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Case Study- Port Discovery Children's Museum

## **Case Study Analysis Part I – Environmental Scan**

### **I. Economic Scan**

Baltimore, Maryland, like many other large cities in the U.S., has a high concentration of populations living below the poverty level as well as far above the poverty level. The Port Discovery Children's Museum has responded well to this dramatic gap. They offer free or reduced admission to low-income families, while receiving large donations, matching gifts, and in-kind gifts from individuals and corporations in the area. They have managed to balance the scales, making the museum accessible to all community members.

For the 2013 fiscal year, Port Discovery received \$3,986,171 in annual earnings. Individuals and businesses contribute to the majority of this annual income. In the Annual Report distributed by Port Discovery earned income and individual giving are grouped in the same category, making the report a little more difficult to unpack since much of the individual giving is marketed as a membership. From my estimate about \$2,340,000 can be attributed to individuals and businesses, making up 58% of total income. Moreover, there is about \$1 million in ticket sales and other earned income (e.g. program fees and merchandise) that make-up 13% of total income. Finally, \$1,160,000 combined from the state of Maryland, City of Baltimore, Department of Education, and other local entities, making up 29% of total income.

After reviewing Annual Reports from 2011-2013, I found that Port Discovery has a consistent income varying between 3.5-4 million dollars per year. A majority of expenses, nearly 71%, go towards program services. The second largest expense, at 19%, is fundraising and marketing. I was surprised and pleased to find the final 10% of expenses is dispersed among the administration. Port Discovery appears to have excellent budgeting skills and I imagine they frequently assess expenses and income in order to maintain this steady budget.

Other outside variables to consider when analyzing the Port Discovery are the amount of tourists in the city and the location. Baltimore receives an average of 20 million tourists per year, many who are families. I am unsure of how many of these tourists visit the children's museum, and whether the visit is planned or a contingency for poor weather. Since there were only 267,000 guests in 2013, I can only assume a small portion were tourists, if any. It would behoove Port Discovery to reach these audiences, whether through promotions or more advertising. Lastly, the museum is in a central location, near Fells

Point, large hotels, and other popular attractions, it is easy to stumble upon. Unfortunately, there may also be competition with The Aquarium, the most visited museum in the city, who serves an average of 1.2 million guests per year. Of course, this can be attributed to the narrow audience the Port Discovery Museum reaches, while the Aquarium may interest a far wider age range.

## **II. Demographic Scan**

The general audience being served at Port Discovery is children ages 2-10 and their families. When looking at the numbers, children ages birth-12 make up the largest group served at 52%. Adults, which can refer to family members, teachers, or other caregivers, make up the other 48% of attendees.

There is some ethnic diversity in the city of Baltimore since 63% of residents are African American and 31% are Caucasian, but there are small percentages of any other ethnicities. Because of this, I can assume most visitors are either African American or Caucasian. Further, Baltimore, like many other large cities, has a somewhat even gender distribution of 52% female and 48% male.

When considering guests' educational background, it can be assumed that most visitors are being educated or have some form of higher education. The children are likely attending pre-school or elementary school, especially due to the educational programs and field trips offered by Port Discovery. Since 80% of Baltimore residents have graduated high school it can be further concluded that the caregivers in attendance likely have a high school diploma. In addition, since 24% of Baltimore residents have received some college or a degree, a smaller number of these caregivers are educated beyond secondary school.

When comparing Port Discovery to other children's museums in the U.S., they have some similar trends. Most guests at museums like the Children's Museum of Indianapolis, the Portland Children's Museum, or the Houston Children's Museum are well educated or currently involved in formal education. A major contrast, though, is ethnic diversity. Port Discovery serves a large black community, the Houston Museum serves a large Latino community, and conversely the Portland Children's Museum serves a large white community. Different accommodations and cultural considerations are needed when creating exhibits and programs in these different regions.

Due to the underrepresented communities of Chinese, American Indian, and Latino ethnicities in Baltimore, Port Discovery may be creating an environment that disregards these groups. They could greatly benefit from these groups, especially since the East coast serves many foreign tourists, if they would consider their interests. Moreover, guests would benefit from learning more about the heritage and culture of these underrepresented groups.

### **III. Cultural Scan**

The general culture of the organization is one of education and accessibility. Port Discovery prioritizes low-income families and children with disabilities. Though the Board of Directors is diverse in age, gender, and race, it lacks economic diversity. Members of the board are generally in the upper middle or upper class. Members hold administrative positions at banks and universities; are partners of law firms; own businesses; and one member is the head coach of the Baltimore Ravens. The board's elite social status could contribute to the ability for many guests to be admitted into the museum with discounted or free admission.

The city of Baltimore strongly supports educational and arts programming. State and local government, as well as businesses offer financial support in order for organizations to offer various educational programming, many with a focus in the arts. Baltimore offers a myriad of arts participation and education opportunities around the city. Baltimore has a well-known symphony orchestra, lyric opera, and theatre company. Institutions and universities like Peabody Institute (the oldest music conservatory in the U.S.), John Hopkins, and Maryland Institute College of Art offer prestigious arts education. The proximity to so many educational institutions leads to several arts programs offered by the museum such as Art a la Cart, Under the Dome, and Hospi-diddles.

Baltimore is the most visited city in Maryland, with the Inner Harbor being the second most visited area in the city. As mentioned previously, they receive approximately 20.4 million visitors per year, allowing Port Discovery the opportunity to reach out to touring families. Due to the comparatively low attendance numbers, the museum may not be taking tourists into consideration.

Port Discovery has somewhat adapted to the new advances in technology. The website is easily navigable, they offer virtual tours, and have some promotions requiring technology access. They also distribute an e-newsletter with upcoming events and deals that is easily accessed by using a personal e-mail address. They have also tried to integrate technology and technology learning into some of their exhibits, like Nano and Nanofabulous.

### **IV. Other Environmental Elements**

Several elite individuals and groups in Baltimore support the Port Discovery either by funding or service. Much of the museum's success can be attributed to the dedicated board members and community members. Further, the museum and its programs are acclaimed in reliable magazines (like *Forbes*), on websites (like [www.fodors.com](http://www.fodors.com)), and news sources (like PBS). Additionally, the Port Discovery Children's Museum is a Reciprocal Network Participant through the Association of Children's Museums, meaning an individual may be a membership at one museum and apply to other participants. Therefore, travelling families may visit the museum without an extra expenditure.

## Case Study Analysis Part II – SWOC Analysis

	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
<b>Cultural Product(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Family-oriented learning activities</li> <li>-Special interest in underserved communities</li> <li>-Accessibility for children with disabilities</li> <li>-Considered a top 20 children’s museum in the nation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Permanent exhibits that children may lose interest in after several visits</li> <li>-Programming focused on younger guests (birth-6 years old)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Partner with other educational organizations to offer more opportunities for school-aged guests</li> <li>-Mentor program for pre-teens/teens to involve a larger audience</li> <li>-Involve more ethnic groups through heritage/cultural education initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Maintaining top 20 children’s museum status</li> <li>-Continued growth and financial support</li> </ul>
<b>Pricing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Affordable for most participants</li> <li>-Offer several discounts (i.e. military, AAA, AARP)</li> <li>-Memberships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Guests ages 2 &amp; up pay same price</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Offer discounted or free admission to younger children (birth-3 years)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Free admission for low-income families, which make up large population of Baltimore</li> </ul>
<b>Place (Access)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Located in Inner Harbor of Baltimore, along with several other organizations (i.e. Aquarium, Baltimore Information Center, major hotels)</li> <li>-Travelling exhibits and programs for guests that are unable to come to physical location</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Single location in a large, low-income city</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Open a second location in another popular area, possibly outside of Baltimore</li> <li>-Provide parking for paying guests or offer discounted parking with validated pass</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Limited and/or expensive parking for guests</li> </ul>
<b>Promotional Efforts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Offer events for adults, as well as children and families</li> <li>-Bi-monthly events where admission is discounted to all guests</li> <li>-Reciprocal Network Participant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack self-promotional efforts</li> <li>-Rely on outside sources (i.e. magazine/newspaper articles, community partners) for advertisement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Offer coupons to tourists</li> <li>-Other promotional offers to residents of Greater Baltimore Area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Competition with several other nearby museums and attractions</li> <li>-Little budget for advertising</li> </ul>

### References:

10 Best Children's Museums in the U.S. (2014, December 31). Retrieved October 20, 2015, from <http://www.fodors.com/news/photos/10-best-childrens-museums-in-the-us#>

Annual Report. (2014). Retrieved November 20, 2015, from <http://www.portdiscovery.org/about/annualreport>