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Jump in the Water: Persuasive Campaign

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Abstract

In the following persuasive campaign, we aim to improve guests' experience at the Surfrider Hotel Malibu to thus boost the company's monetary inflow. Through the rollout of our "Get in the Water" campaign, we plan to transform guests' perceptions of the hotel's offerings. Furthermore, we plan to persuade guests that getting in the water is a fun and rewarding experience, ultimately improving their overall experience at the hotel and in Malibu. Initiatives, including a media-output revival and influencer-marketing events, would allow the Surfrider to connect with potential guests and advertise the possibilities of a hotel stay.

Keywords

guest experience, campaign, perception, media-output, influencer-marketing, economic intake

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Context

Why do so many people dream of visiting Malibu? Known for its beautiful scenery, inviting weather, and famous residents, Malibu has become an iconic American city, with it often being the setting of movies, television shows, and advertisements. But if the gorgeous shoreline, warm weather, and high-profile residents are the main reasons people visit Malibu, then there are alternatives, such as Kailua, Hawaii, and La Jolla, California. So then, why is Malibu such a desired destination? What makes it unique? While other affluent seaside communities have opulent mansions beside lovely beaches, nothing quite compares to the bond Malibu has with its landscape—to be in Malibu means not just being by the sea but living with the sea. This entails not only a wealth of chances for boating, hiking, and surfing but also a tranquility that is typically only found in the middle of nature. Hosting a population of 16,000 plus residents with a 27-mile stretch of coastline, Malibu is the ideal location for those seeking an isolated, intimate experience. For those seeking to enjoy urban, city experiences, the Los Angeles area is less than 25 miles away. Ultimately boasting the best of both worlds for tourists that want a taste of everything, from wineries in the scenic canyons of Malibu to the hottest new restaurant in LA's downtown, to the secluded beach on Malibu's north side to the theme parks within Los Angeles. Although there are a variety of other possibilities for coastal locations for vacationing, "the Bu's" ambiance is unmatched.

Despite Malibu's unbeatable features, some would-be vacationers argue that the city -and thus Surfrider Hotel- fails as a desirable vacation destination. The town's high prices and growing move towards modernization has hurt its worth in regard to attracting travelers. The Surfrider itself, once a popular 1970s crash-spot for rockstar legends including the likes of the Rolling Stones and Fleetwood Mac, has become a much more modern, commercialized space. With the

properties' reopening in 2017, Malibu locals were met with a brand new Surfrider experience; a chic space featuring a luxurious atmosphere and sky-rocketed pricing. Following this 2017 rebranding, the Surfrider Malibu's team has been tasked with client outreach; thus needing to reestablish ways in which the hotel can bring in a larger number of clients. Complaints regarding Malibu pricing is a constant focus of the Hotel's marketing process, and thus the company constantly looks for ways in which to prove the value in a guest's stay.

Objective

The objective of our campaign is to effectively elevate guest satisfaction with the Surfrider Malibu Hotel's offerings, specifically in a campaign to encourage more interaction with Malibu's greatest attribute: the ocean. The *Get in the Water* campaign will serve as a commercial campaign, promoting various beach-based activities that can be enjoyed on the Pacific coastline - described as a part of the hotel's offerings. The reason behind such a campaign is simple and honest, to maximize potential economic profit for the hotel without too much investment or overhead costs. As the hotel already offers a variety of beach accessories, from complementary surfboards to the perfect beach bag, the goal is to re-establish the beach as a go-to activity for guests to enjoy as a part of their Surfrider stay. Ultimately, our goal is to remind guests why they booked a stay at the Surfrider in the first place - to enjoy everything Malibu's coast has to offer.

Theme

The Elaboration Likelihood Model will contribute to a strong theoretical framework to guide our persuasive commercial campaign. Developed by psychologists Richard Petty and John Cacioppo, this theory suggests that audiences' attitudes are persuaded by how they receive information. Thus, a viewer receiving information through the central route of processing is being persuaded by logical, factual content being persuaded. On the other hand, a viewer receiving

information through the peripheral route of processing is looking to sensory content, such as sound, colors, or other sensory factors, to shape their attitude (Borchers, 2022). In terms of which route a viewer is persuaded by, one can consider the ‘intent’ of the viewer. For example, central-route processing takes place when people are highly motivated and have the time to consider their options. In this case, they thoroughly assess the advantages and disadvantages of a decision. In peripheral-route processing, however, people tend to be more easily swayed when they are rushed, or the decision is less important to them (Hopper, 2020). It’s important to create content that appeals to both routes of processing, to maximize the potential of positively influencing a viewer.

In regard to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, our campaign will target both central and peripheral routes of processing. The central-route processing will be targeted as we provide context as to the benefits of the beach, reminding guests of what makes Malibu a famous and desirable location to travel to. Facts regarding the hotel’s *Get in the Water* amenities, such as complimentary surfboards and branded beach chairs will be the focal point of information provided. In addition, though, information regarding car transportation, weather reports, surf forecasts, and more will be provided; crucial information for the attentive incoming guest planning their stay. For the peripheral-route processing, one can consider how our campaign will align with the already established identity of the Surfrider Hotel. Our campaign will be communicated in a variety of mediums, from pamphlets for in-house guests to website updates to magazine features, all of which will match the current Surfrider aesthetic. This aesthetic includes shades of yellows, blues, and muted neutrals - all styled to look effortlessly perfect. Verbiage will fall in line with the current staff-promoted narrative; for example, guests are welcomed to *their* Malibu beach house upon arrival. The hotel and its staff constantly work to maintain the nonchalant, effortlessly cool surfer type vibe, using words like ‘stoked’ and ‘rad.’ The hotel itself is decorated with art depicting the

ocean, with the lobby featuring a 2x4 of a Surfrider “babe”. Furthermore, the guest that casually peruses our website or looks around the hotel during check-in (or through a window) will be bombarded with ocean-esque imagery. They’ll see pictures of our custom McTavish surfboards for rent or see endless books depicting the ideal surfer’s dream.

Target Audience

The *Get in the Water* campaign aims to reach a broad audience, encouraging a fun, laid back, and authentic experience that only the Surfrider Hotel in Malibu can offer. When deciding on hotels and destinations, guests look for uniquely themed experiences, beautiful scenery, as well as what they have heard or seen, whether from reviews or social media (Li & Cao, 2022). Due to the nature of the business (being a hotel), geodemographics and demographics were not specifically considered in determining the campaign’s audience. Our team can instead consider the financial status of guests, where our pricing attracts an array of middle- and upper-class economic statuses. Ultimately, the goal of the campaign is to activate incoming guests of the ‘new’ amenities, inform potential guests of the offerings, and neutralize those that are not interested in the beach offerings upon booking their stay.

Get in the Water functions to communicate the experiences to be enjoyed in Malibu, as part of an extension of the hotel’s offerings. Furthermore, the campaign functions to change guests’ perceptions of what they can do during their stay. As the common denominator among guests is their financial status, it’s important that guests receive an elevated experience worth the value they are spending. Thus, the beach activities advertised in *Get in the Water* don’t affect the costs of guest stays (or the hotels’ financial output) but spells out and further reminds guests of the offerings they can enjoy with their booking. Families and couples alike can enjoy complementary use of the hotel’s surfboards, paddleboards, towels, and chairs - perfect for a family to enjoy a group surf

lesson or a couple to sunbathe on the beach. Children can learn how to safely enjoy the water with the guidance of one of the hotel's top surf instructors, and couples can be guided to a beautiful winery nestled in the canyon. For guests that have come to Surfrider under the premise of work or business, the *Get in the Water* campaign would function as a guide for how guests can relax - everything from the morning breathwork class to a group morning dip in the Pacific. All this is done in keeping with the nonchalant, endless summer vibes the Surfrider Hotel enjoys; inspiring guests to enjoy Malibu and get in the water.

We understand that within our audience, people have had negative experiences with the ocean, do not know proper ocean safety, or come to Malibu with false expectations of what the city is truly like. At the Surfrider Hotel and through the *Get in the Water* campaign, we will create positive experiences with the ocean, providing fun and unique experiences, while also teaching proper ocean safety. We want people to get the authentic Malibu experience, where they will find a relaxed beach town, with good food, good views, and good people.

Platform and Timing

In regard to the platforms and release schedule of the *Get in the Water* campaign, our team will implement a three-part process. The first phase of the campaign focuses on Website and in-house textual pieces. Meaning, adding info regarding the *Get in the Water* campaign to the Surfrider Hotel's website, as well as curating brochures and pamphlets for in-house guests to receive upon check-in. This combination of digital marketing and corporate communications allows the Surfrider Team to streamline communication to in-house, booked, and potential guests in a cost-effective manner which is a common practice of the hotels' communication strategy today.

The second phase of the *Get in the Water* campaign would be an influencer event hosted by the hotel, spanning over a four-day weekend. This event would be organized with specific *Get in the Water* amenities, including group surfing lessons, yoga on paddleboards, tanning sessions accompanied with picnics, meditation practices, and more. All of which would be experienced by a select group of influencers, who would thus share the Surfrider's campaign with a target audience that aligns with the Surfrider's clientele. In hosting such an event, we believe that excitement regarding the Surfrider will be boosted while also creating positive and lucrative relationships for the future with the invited influencer personnel.

The third phase of the *Get in the Water* campaign consists of publishing Surfrider's new offerings. Luxury lifestyle magazines like Condé Nast Traveler would be provided with all the necessary info to create features showcasing the *Get in the Water* campaign. From factual content regarding the hotel's operations to testimonials and pictures from the Surfrider's *Get in the Water* weekend, these magazine features would further boost the campaign's prominence, expediting the number of potential guests interested in staying at the hotel. Circling back to the ultimate goal of the *Get in the Water* campaign, we hope to boost the Surfrider Hotels' overall guest satisfaction and thus monetary intake. The belief here is that guest satisfaction will lead to an increase in positive ratings, which would encourage more bookings and thus more income for the hotel. Based on a 2020 study by Pew Research Center, it was determined that "82% of U.S. adults say they at least sometimes read online customer ratings or reviews before purchasing items for the first time" (Smith, 2020). Furthermore, the idea here is that the *Get in the Water* campaign will attract more attention, and better ratings, and thus increase the number of first-time bookings at the Surfrider Hotel.

Success of the Campaign

The *Get in the Water* campaign has the objective of raising guest satisfaction through various ways of encouraging bookings and keeping current guests loyal through different offerings, encouraging people to get in the water, giving them a more authentic Malibu experience. This campaign can be evaluated in terms of success by utilizing surveys for guests after their stay. These final surveys or assessments will determine if the campaign was effective in keeping guests satisfied, as well as growing the guest market (Beebe, 2021, p. 270). Reviews on websites like booking.com, Trip Advisor, Yelp, etc. will also be a good indicator of the satisfaction rates of guests. Another way of determining the success of the campaign is utilizing the digital footprint left on the website as well as social media platforms. Analyzing the data of increases or decreases in engagement on these platforms is an easy and effective way of determining the success in the traction of the campaign.

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