

MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

Market and Consumer Analysis

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MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

Abstract

This research paper will provide an in-depth analysis of the National PTSD Service Association's social media brand awareness outreach efforts. A summary of the target market, buyer persona, problem statement, primary research design and findings, secondary research, and market infographics are presented. Plus, a situation analysis and a S.W.O.T. analysis that will examine the National PTSD Service Association's organizational strengths and weaknesses.

Keywords: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Veterans with PTSD, and Service Dogs.

MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

Capstone Thesis Project

Introduction

The National PTSD Service Association (NPSA) is a Sarasota, Florida-based non-profit 501(c)(3) organization providing service dogs to qualified military veterans. Founded in 2014, the NPSA has needed to expand their outreach efforts to veterans with Post Traumatic Disorder (PTSD) throughout southwest Florida, specifically from Charlotte County to Hillsborough County. A strategic social media campaign will be implemented with the goal of increasing followers and fans in the target market of veterans with PTSD, age 45 to 55-years-old, by 40% by April 2021. These public relations efforts will increase brand awareness, create a community of advocates that support veterans and their service dogs' health and well-being while increasing donor support.

Thesis Statement

The National PTSD Service Association is the dog training service that provides specifically trained service dogs for qualified veterans who have PTSD. A social media campaign will be developed, focusing on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter with the goal of increasing followers and fans in the target market of veterans with PTSD, age 45 to 55-years-old, by 40% by April 2021.

Situation Analysis

Company Overview and Current State

The National PTSD Service Association The National PTSD Service Association (NPSA) is a Sarasota, Florida-based non-profit 501(c)(3) organization providing service dogs to qualified military veterans with PTSD. Sandra LaFlamme is the organization's co-founder and is overseeing the work. The organization trains the

MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

service dog alongside the veteran at the Euro Pros K-9 Center, 35571 Florida Rt. 70, Myakka City, FL 34251.

My client would like to gain more followers and fans using social media, specifically Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. In addition to increasing brand awareness through social media outreach efforts, my client would like to attract more financial donors. The capstone project will move these goals forward through a well-researched, strategic, social media campaign implementing Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

My client's current situation is stable as well as financially solvent; however, the organization is in dire need of improving their social media presence, which will help to increase their brand's awareness and financial donor contributions. At this moment, Sandra and Mark LaFlamme are self-funding the National PTSD Service Association operating and marketing expenses. Currently, the organization has an excellent reputation within their target market. Since the organization is self-funded by Sandra LaFlamme and Mark LaFlamme, with limited financial donations, they have struggled to attain additional brand awareness.

The client has only used their Facebook page and posted flyers at local Starbucks locations. The current image and reputation of the client is excellent. The client has not had a public relations campaign in the past. Their public relations efforts have been through Facebook, posting flyers at Starbucks, and word of mouth. Currently, the capstone PR practitioner is working with the client to set up social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram. Facebook is also being improved upon by adding groups and editing the client's profile page.

The capstone PR practitioner is also developing a strategic social media campaign with effective messaging and posts. A social media schedule is currently being developed along with a PROMO video and a research study. The client and PR practitioner are currently discussing

MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

Volkswagen's TV commercial ad campaign that brilliantly incorporates Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs*, which will help them determine a way to incorporate Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* theory in their social media campaign's messaging. Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* theory addresses five essential needs people desire for motivation. According to Maslow, people possess physiological, security and safety, social, ego, and self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1954).

Additionally, veterans that are interviewed or the likeness of their image is used in any National PTSD Service Association's social media or public relations materials will be notified by phone and electronic, written correspondence, asking for permission to use their image or interview. It is important the client's brand messaging strategies are aligned with copyright law (Dalglish, 2011).

The campaign plan is to develop an effective social media program implementing Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The client is 100% committed to the strategy, plan and would like to continue with the current direction. The social media insights and analytics will be reviewed on a weekly basis, plus the client's website's Google analytics will also be reviewed on a weekly basis. The content and messaging appearing on each post will be evaluated and edited to ensure optimum effectiveness.

MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

SWOT Analysis

S.W.O.T ANALYSIS		
	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
INTERNAL	STRENGTHS 1. Provides service dogs for veterans with PTSD. 2. Serving veterans from Hillsborough County to Charlotte County. 3. Match highly skilled service dogs with qualified veterans. Excellent reputation since 2014. On star nonprofit high ratings.	WEAKNESSES 1. Don't utilize social media platforms. 2. Don't get the word out. 3. Don't fulfill mission. 4. Don't receive funding 5. Southeastern Guide Dogs continue to monopolize, service dog training for veterans with PTSD.
EXTERNAL	OPPORTUNITIES 1. Serve an underserved population of qualified veterans with PTSD in SW Florida in need of a service dog. 2. Provide grants and financial assistance to vets with PTSD that need a service dog. 3. Capstone Project PR Practitioner	THREATS 1. Another like organization will open doors, persuading target market to try another service catering to veterans with PTSD in need of a service dog. 2. Southeastern Guide Dogs penetrates and reaches target market more effectively, stealing the client's audience completely.

Figure 1: SWOT analysis chart.

Providing highly skilled service dogs for qualified veterans with PTSD is an appreciated service for these veterans living in southwest Florida, from Hillsborough County to Charlotte County. Discuss the Strengths listed in the figure above. The National PTSD Service Association provides dog trainers that match the veteran with a service dog, so they are a perfect fit. The client has an outstanding reputation in the industry as well as the veteran population they serve. The social media campaign's content will use messaging and images reflecting the client's strengths. Social media outreach will include Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Discuss how the Campaign will leverage these Strengths.

The client lacks brand awareness within the target market and general population. The National PTSD Service Association has only used Facebook and flyer distribution at various Starbucks coffee shop locations throughout southwest Florida. The client has never had an in-house public relations practitioner or public relations strategy to implement a brand awareness campaign. Plus, the organization's founders have self-funded the National PTSD Service Association with limited donations from Wal-Mart and Home Depot. The client will have access to a public relations practitioner through the capstone project and with the increase in brand exposure, which will

MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

increase veterans with PTSD participation. Over a period of time, this will lend itself to better support data to present to interested financial donors and attaining grants. The campaign will address these weaknesses by including Instagram and Twitter in the social media campaign, adhering to a public relations campaign directed by the public practitioner, and will position themselves as a viable non-profit organization worthy of receiving financial donations and grants.

The client will have an opportunity to provide services to an underserved population of veterans with PTSD in southwest Florida needing a service dog. The National PTSD Service Association will be better positioned to receive grants and financial donations. The client will be able to continue their mission of helping with PTSD by offering grants and financial assistance to qualified veterans. The campaign will leverage these opportunities as the driving force to implement an effective social media campaign that will reach the target market by increasing fans and followers.

The client will not serve the veteran population in the southwest suffering from PTSD; this is a threat that will ultimately extinguish their mission, social media campaign, and organization. Financial donations and grants will be non-existent and one of their local competitors, Southeastern Sign Dogs will dominate the target market. The campaign will leverage these threats by adhering to the strategic public relations campaign. The threats will also act as an impetus to keep the client focused on the right direction, since the client could also have the inclination to serve a market outside of the target market

Competitive Analysis

The main market leader in southwest Florida is Southeastern Guide Dogs, a Palmetto, Florida based 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, founded in 1982 (Guidedogs.com, 2020). Southeastern Guide Dogs “has matched more than 2,800 dogs with visually impaired handlers.

MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

And, in 2006, Southeastern Guide Dogs launched ‘Paws for Patriots’ placing service dogs with veterans with visual impairments or PTSD and brought dogs to help veterans in military bases and hospitals such as Walter Reed, Quantico and Camp Lejeune” (Davies, 2014).

Southeastern Guide Dogs offers, “a 33 acre campus with modern, state of the art facilities totaling 100,000 square feet, the Margaret and Isaac Barpal Veterinary Center, the Keith G. Hirst Canine Assessment Center, the Barpal Hirst Student Center, and the Grant and Shirlee Herron Puppy Academy” (Guidedogs.com, 2020). Additionally, Southeastern Guide Dogs is very innovative in fundraising methods to attract financial donations. Recently, a new fundraising campaign was launched at Southeastern Guide Dogs, encouraging individuals to sponsor a puppy for \$19 per month, allowing an individual the opportunity to follow their puppy through a two-year journey, witnessing the puppy’s transformation into a guide dog (TampaBayNewswire.com, 2019).

Even though the competitor provides service dogs for veterans and other individual needs such as disabilities related to blindness and children with significant challenges since 1982 (Guidedogs.com, 2020), the National PTSD Service Association is committed to servicing only veterans with PTSD. The brand awareness public relations campaign will remain focused on delivering the client’s message to its target market.

Problem Statement

Qualified veterans, who suffer from PTSD in southwest Florida (Charlotte County to Hillsborough County), need access to trained service dogs. The trained service dogs will help them return to life with confidence and independence.

MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

Target Market and Buyer Persona

Target Market

The National PTSD Service Association has a target market of veterans residing in areas from Charlotte County to Hillsborough County in southwest Florida. Target veterans are female and male, age 45 to 55-years-old, from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and have come back from active duty. They have experienced traumatic, life-threatening combat and are returning home to their families and everyday lives. According to Cohen Bio Science for Veterans, “Post-deployment, PTSD prevalence in U.S. infantry personnel has averaged 10%-20%, often coexisting with depression, substance misuse, and other concerns (Cohen, 2020).”

The veterans face Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) daily. Some veterans have a high school diploma or GED, and several have a college education. Their income levels vary from below poverty to \$45,000 (Statista, 2019). They struggle to stay employed due to PTSD issues. These veterans who experience PTSD need the National PTSD Service Association service dogs that are trained to fit their emotional and physical needs.

The specific demographic for the primary target market is 45 to 55-year-old veterans with PTSD who live in Southwest Florida, specifically from Charlotte County to Hillsborough County and qualify to receive a service dog.

Veterans returning from combat who have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) may experience depression and anger, leaving them at greater risk for divorce, substance abuse, homelessness, and are at 1.5 times higher risk of suicide than non-veteran adults (2019, Holey). Only the National PTSD Service Association provides trained service dogs to fit a veteran's emotional and physical needs, empowering them to return to life with confidence and independence through their partnership with their service dog.

MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

According to a study on How Traumatic Violence Permanently Changes Shopping Behavior in *Frontiers in Psychology* suggests, veterans who experience heavy combat are less likely to stay committed to one brand, and they “exhibited similar disconnection from brands as others have experienced in social relationships (2016, Sigirci).” These veterans are more transactional and are most likely not willing to pay for an expensive product. However, those veterans that experienced lesser combat trauma were likely to try new brands, product cost was not an issue (2016, Sigirci).

Buyer Persona

Mark Schwartz is a 48-year-old veteran who served in the Afghanistan war and works as a part-time chef at Sharky’s on the Pier restaurant in Venice, FL. He also resides in Venice, FL, with his wife and two teenage children. Mark has an Associate of Science degree in Culinary Arts, and his salary is \$23,000/year. During his spare time, he enjoys fishing from the Venice Pier and keeping in touch with his veteran buddies on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Mark would like to work more hours at Sharky’s on the Pier and would like to one day create award-winning fish dishes as Sharky’s executive chef. Mark also wants to make his wife and children proud of his culinary achievements.

Despite his goals, his PTSD issues impede his ability to work longer hours and earn recognition. He would like to overcome PTSD with the assistance of a highly skilled service dog that will fit his emotional and physical needs, so he can work longer hours, achieve his goals, and regain a sense of balance and joy in his life again.

MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

Figure 2: Buyer Persona



Image by Shutterstock

Secondary Research

Social media habits of veterans are very much like the habits of active duty military, according to the following data provided in the area of research. According to Facebook, “4 million people on Facebook are veterans or active duty members, 12.5 million people on Facebook are family members of a veteran or an active duty member, and 242 million people on Facebook are friends with one or more veterans or active duty members” (Facebook, 2020). Also, “900,000 people in the US participate in more than 2,000 groups for military members, veterans, and their spouses on Facebook” (Facebook, 2019).

The second topic addresses service dog trained and individual tasks. The research study demonstrates that trained tasks were used more frequently. The research study performed by Purdue University’s College of Veterinary Medicine showed that the most important task for a PTSD service dog for veterans was disrupting episodes of anxiety. Research indicates service dog trained tasks were used 3.16 times per day with individual tasks being used 1.36 to 5.05 times per day. The study researched 216 veterans from K9 for Warriors (Service, P., n.d.). Trained tasks can be when a dog senses when the veteran experiences distress, anxiety, or even

MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

night sweats. Whereas picking up a pen on the floor or the newspaper are considered individual tasks.

The third topic highlights the veteran population in Sarasota and Florida, which includes 4,454 White, 429 Black, 249 Hispanic, and 2 or more ethnicities 44 for Sarasota veterans. Veterans by age in Sarasota County are 75 (1,698), 65 to 74 (1,387), 55 to 64 (803), 35 to 54 (672), and 18 to 34 (367). Median income for a veteran is \$35, 783 (Livestories, 2018). Total veteran population in Sarasota County is 42.7k (Livestories, 2018). There are 1, 381,170 male veterans and 144, 229 female veterans in the state of Florida (Floridavets.org, 2020).

The fourth topic provides new data on the way veterans with PTSD, the target market, are communicating. According to Dell Technologies, “the effectiveness of mobile and wearable technologies in recent years has begun to shift their focus to both mobile and wearable technologies that can provide real-time stress monitoring and intervention, lighting the path for new PTSD treatments” (2018, Dell Technologies). Since the release of the PTSD Coach app in 2011, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs states, “PTSD Coach has been downloaded over 100,000 times in over 74 countries. However, the app still relies on veterans to track their own symptoms” (Dell Technologies, 2018).

The fifth topic provides additional data on the National PTSD Service Associations competitor, Southeastern Guide Dogs. Southeastern Guide Dogs is situated on “a 33 acre campus with modern, state of the art facilities totaling 100,000 square feet, the Margaret and Isaac Barpal Veterinary Center, the Keith G. Hirst Canine Assessment Center, the Barpal Hirst Student Center, and the Grant and Shirlee Herron Puppy Academy” (Guidedogs.com, 2020). Plus, Southeastern Guide Dogs practices genetic reproduction to create healthier, and smarter

MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

dogs (Guidedogs.com, 2020). Southeastern Guide Dogs has matched more than 3,200 guide and service dog teams since 1982, and currently have over 1,200 dogs under their auspices (Guidedogs.com, 2020).



Infographic 1



Infographic 2

MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

Primary Research Design

In researching the effectiveness of online surveys using social media, according to a study by Rand Health Care on an Online Alcohol Intervention to Increase Access to Care for Veterans, Facebook was effective for reaching veterans (Irving, 2020). Primary research should be conducted using this method. A survey, using Survey Monkey, will be created, and shared on the client's Facebook page and groups. Rand's research demonstrates that Facebook is a social media site used and frequented by military veterans. The research obtained "1,023 veterans, ages 18 to 34 in just over three weeks" (Irving, 2020), which indicates Facebook can "be used to recruit representative samples of veterans and not just a selective subsection of the population (Irving, 2020)." Half of the veterans participating in the research had issues with PTSD, depression, anxiety, and heavy alcohol use (Irving, 2020).

Possible questions survey are: 1. After coming home, post deployment, have you ever had a service dog to help you with PTSD? 2. How long have you been experiencing PTSD? 3. Do you have written documentation from a healthcare provider qualifying you to receive a service dog? 4. Do you have a dog you would like to train to be a service dog? 5. Have you ever heard about the National PTSD Service Association? 6. Would you like to visit the NPSA training facility to see if you qualify for a service dog that's a perfect fit for you? By asking these questions, it will be determined if the veteran needs the National PTSD Service Association's services and qualifies to receive a service dog. Survey questions will be reviewed and approved by the client with a survey start with an end date determined by the client.

MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

Primary Research Findings

Introduction

The reason for the primary research was to determine the validity of the target market's geographic, demographic, gender, and general veteran population living from Charlotte County to Hillsborough County. The primary research provides a glimpse at the necessary messaging required for an effective public relations social media strategy.

The relevant secondary findings suggest that the social media habits of veterans are much like the social media habits of active-duty military. There are \$2.7k veterans living in Sarasota County, and the most interesting of all secondary findings is that military veterans with PTSD are communicating more with mobile and wearable technologies. These findings supported the primary research effort.

Method

A survey was created by Survey Monkey and then posted on the client's Facebook page, groups, and website. A Facebook survey ad was also created and posted.

Veterans were encouraged to click on the survey link. The survey consisted of 6 questions, resulting in a 1-minute duration survey time. The survey questions were: 1. Are you a veteran with PTSD? 2. Would you like to visit the National PTSD Service Association's training facility? 3. Do you currently reside in southwest Florida (between Charlotte and Hillsborough County)? 4. How would you like to receive additional information on the National PTSD Service Association? 5. What is your age? 6. What is your gender? Prior to the start of the primary research study, the client was initially averse to connecting with Facebook groups, the client did not have any Facebook groups. The client was also hesitant to boost a Facebook ad. However, after the PR practitioner shared with the client the various local, Sarasota veteran Facebook

MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

groups, Facebook group veteran data and statistics, and the importance of connecting with Facebook groups, the client was encouraged and approved Facebook groups and boosting a Facebook ad. Since the client has had limited social media outreach (only Facebook)

The results were gathered using Facebook Insights and Monkey Survey data. The data was statistically significant because the secondary data suggests a higher social media veteran participation. However, the survey data results showed differently. The only respondents were female. This is statistically significant since the secondary research indicates there is a larger population of males versus veteran females in Florida. According to Floridavets.org, “there are 1,381,170 male veterans and 144, 229 female veterans in the state of

Results

There were only 3 survey respondents. All respondents were 100% female. 100% had PTSD. 33.3% wanted to visit the training facility. 66.67% did not want to visit the training facility. 33.3% did not reside in southwest Florida, 66.67% resided in southwest Florida, 100% were 45 to 54 years old, 66.67% wanted more information, and 33.3% did not want additional information. The boosted Facebook Survey Monkey ad reached 259 persons in Sarasota / Bradenton County that had 14 Engagements and 4 link clicks. The Facebook client post reached 29 people with 5 engagements. Currently, there isn't available data from the client's website embedded Monkey Survey because the Monkey Survey code was recently placed on the client's website.

Conclusion

The National PTSD Service Association (NPSA) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization providing service dogs to qualified veterans with Post Traumatic Disorder (PTSD). Founded in 2014, NPSA has needed to expand outreach efforts to veterans from Charlotte County to

MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

Hillsborough County. Qualified veterans, who suffer from PTSD and reside in southwest Florida, need access to trained service dogs. The trained service dogs will help them return to life with confidence and independence. Contradictory viewpoints on veterans' post deployment assimilation suggest treating veterans with PTSD with FDA-approved drugs such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) (Alexander, 2012). However, the secondary research studies presented in this market and consumer analysis suggest otherwise, and provide research statistical data that a highly skilled, trained service dog, indeed, helps a veteran with PTSD. Veterans with PTSD need the support of a service dog in order to regain balance in their lives. The National PTSD Service Association is leading the way to help restore veterans' lives.

MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

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MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

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MARKET AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS

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