoo event, I created a snapchat filter for the event which guests and park goers were able to use (pictured below). This filter was featured on people's stories and seen by people on their friends list which spreads to word the event. I suggest using filters in the future because they are cost effective and have the potential to reach a lot of people. Continuing to pay for event advertisements for Facebook and Instagram users in the area is a great way to keep the community updated and engaged.

Email blast:

Email blasts are a low-cost way to engage current members. Email blasts break down the upcoming events and news. This channel could be extended by offering special promotions only available in the email blast such as a free grain cone with admission. To

gain more contacts, sign up boxes can be placed around The Zoo such as in the ticket booth and gift shop. These sign up boxes will have applications to join the email blast list as well as a sign explaining the benefits for joining. This will help increase the amount of contacts as well as increase the engagement because of the new promotions.

Massappeal:

Massappeal is a local lifestyle news show that has time slots for local businesses and events to advertise. Featuring The Zoo on Massappeal once a month keeps Massappeal viewers informed on what's new at The Zoo. Having television coverage of the animals and events helps build The Zoo's reputation in the area. This marketing channel builds trust among customers because the show hosts are trusted by their viewers so it builds trust when they endorse the events.

Website:

The Zoo's website will continue to be a primary marketing channel. In order for the website to be successful it must remain up to date with all the current events. Including a section about what animals are at the zoo and some facts and the stories of the animals is a great way to push the message of conservation, education and rehabilitation.

Entry Video and Signage within The Zoo:

The TV located at the entrance of The Zoo features a promotional and educational entry video about The Zoo (link below). This video provides a background of The Zoo and its mission as well as features information about several of programs such as Zoo Camp and birthday parties at The Zoo. This TV can also be used to display the upcoming events and daily events such as Keeper Talk times. The signage around The Zoo is also a marketing

channel because it can be used to advertise upcoming events and to advertise donation opportunities. Signage in The Zoo could also feature QR codes that bring customers to the link of the event. These QR codes could also be placed on the exhibit signs which could bring them to a link within the website that has more information on that particular animal.

https://youtu.be/KFOT9aa1UEA

Personal relationships with schools:

Since The Zoo is very focused on their educational efforts, it would be beneficial to create personal relationships with local schools and colleges. Elementary schools tend to take students on field trips, so by maintaining a relationship with a school, they could be incentivized to come back yearly or book a Zoo on the go program. There are several colleges in Springfield and the surrounding towns. It could be beneficial to partner with some of these colleges and host a college night at The Zoo. Most colleges have budgets set aside for planning programs for students to attend which could increase revenue. This event could take place for a few hours after The Zoo closes so it would not interfere with the regular zoo traffic and would either be during the Spring or Fall semester. This event would be open to college students who provide a Student ID. Lawn games and food trucks could be set up in The Zoo to attract more attendees. Additionally, The Zoo and local colleges could partner to host educational events on campus that feature animals. An example flyer for the event is pictured below.

FPZ App:

I suggest creating an app for The Zoo called the FPZ App. This app can feature up to date park opening times which can be very helpful on days where the weather is bad, so customers know if The Zoo is open or not. This app would also have a virtual map of The Zoo that shows you where the animals are located. Using GSP, as zoo goers walk around The Zoo, they will be able to see exactly where they are on the map and what animal they are near. It will also feature information about events that are currently happening in The Zoo such as daily Keeper Talks. This app could also have small profiles on each of the animals so when customers visit the different enclosures, they feel like they know the animals. The FPZ App could be used to purchase tickets and keep track of memberships

in the Ticket Wallet. Push notifications could also be utilized to keep users informed of events and promotions.

Conclusion:

The Covid-19 outbreak leaves a lot of uncertainty for The Zoo. This plan is intended to be a 1 year marketing plan, however due to the recent conditions, it may be challenging to meet the original marketing objectives. This plan seeks to offer solutions for The Zoo to use during the quarantine period, as well as solutions for the traditional season. If implemented, the effectiveness of this plan will be able to be tracked by the event attendance, number of visitors, popularity of promotions and engagement in new distribution channels.

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