

A marketing plan for the london aquarium

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



This document outlines a Marketing Plan for the London Aquarium. The latter is a suitable choice for such an exercise, as it has significant untapped potential as a tourist attraction in the highly competitive environment of our famous metropolis. The Marketing Plan surveys the environment, and tries to bring all seven elements of the Marketing Mix to bear on strategy for achievement of specified objectives. The website of the London Aquarium serves as the primary source of information for this Marketing Plan.

The Environment

London has been a leading metropolis of the world for centuries. Its stature as the seat of the British Monarchy and of the Government is enhanced by leading positions in the world's finance, international trade, and tourism. The latter is most relevant for the London Aquarium, which is the object of this exercise.

The vast numbers of people from all parts of the world, who visit London as tourists every year, are the most important opportunity available for the London Aquarium. The city also attracts significant numbers of domestic tourists. Future prospects are bright as London's selection for the Olympics augurs well for a steady and growing inflow of tourist traffic.

Adverse events in July 2005 have raised questions of security in London. However, city authorities and the national Government have taken a number of effective steps to contain the threat. There are many other cities in various countries that compete with London for tourist revenues and traffic. They probably pose a more business-like threat to the popularity of London as a tourist destination.

The London Aquarium does not have the rich historical background of some better-known tourist attractions in the city. Neither does it have the devoted following of some of the most famous annual sports events that are held here. The London Aquarium is privately owned, and therefore subject to more severe requirements in terms of cash flows and the returns it must generate on investment. These are a few weaknesses from which it suffers, relative to other tourist attractions in London.

The Aquarium has important advantages as well: the romance of aquatic life attracts virtually everyone. Diverse animal forms can attract more than one visit by each person. Local residents are also potential customers, apart from tourists. The London Aquarium has a convenient location, and is relatively easy to reach from any part of the metropolis.

Objectives

The Objectives of the Marketing Plan that the London Aquarium may like to consider are:

1. To register an annual increase in the number of visitors which is not less than the change in tourist arrivals in the metropolis
2. To increase the number of revenue lines by offering new services to visitors.
3. To increase the awareness about the Aquarium in the public eye
4. To improve visitor satisfaction and to respond positively to feedback and complaints
5. To build further on the quality and diversity of aquatic forms of life in the collection of the Aquarium

Strategy

How can the London Aquarium use its strengths and the opportunities of the tourist market to achieve the Objectives stated above? One possible approach would be to improve the Interactive Marketing experience. There should be incentives for past visitors to record their experiences and for potential visitors to visit the Aquarium at the next opportunity. This interactive strategy can find applications in all seven elements of the marketing mix.

Product

Responses from visitors on the Internet lament that the London Aquarium does not offer shows. The Aquarium website does mention educational activities, group facilities, and hire of the site for private functions. The Aquarium could open its Animal Husbandry Department to the public, install digital kiosks that provide information on the exhibits and conduct seminars and workshops throughout the peak tourist season. Overall, there is scope for the Aquarium to shift focus from the tangible elements of its product, to enhancing visitor experience. Visitors should be able to stay in touch with the Aquarium: the website should provide electronic newsletters and sponsor web logs.

Internet sites show that some visitors miss marine mammals at the London Aquarium. The management should consider this concrete feedback on technical grounds. Video feeds can serve as an alternative if space constraints prevent the Aquarium from keeping aquatic mammals.

Promotion

The London Aquarium needs to do more to spread awareness of its charms. It can copy the Euro rail example and use the international network of Travel Agents to make tickets to the site widely available. It would help if Tour Operators could have incentives to bring their clients to the Aquarium. Heathrow, Gatwick and hotels can all help to remind arriving visitors to include the Aquarium in their itineraries. Most tourists would sample fish and chips during their trips: this is another innovative medium to use to remind people to drop in at the Aquarium. Feeds from the live web cameras should be on display at or near key transit points such as Oxford Circus and King's Cross. Such displays would help at visa offices worldwide. Big Ben and other 'celebrity' attractions near the Aquarium can serve as magnets to bring visitors to the Aquarium in droves.

The promotion element always requires a mass media element. Television and the print media have influential roles in determining how people spend leisure time in London. The Aquarium could arrange for media coverage of its educational activities, and offer feeds from its live cameras.

The promotion element should include the domestic and resident segments, apart from foreign tourists. The Aquarium can make a concerted attempt to draw in crowds from people who visit London from other parts of Great Britain, as well as from the large metropolitan population that is always on the lookout for new diversions.

There is tremendous scope for the London Aquarium to promote its many attractions more extensively and persuasively. This is the single most

important element on which the Aquarium can concentrate for short-term gains in the number of visitors.

Price

It should not cost almost \$10 for a child to visit the Aquarium. The family price of \$50 probably keeps many people away. The Aquarium should consider staying open beyond 6 pm in summer and aim for drastic volume growth. Pricing for large groups and for children needs review. The Aquarium can expand on its offerings of mementos to build a full-fledged retail outlet, as well as to provide for catering. It should not count on ticket sales alone for revenue.

Place

The basement of the County Hall is not enough for the London Aquarium to compete to its full potential. It should consider awarding franchises for independent operators to offer aquatic exhibits, using the London Aquarium's goodwill and expertise. The Aquarium has a wealth of knowledge on habitats. It also has unparalleled genetic resources. Many services and institutions in London that depend on tourism, can spread their overheads better by offering displays, exhibits and shows, under the London Aquarium umbrella. The aspect of ticket sales covered under the promotion element earlier in this document has implications for distributions as well.

Distribution, as with promotion, has high scope to improve the Aquarium's volume of business. It can also change the nature of the enterprise, keeping the possibilities of high technology in view. The Aquarium can also benchmark its practices against famous hotel and food chains, and excel in franchise

management. Such an approach will help the Aquarium leap over space constraints at its present location.

People

It may be that the London Aquarium depends mostly on biologists to run the enterprise. It will be useful to recruit or to outsource Services Marketing expertise. The Aquarium may also wish to engage people trained in Interactive Marketing, to provide information to visitors and to ensure that they all enjoy their visits. Operations should be seen from a marketing standpoint and not merely in technical grounds.

Process

Visits to the Aquarium, educational programs, private events, live web cameras, and the website are the main points of interaction between the institution and the international public. Each of these types of transactions can do with the benefit of process analysis, to strengthen Internal Marketing. Employees will need both material resources as well as emotional support to make a success of the new strategy. The process element can ensure that the Aquarium arranges for such provisions comprehensively and affordably.

Physical Evidence

The indoor location of the Aquarium is a constraint in terms of physical evidence. The Aquarium should try to build networks with the Zoo, Botanical Gardens, and authorities responsible for the Thames, to use outdoor locations and thereby improve the physical evidence element. This matter has also been discussed under the distribution element.

Conclusions

The vast size of the London market for tourism leaves scope for the London Aquarium to review its marketing strategies and to plan for a bigger future. It has excellent material resources in terms of specimens and expertise. The Aquarium has kept abreast of cutting-edge digital technology, with a colorful and informative website, and with live web cameras. It can now upgrade and coordinate all seven elements of the marketing mix to provide an enriched and highly responsive experience for customers.

The Aquarium should develop a Service Mission to enthuse its staff. All personnel should commit to the Marketing Plan Objectives. A pervasive determination to provide visitors with superior experiences, and to compete with other London attractions, will make a grand success of the new strategy.

References

1. About us, The London Aquarium, not dated, retrieved November 2005:
<http://www.londonaquarium.co.uk/about/index.html>