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Marketing Plan : MNCH

MMC / Winter2014

I. OVERVIEW

BRIEF HISTORY OF MNCH

The Museum of Natural and Cultural History (MNCH) was created in 1935, and is Oregon's primary repository for anthropological and paleontological collections. MNCH houses hundreds of thousands of ethnographic and archaeological objects, fossils, and biological specimens from Oregon, the Pacific Northwest, and around the world.

SUMMARY OF MARKETING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Museum of Natural and Cultural History aims to expand their audience. Specifically, a main concern is to increase attendance of young adults and students, beginning with the engagement of the UO community. Similarly, MNCH aims to establish a stake in their community, breaking the perception that history museums are either boring and/or elitist. In addition to their immediate community, MNCH hopes to gain a stronghold in the already saturated tourist market. Ultimately, MNCH foresees a shift from an emphasis on collections and research towards one that values visitor experience. MNCH has a desire to not only maintain a reputable academic authority in anthropology and paleontology, but to also fascinate and entertain.

MARKETING STRATEGIES

The above goals and objectives can be achieved through the implementation of audience engagement, pricing and operational restructuring, and social media strategies. These strategies are in accordance to four communication principles, as illustrated in Appendix A: creating, community building, promoting, and curating.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- A rise in attendance of ages 15-24 by 25%
- Greater hold in tourist market (increase out of town traffic by 20%)
- Development of 5 new events and programs
- Greater awareness amongst Eugene/ Lane County Community

II. SITUATION ANALYSIS

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Economic Scan

A great portion of MNCH's income is contributed, and they rely heavily on grants. In 2012, about 45% of their total income was from grants. As part a University Affiliate, the museum receives government support. They do well with memberships, however there is an increased focus on planned giving and endowments for long-term funding. Since the museum is historically and largely geared toward collections and research, it's earned income is experiencing an increased reliance on the interpretive experience; the opening of their new exhibition hall, Explore Oregon! will create more of a destination for schools and families, and will boost interpretive and visitor services. The museum experiences great competition with other museums and cultural institutions, including the JSMA, The Science Factory, the Raptor Center, and more. Additionally, the museum is positioned within a crowded tourist market, competing with outdoor recreation, football, festivals, and more. Consequently, MNCH is often riding on the coat tails of these other sectors, and is meanwhile challenged to market itself as a distinctive experience.

Demographic Scan

The Museum of Natural and Cultural History has a fairly narrow audience, including K-12 students and teachers, the well-educated, retirees, and families with children. They would like to expand their audience beyond this slice of life, however they struggle to appeal to others outside of these demographics. To tackle this, Kristin wants to begin with engaging the UO community and to encourage students and staff to visit the museum outside of academic purposes. They would also like to tap into the abundant flow of travelers and tourists that frequently pass through Eugene. Additionally, there is a clear tension between the needs of older and younger audiences, and Kristin is working to bridge the gap. Diverse target audiences and how/where they consume information has made it difficult to accommodate both parties through communication. She has been experimenting with many marketing platforms to engage audiences without alienating or disregarding certain constituencies. For example, social media efforts are largely ineffective with older audiences, a large portion of MNCH's constituency, while mailers are inevitably ignored by the tech generation.

Cultural Scan

The Museum of Natural and Cultural History is chiefly identified with education, research, and academic engagement, which represent the museum's main strengths. However, as the museum seeks accreditation and a widened audience, many transformations are in the works. There is an acknowledgement within the museum that they are here to serve their audience in the way they need to be served; through engagement, programming, democratization, and the acceptance of the idea that they are here to fascinate and entertain. In line with the museum industry at large, there is a shift in values, and a role reversal at play. The museum aims to break the sacred elitism of a research-based institution by establishing a stake in the community while encouraging the development of knowledge. This means the museum must package themselves and their services in a way that is more engaging to a broader audience. The museum is also embracing technology; it has a lot of room for improvement, but their tech-savviness is growing. They do recognize the relevance of social media and their existing social media strategy is expanding aggressively across all platforms. The MNCH website and online gallery is fairly comprehensive, but could use an overhaul.

Other Environmental Factors

As a university affiliated museum, MNCH is part of a much larger system, which can be difficult to navigate. All marketing efforts must align with the University of Oregon brand management, and ultimately represent not only the museum, but also the University, the President, associated departments, staff, and so forth. Additionally, it requires an enormous amount of collaboration and "cross-pollination" to get things done.

SWOC Analysis

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
PRODUCT	- Guided Tours - K-12 programs - No-School Days - Education: community courses, teacher resources	- Lacking 'entertainment value' - MNCH merchandise seems outdated and limited in scope	- Develop engaging and relevant programming for teens and young ppl - Merch could use updated designs and greater variety	- Refocusing programming efforts to include different audiences - Development of new design for merch

PRICE	- Inexpensive entry: \$5 - Discounts to families, seniors, and youth - FREE to members, including UO students, and ASTC members	- No discount for non-UO students - No discount for military or uniformed officers	- Could offer more discounted days - Could extend discounts to LCC students - Could offer discounted entry days to Oregon residents	- Encouraging attendance through discounts while maintaining an earned income
PLACE	- FREE parking lot on site for visitors - ADA compliant, wheelchair available - Friendly staff - Directions and information clearly presented on website - Great Facebook presence - Cozy, inviting building - Open on weekends	- Parking lot is very small, so spillover must park in street - Building located on campus, which in itself can create a barrier or disconnect to greater Eugene community - History museums perceived as 'boring' - Only open until 5 pm daily	- Offer discounted parking vouchers for other lots on/near campus - Place marketing throughout Eugene and Lane Co to build awareness - Update programs - Could stay open later more regularly	- Overcoming perceptions as being boring, elitist, or both - Extending reach out into the community - Competing with other tourist options - Staffing beyond regular hours
PROMO	- First Fridays = FREE - Winter Wednesdays: store stays open late until 7p, discounts - In the process of gaining accreditation - PR around new exhibit hall is building hype	- Free days are on weekday, so working folk cannot take advantage - Winter Weds does not include admission to museum (store only) - No late nighters beyond Winter - No promo giveaways scheduled for EO opening	- Schedule a free day or time on the weekend - Expand Winter Weds to include museum admission - Try late nights in other seasons (Summer Saturdays? - Develop promo product for the opening of EO - Celebrate accreditation process and capitalize on success	- Encouraging attendance through discounts while maintaining Earned Income - Staffing beyond regular hours - Development, production, and budgeting of promo product for EO - Potential politics surrounding Accreditation process

Audience Analysis:

In many ways, the Museum of Natural and Cultural History experiences similar challenges as any other history or cultural museum. The audience is primarily grade school students, teachers, families, older folks, and those who are otherwise interested in the subject matter. Even with students, involvement rarely occurs beyond the class field trip or the completion of related assignments. There is a great struggle to engage youth outside of academic pursuits, especially when in competition with so many other engaging cultural and recreational institutions. MNCH hopes to engage more closely with the University of Oregon campus, the surrounding community, as well as the consistent flow of travelers and tourists passing through Eugene. I believe there needs to be an

increase programming that appeals to these groups, and focuses on connecting the past with the present. It is important to find ways to reveal how learning about history relates to (young) contemporary lives. I also believe a greater effort in making interdisciplinary links could solve the disconnect between youth and historical/ anthropological/ cultural study. As Alice Parman says, "ROMANCE THE VISITOR!" In short, figure out how to make it sexy! Then market the hell out of it.

III. SCHEME

1. AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT / PROGRAMMING

Currently, MNCH offers little to no programming that targets young people between the ages of 13 and 25. If one of MNCH's goals is to establish a stake in the community, then it would be smart to think about ways to engage this segment of the population, which comprises just over 20% of the total residents of Eugene (eugene.areaconnect.com). Additionally, the museum faces immense competition within the greater tourist economy that envelopes the surrounding region, from football games to river rafting and more. The museum could benefit from added programming to attract teens, UO students, as well as the constant flux of tourists passing through the area and hungry for adventure.

Targeting Teens

Teens are greatly underrepresented at MNCH. In fact, there is zero programming dedicated specifically to this age bracket. While teens are no doubt a difficult audience to engage, especially in the interest of history and rocks, educators and marketers could work together to develop enticing programs and events for high school students. Special teen nights could feature music (playlists curated by the teens themselves), art making workshops (drawing comic strips or printing T-shirts about their favorite historical characters), and even brainstorming sessions on teen-powered guerilla marketing stunts for MNCH (with university permission, of course). A key factor in success of these programs is the demonstration of how learning about history is not boring, but rather quite interesting and relevant to their current, young lives. Of course, this idea will have to be delivered through the disguise of simply what the cool kids do on a Thursday night. An excellent model of successful teen programming can be found at the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History, and their teen program, *Subjects to Change*.

Targeting UO Campus

One of the primary concerns of the MNCH marketing staff is the engagement of the UO community. To begin, MNCH could easily host history and anthropology tutoring sessions at the

museum as a resource to students beyond the exhibits and publications. However, the museum struggles to keep students coming back beyond their academic endeavors. Aside from the MNCH Student Ambassador group and the Trivia Nights they host at the Buzz Cafe, there is very little "extracurricular" programming designed specifically for young adults and college aged students. The Galleria, one of the museum's exhibit spaces, is the perfect venue to host social events. This area has been used in the past for family and holiday events, as well as members-only engagements. It seems only logical that this space could be utilized for the engagement of the UO campus.

Targeting Tourists

Since MNCH faces heavy competition within the greater tourist market in and around Eugene, it would be advantageous to develop programming that is designed to connect tourists to the surrounding cultural and environmental landscapes. Educators in the museum could use the museum's collections and wealth of knowledge to design tours to specific destinations in and around Eugene. For example, a guided hike up Spencer's Butte, and around the Ridgeline Trail could be an exciting way to engage tourists in learning about the ecology and geology of the region. Alternatively, MNCH could host a bicycle tour of Eugene that highlights the legacy and influence of the Merry Pranksters on Eugene's culture. Recently, MNCH hosted a fundraising dinner with a lecture on the effects of climate change on the Oregon wine industry. This would have been an excellent opportunity to expand programming into a MNCH-led wine tasting tour of the region. Tours would be carefully crafted to appeal to a variety of tourist interests, needs, price ranges, and stamina (ranging from 2-hour van tours to all day physical, hands-on excursions). Market research is necessary to understand the motivations for visiting Eugene, as well as the kinds of experiences tourists look for when visiting, and what they are willing to pay for it. These offerings would create more of an incentive for tourists to choose MNCH as a means of exploring and experience Eugene, as opposed to the competition. Additionally, this would strengthen MNCH's stake in the community by supporting the tourist industry and educating travelers about the history and culture of the area. Furthermore, the development of these types of engaging tour programs for a range of audiences help in overcoming the common perception that history museums are boring and/or elitist.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT: IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES // BUDGET

Personnel

- Current Education Staff // existing budget
- 2-3 additional part time educators/guides // \$3300/month in hourly wages (\$11/hour)
- o volunteers // time required to train them by existing staff

• Materials and Supplies :

• Art making supplies (varies by program): \$ 100 - \$300 (monthly)

• 12 Passenger Van (to transport tourists): \$30,000 (one time purchase)

Gas Budget : \$200 (monthly)

• Technological resources :

 3 iPad minis (to document programs for further marketing efforts, and for use by participants in creating their own media): 3 x \$300

Media :

- o social media, print distributions, word of mouth
- Printing, production, distribution: Flyers, distributed by hand, mailed to schools, hostel, hotels, visitor centers, and more; partnership with QSL for discounted printing
- Sponsors and service trades: University of Oregon, UO Outdoor Program, City of Eugene
 Parks Department and Recreation Department, Bicycle Rental company, Eugene Whiteaker Hostel,
 Eugene School District, Bethel School District, and other community partners

Other:

 Insurance (primarily for tours, transporting passengers): requires further research in legal policies, UO Policies, etc

2. PRICE/OPERATIONAL RESTRUCTURING

The MNCH already has very affordable pricing at \$5 per person, and even extends discounts and free entry to UO students, seniors, and families. Once per month, the museum holds "Free Fridays" with open admission to all exhibits. While these procedures do open opportunities for certain people to visit the museum at low or no cost, I believe some restructuring of prices and operations could increase accessibility, and therefore raising the stake MNCH holds in their community. The following is a list of suggestions for restructuring, and the reasons behind them:

- Extend Discounts to Lane Community College Students: this would increase the number
 of young people, MNCH's target demographic, likely to visit the museum. This would also show a
 greater stake in the community, demonstrating MNCH's appreciation of all students, not just UO
 students.
- Offer Discounted Days to Oregon Residents: This could rally citizens of Eugene, Lane
 County, and greater Oregon to visit the museum. Especially with the opening of the new exhibit,
 Explore Oregon, offering this kind of incentive not only celebrates Oregon's history, but also the
 people that currently inhabit the region, increasing the stake in the surrounding community (one of
 MNCH's objectives).

- Shift Free Fridays to a weekend day: MNCH currently opens it's doors for free on the first friday each month. For those who work full time jobs during the week, this benefit is not available. It would be wise to shift this monthly free day to a weekend day, therefore increasing accessibility for working folk. This move would also demonstrate that MNCH cares for the people in the community it serves, in considering their own needs and schedules.
- Extend open hours later during one weekday: Currently, MNCH is only open from 11 to 5 pm, Tuesday through Sunday. If at least one weekday--perhaps Thursday or Friday-- were open later until 8 pm at least, this would again provide greater access for working folk.
- Offer Parking Vouchers for other lots on or near campus: MNCH is lucky to have a small parking lot available for visitors, however, there are fewer than 8 spots. Nearly half of the spots are reserved for volunteers and/or staff. While having some parking is better than no parking, it would be advantageous to provide some kind of parking voucher that would be valid for other parking lots on or near campus. This might aid in overcoming barriers perceived by the visitor that the museum is difficult to get to.

RESTRUCTURING: IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES // BUDGET

Personnel

- Front Desk Staff to cover later hours // additional \$96 per month in hourly wages (\$8/hour)
- Store Staff to cover later hours // additional \$96 per month in hourly wages (\$8/hour)
- Media: blast social media, flyer distribution, print ads
- Printing, production, distribution: printing vouchers, flyers advertising new freemiums/hours
- Sponsors and service trades: University of Oregon, QSL, Visitor centers, hotels, hostels, Eugene Weekly and other local newspapers

3. SOCIAL MEDIA

Twitter

Benefits

Twitter offers an excellent platform for news flashes, event updates, friendly reminders, trivia, and even jokes. According to Mediabistro.com, Twitter is used primarily by 18-29 year olds, which is one of the main demographics that MNCH wants to expand. The limitation of characters serves as both a challenge and a benefit: it allows for readers to quickly absorb pertinent or memorable information.

Challenges

The 40-character limit also requires a concise and witty writer to boil down information into something relevant and attention grabbing. Twitter is so popular these days, it may be oversaturated with tweets, and therefore you risk getting lost in the chatter/twitter.

@MNCH

I can see MNCH using this to announce events, programs, tours, special hours, and sales at the store. It

could also use Twitter to deliver "breaking news" such as findings in the field by anthropologists, or recent acquisitions from donors (permission granted, of course). And who doesn't love a good dino joke?

E-Newsletter

Benefits

Brings the publications and news already published in print and on the MNCH website directly to subscribers. Up-to-date announcements and programs will be delivered promptly and directly, rather than hoping that potential visitors happen to find it on the website, or through other media channels. I believe this would be an excellent channel to reach 20- and 30-somethings who actually subscribe to e-news.

Challenges

Compiling information into an e-news format does require time and basic expertise. As with many e-newsletters, it risks becoming an annoyance to subscribers, and competes with all the various other email subscriptions that people have to tackle on a daily basis.

@MNCH

Luckily, MNCH already has a large amount of content to include in such a publication, and the content already exists in other, less accessible outlets. Utilizing this information in an e-newsletter will bring repeated and direct contact with MNCH news. Additionally, subscribers could choose which updates they receive and how often: programming, events, archaeological findings, recent acquisitions, staff news, and more on a weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or quarterly basis. It could also highlight new store items and publications available for purchase, especially those produced by MNCH, such as their Bulletin Series. It would be great to include some kind of interactive element within the e-newsletter, such as surveys, quizzes, contests, fun activities, coloring pages (as downloadable pdfs), and more.

YouTube

Benefits

YouTube provides a platform for multimedia insight into museum, allows for live action documentation, strengthens online presence, and has potential to gain a following beyond physical visitorship to the museum site. With the right content and production, a MNCH YouTube channel could serve as an excellent Edu-tainment marketing tool.

Challenges

Videos take time and expertise to produce; sometimes do not translate to all devices/ dependent on solid internet connection; content could be produced "just because" rather than sticking to quality content

A video outlet provides opportunity to document a wide range of activities associated with MNCH, including, but not limited to: field research, paleontology digs, onsite programming, family days, school trips, docent tours, behind the scenes captures of exhibition planning and production, interviews with educators and experts, and so much more. Researchers could utilize GoPro cameras in the field, or simply take pictures of the places they explore and exciting findings. MNCH could start small with monthly or bi-weekly videos to establish comfort with the medium, then move to more frequent posts, possibly even a consistently updated YouTube Channel Series. In fact, MNCH already produced a really nice, informative video to celebrate it's 75th Anniversary in 2010, yet it is poorly circulated. As a museum employee, I hadn't even seen it until I did a little digging.

Instagram

Benefits

Reaches a different, more visual, and most likely younger audience than mainstream Facebook; allows an

intimate look into the museum; Strategic use of hashtags, @MNCH, and other handles will increase visibility, especially among UO campus and within Eugene community.

Challenges

Encouraging staff members to capture their own work and submit it to the appropriate marketing staff member who manages social media. Sometimes Instagram is cheesy (would need to have standards and training on which filters are acceptable to use and how).

@MNCH

The MNCH has an amazing collection of artifacts and objects, ranging from really really old fossils to beaded works by contemporary native americans. Instagram would be an excellent platform to highlight pieces from the collection and "romance the visitor" with the stories attached to the objects. Additionally, Posts to Instagram can give followers a peek at field researchers in action, new acquisitions, exhibit development in progress, items in the store, events and programming, and so much more.

SOCIAL MEDIA: IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES // BUDGET

Personnel

- Part time marketing staff // \$660 per month in hourly wages (\$11/hour @ 15 hours/week)
- Volunteer marketing or art students to create content // \$0 (only time to train required)

• Technological Resources

- Laptop // \$1200 (one time purchase)
- iPad mini // \$300 (can use one of the iPad minis purchased for audience engagement)
- Hootsuite membership // \$10 (monthly)
- Excel Database // \$0 (already in possession)
- iMovie // \$0 (for simple video production)

Media

- Social Media subscriptions // \$0 (Twitter, YouTube, MailChimp, Instagram)
- Photography // \$0 (marketing and other staff members create content)
- Video // cost varies (depending on video content; should be mostly \$0)
- Sponsors and service trades: University of Oregon, marketing students

IV. CALENDAR / TIMELINE

(See Appendix B)

V. EVALUATION PLAN

Methods to measure quantitative results

Tracking attendance numbers, demographic information (age, student affiliations, google analytics of

social media and website traffic

Methods to measure qualitative results

Feedback forms, return visits, testimonials, synthesis of social media activity/ follower contributions (buzz)

Evaluation of effectiveness of each marketing strategy:

Audience Engagement

Quantitative

- attendance numbers
- demographic information (age, gender, student affiliations, etc)

Qualitative

- How did you hear about us?
- Feedback forms/surveys with open and closed ended questions
- Likeliness to participate again
- Likeliness to recommend to others
- Suggestions/ observations

Restructuring

Quantitative

- hourly, daily, and monthly attendance numbers
- demographic information (age, gender, student affiliations, etc)

Qualitative

- How did you hear about us?
- What made you decide to visit?
- Feedback forms/surveys with open and closed ended questions
- Likeliness to participate again
- Likeliness to recommend to others
- Suggestions/ observations

Social Media

Quantitative

- Google analytics
- Increase in followers

- Return visits to social media sites
- Numbers of likes, shares, and comments

Qualitative

- How did you hear about us?
- Review of the content and types of follower interaction (comments, likes, shares, etc)
- Which types of content generate more buzz

Recommendations for future marketing plan development

Once new programs have been piloted and implemented, further marketing strategies can evolve out of them. For example, the Eugene Tours could generate strategies to target customers of Eugene Whiteaker Hostel, local hotels, and other high traffic tourist establishments. Likewise, if the teen program is successful, they could be a vital resource to the museum as both generators and implementers of guerilla marketing tactics.

To enrich all social media platforms and online presence, I recommend that MNCH further boost their content marketing. The creation of videos, podcasts, photography database, and takeaway educational materials and more can increase interest of followers and simultaneously give transparency to the activities of the museum. For example, the museum's incredible team of archeologists and paleontologists could reveal findings as they are discovered in the field. The education and marketing teams could synthesize these findings into entertaining bits of media that clearly demonstrate the relevance of studying history and the connections to our daily lives.

Resources

Kristin Strommer, Marketing Director, Museum of Natural and Cultural History, University of Oregon

http://eugene.areaconnect.com/statistics.htm

http://www.mediabistro.com/alltwitter/twitter-demographics-2013 b36254

APPENDIX A

MNCH MARKETING STRATEGIES

New programming dedicated to youth, UO community, tourists Switch monthly Free Fridays to the weekend Offer discounts to LCC students, OR residents Change operating hours to accomodate working folk Stay open later on one Parking vouchers Social media posts relevant/interactive to community weekday Social media sharing of articles, media from other sources, tailored to target markets **AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT** SOCIAL MEDIA Community BIDG SWIIME PROMOTIVO CREATING New discounts, operating hours, etc encourage museum attendance Creating content for social media: videos (GoPro), photos, interviews, Creating new programming to target youth, UO campus, tourists Twitter, FB, E-News, Instagram New programs provide fresh material to share on SM Social media channels: mini-documentaries

PRICE/OPERATIONS RESTRUCTURE

APPENDIX B SOCIAL MEDIA WEEKLY TIMELINE*

