Hospitality, Travel and Tourism Marketing: SEA Aquarium Sentosa, Singapore

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Abstract

According to the Guinness Book of World Records, Singapore’s SEA Aquarium is the largest aquarium in the world. However, now the title is overtaken by Chime-Long Ocean Kingdom in Hengqin, China. Located at the Marine Life Park at Resorts World Sentosa, Singapore, it contains a total about 45,000,000 liters of water and is home to more than 100,000 marine animals of over 800 species.

SEA Aquarium Sentosa compromises ten different zones with 49 habitats, from Southeast Asia to the Arabian Gulf and the Open Ocean. SEA Aquarium Senior Curator Grant Willis stated in a news release that SEA Aquarium not only offers a stunning display of habitats, but also education and conservation programs in which families and guests can participate. (RWS Sentosa Press Release 2012)

The Marine Life Park is one of the two mega-attractions in Resort World Sentosa (RWS) Singapore, which compromises the S.E.A Aquarium and the Adventure Cove Waterpark. RWS is located on Sentosa Island, off the southern coast of Singapore. It is only 10 minutes away from Singapore’s Central Business District, and is easily accessible via busses, MRT rail system, taxis and cars.

RWS is wholly owned by Singapore Genting Group. It was named as the Best Integrated Resort in 2011, 2012 and 2013 at the TTG Travel Awards, which recognizes Asia-Pacific’s best travel industry.

Keywords: Hospitality, Tourism Marketing, Singapore, Sentosa, RWS, Market Positioning, Promotion

INTRODUCTION

According to the Guinness Book of World Records, Singapore’s SEA Aquarium is the largest aquarium in the world. However, now the title is overtaken by Chime-Long Ocean Kingdom in Hengqin, China. Located at the Marine Life Park at Resorts World Sentosa, Singapore, it contains a total about 45,000,000 liters of water and is home to more than 100,000 marine animals of over 800 species.

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Mission Statement

The SEA Aquarium Sentosa combines education, entertainment and action inspiring customers to do their part and protect the natural treasures of the blue planet. The SEA Aquarium’s mission is primarily focused on the environment, promoting the importance of protecting the blue planet through its initiative exhibits and educational programs. Its purpose is to put Singapore on the global map for Marine Education, Conservation and Research.

Vision Statement

The vision of the Sea Aquarium is to be responsible leaders in the care and exhibition of animals by educating, inspiring and empowering people to become catalysts of positive change for marine and nature conservation.

MARKETING STRATEGIES

Marketing is about understanding human social needs and wants. However, marketing also build relationship between a product and end use. (Kotler 2006, 44) Marketing strategies generally include market positioning and targeting, promotions and distribution, production differentiation and pricing strategy for market share growth. The strategies mainly focus on competitive advantage, consumer needs and wants, creativity and flexibility. It is grouped as customer oriented marketing strategy and competitors oriented marketing strategy. (Selvarasu A. and Sankaran A., 2011)

MARKET POSITIONING AND TARGETING

Positioning

Positioning is an important strategy that an organization might utilize to create and sustain competitive advantage. (Palmer 2001:177) Once a business has identified its target market, its next step is to position its business in the market. The main purpose of positioning is to identify the basis on which the company wants to challenge and point of view its services.

SEA Aquarium’s competitive edge is its positioning as a recreational place for families. There are many positioning criteria which products or services can be positioned. SEA Aquarium itself adopts positioning strategy by specific product or service attributes and needs. Adding to its advantage on location, which is in the heart of the city and near the prime business district, SEA Aquarium benefits from its product or service attributes, which are specified of marine life. This adopted strategy offers the company product characteristics and uniqueness and more importantly it differs them from other attraction
or recreational places. Moreover, it’s the only recreational aquarium in Singapore, which gives the company more chance to focus on other areas that will help them to sustain their business in the market. Facilities and programs offered by SEA Aquarium are also appropriate to entertain any age groups, from children to adults.

**Targeting**

Targeting is very important for business in marketing sector. The principles of target marketing are to identify the major market segments, target one or more of these segments, and tailor the marketing effort towards each particular segment (Wright & Esslemont, 1994)

It is more efficient to target a specific target market rather than to offer a standard marketing strategy to everyone. For a huge and known attraction company such as SEA Aquarium, market segmentation is essential due to the possibility of large scale of guests. Segmentation can be done by segmenting market in terms of demographic. Deciding factors when selecting the right demographic can be age, gender and income.

SEA Aquarium target markets are possibly locals and foreign visitors. As a part of RWS, which is known as a family resort destination, families are therefore its possible targets. However, there’s a distinguished different between target audience and target market. Most of SEA Aquarium’s attraction and programs, such as Ocean Dreams, Junior Marine Explorer, Colors of the SEAA Tour and Aquarist for A Day, require and consider 4 to 12 years old as children and 13 years and above as adult. Therefore, we consider 4-12 years old children can be part of the target audience and 13 years and above as the target market, which the company should deliver the marketing strategy.

Emerging overseas tourists, particularly from the neighbor countries such as Indonesia & Malaysia, it therefore leaves a large target market that will lead the company to increase in visitors.

Moreover, in a release, RWS launched a loyalty program to drive repeat visitors among local residents, called RWS INVITES. Therefore, we can conclude that the main target markets of SEA Aquarium are 13 years and above locals or foreign tourists who possibly have children and the chosen markets are tourist families from Indonesia and Malaysia.

**MARKET PROMOTION AND DISTRIBUTION**

**Promotion**

Promotion is consider one of the most powerful elements in the marketing mix. Sales promotion activities consist of publicity, public relations, exhibition and demonstrations etc. (Culliton, 1948). The main activities promotion intended to attract more visitors. Advertising and publicity are powerful elements of promotion strategy. Both are used to create and deliver essential messages to its target market. Other marketing promotion and communication strategy are personal selling, sales promotion, direct marketing and with the help of emerging social medias.

Promotions usually will inspire an interest in purchasing a product or service by customers, meanwhile the company uses promotion to persuade people. (Ogeniy 2009, 368) SEA Aquarium adopts several promotion strategies as an approach to reach international and local visitors. There are five major components of promotion used by
SEA Aquarium: advertising, sale promotion, publicity, public relation and personal selling.

SEA Aquarium used advertising strategy, which is non-personal communication that can be done through television, radio, newspaper, magazines or social media platforms. Advertising is basically passing information to future customers for recognition. Beside that RWS own website is also one of essential tool for advertising.

Sales promotions are also being used to promote their recent attraction or programs. The most common form of sales promotion is promotion prices and packages. One of the most recent sales promotions is the RWS INVITES. It allows local residents to pay once a year in advance for a membership to enter some of the selected RWS attraction, including SEA Aquarium itself.

Public relation is another effective method used by SEA Aquarium. The information spread through media generates news coverage. For instance, they distribute newsletters, annual reports or recent activities updates. One of the most successful tool is through their website and RWS blogs, which allow visitors to write their experience in SEA Aquarium and RWS. This promotion strategy is regarded as social interaction between individuals related to the company. This interaction may impact customer service given by SEA Aquarium. For instance, a visitor who wrote in the blog can suggest or recommend ideas for SEA Aquarium to improve their service.

**Distribution Channel**

Distribution Channel or known as product placement strategy shows how the products or services getting to final customers. Distribution has a huge effect on the profitability therefore a firm should have excellent supply chain and logistics management plan for distribution. (Singh, 2012)

SEA Aquarium adopts two different distribution channels: direct distribution and website. Direct distribution occurs at the venue’s tickets booth and RWS website where customers can make requests or book the tickets online. Distribution strategy also very important in marketing, besides online booking SEA Aquarium also work together with third party for instant, we can buy entrance ticket at Agency. However, despite of these many benefits and the area of sales promotion still need an improvement. SEA Aquarium should enlarge their promotion and product strategy. Promoting in many other countries and adding more programs into SEA Aquarium may help them to gain more customers. They can take advantage of advertising platforms such as newspaper, recent and trendiest social media and if possible they may gain attention by advertising on local television or radio stations.

**MARKET PACKAGING AND PRICING STRATEGY**

**Packaging**

Product strategy is often connected to pricing strategy. It represents how a company can decide what product or service lines they should offer in the market. As for SEA Aquarium, they offer products or services for entertainment and education purposes. Marine animals are their main valuable assets, while educational programs and other services offered, which are related to these animals are their products.
SEA Aquarium does not offer any accurate product to its visitors. SEA Aquarium combines education, entertainment and action to inspire their guests. Most of the programs offered are often related to marine education, information of each animal species they have or educational programs.

A brand name is very important to protection a product; it build up the product or services to be accepted in the market with the brand name. Likewise the brand name is symbolized by sign, symbol or design. (Williams, 2010) Brand name is important for product or service recognition of a company. SEA Aquarium’s symbol is fish, which represents their main attraction.

**Pricing**

Price is among the four P’s of marketing mix that have to be considered before making the decision of purchasing the product or services in the market. (John 2007, 35) Pricing strategies consider the customers’ interest or changes in the market demand. Daily admissions to SEA Aquarium are priced at $38 for adults (13 years old and above), $28 for children (4-12 years old) and senior (60 years old & above). The ticket price to enter SEA Aquarium is considered expensive compared to the first time they open at 2012; there was a rise by $9.

There are many different pricing strategies that can be adopted by firms. SEA Aquarium adopts the traditional pricing strategy, which they define the sales price based on the production costs. As they do not offer any concrete products or services and the high cost of maintenance for the aquarium, including water, more than 100,000 marine animals and other additional services required and essential for the aquarium running.

However, SEA Aquarium also offers educational programs, such as Ocean Dreams ($158+), Junior Marine Explorer ($140+) and VIP Guided Tour ($88+). They adopt seasonal pricing strategy for these programs, which is regarded as price that can change depending on the period or situation. The depending factors can be special events or festivals and celebration. Currently, they are also having sales promotion, which combines SEA Aquarium and Adventure Cover Waterpark at $25 (U.P. $38/ $36).

**RECOMMENDATION AND SUGGESTION**

As part of one of two integrated in Singapore, Resort World Sentosa, SEA Aquarium has so many competitive edges. It’s located in the heart of the city Singapore and just 10-minutes away from the city’s business district. In addition, SEA Aquarium is positioned and surrounded by other popular attractions such as Universal Studio, Trick Museum and 5-star hotels. And its popularity as the only aquarium entitled as one of the largest aquarium in the world makes it easier for the company to attract visitors, either local or international.

I also recommend SEA Aquarium to add more educational programs and organize them in more exciting way. Teens are the largest possible target market for the company and thus the marketing team should find thrilling ideas that match with newest trend and arrange events or programs to attract them. They should notify general public about any events that will be occurred in SEA Aquarium.

SEA Aquarium should also add more fascinating, unique and attractive animals. If possible, they should find a way to attract world television station attention such BBC,
National Geographic, Animal Planet and many others. This may lead them to attract more visitors from other countries. As for the pricing strategy, SEA Aquarium should reduce the price for the programs. Other alternative is they may need to work hard to make the programs as exciting and memorable for the visitors so they can be satisfied and thus spread positive comments about the program. This also may help the company to attract more visitors. Even with expensive prices, if the programs are really good, not boring and memorable, many visitors may be attracted to join the program. While the daily admission ticket price depends on the production cost, SEA Aquarium should find a way to reduce the maintenance cost.
REFERENCES


