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A marketing plan is written for

Little Nell

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Introduction

Relais & Châteaux has a huge collection of exclusive hotel brands and the Little Nell is one of them. The Little Nell is among the top 5 hotels of Relais & Châteaux and is considered as one of the best ski hotels in the U.S. The hotel is nestled at the base of Aspen Mountain in Colorado (Forbes Travel Guide, 2021). The marketing plan aims to provide recommendations, following marketing elements and internal and external environments analysis, for successful progress in the new-normal following the changes that have occurred in the tourism industry since the coronavirus appears.



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1. Marketing Mix

Product – The Little Nell is the only ski-in and ski-out in Aspen mountain. They have 92 rooms with 30 varieties with large windows, unique layout, marble bathrooms, and some with vaulted ceilings for mountain view (The Little Nell, 2021). Element 47 restaurant offers seasonal and local foods, standard plates and sustainable seafood, and the bar has 20,000 wine collections. They offer free airport shuttles, fly fishing, cross-road tours, snowcat skiing, babysitting, house-car, nightclub, pet service, pool, spa and gym to guests.

Price - Nell targets upper-middle to higher-income people, provides premium service and charges a high price. So, it follows a premium pricing strategy. The per-night cost varies from \$656 to \$3,545 depending on room layout, vaulted ceiling, and rush (The Culture-ist, 2021).

Place – Nell follows both direct and indirect channels to sell their rooms and suites. They sell through their websites as well as third-party websites like Booking.com, Hotels.com, Expedia etc. giving commissions and special offers.

Promotion – Their homepage features a welcoming video and they display banner ads in digital media. Their sustainable sourcing of seafood, Ride & Dine with cyclists, nurturing programs for residents are behaviours that facilitate public relations (Thomason, 2016). Free ski passes, Colorado residents' special rate, \$85 breakfast credit, 25% off for 30 days stay and other special savings are their promotion activities.



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2. The Marketing Environment (Micro-SWOT)

They have Aspen mountain, Fork river and the fashion of Aspen (Colorado.com, 2021). They have skilled housekeeping to personalise services, concierges for skiing, fishing and land-guiding, and famous chefs. The strongest point-of-difference is their uniqueness and authenticity. The fashionable boutique in the lobby, health centre, wine collections in the bar, Audi experience, Cycle camps, Arts at the Nell etc. is some unique features they possess.

The shortage of room supply is their main weakness as the hotel is famous for all-season beauty. Its 92 rooms do not serve the global guests willing to visit to experience Aspen's authenticity here.

80% of people want to travel again after Covid-19 (Kamata, 2021). Quarantine has involved people in social media and thus Nell can utilise the opportunity. They can reach out directly to prospects, who like mountains and culture, via social media and highlight their camps, mountain-river-ground roaming arrangements, restaurants and bars.

The global economy has suffered for Covid-19 and many people went jobless, living standards dropped and people prefer savings for future uncertainty. An affordable option like St Moritz and big properties like Frias with 200 lodging options can attract the customer who wants affordability and no stock-out respectively (Nytime.com, 2021).



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3. The Marketing environment (Macro) PESTEL

Different political decisions regarding border opening-closing, vaccination, airport rules, restrictions in entry-exit etc. centring Covid-19 are barriers to travelling (Ranjan et al., 2021). European Union has removed the US from the “Safe List” for travelling. European travellers entering and returning from US places like Aspen are now facing restrictions.

Global unemployment is expected to be 205 million in 2022 (Ketter and Avraham, 2021). The job recovery rate is also slower after lockdown withdrawal. As people have less money to spend, risk losing jobs, or slower salary growth for the pandemic, they cannot focus on luxury travel.

Social distancing and hygiene are now people’s priorities which gives Nell an advantage. As it has fewer rooms, there is less crowd. Less crowd means easier distancing and maintaining crowd-generate safety concerns. 33% of people find mountains safe, 15% lake and 8% pool for social-distance-travelling where each is contained by Nell (Nast, 2021).

People have got habituated to technology. People spend 145 minutes daily on average on social media, and online purchases have increased by 25% (Lapointe, 2020). This situation offers opportunities. Campaigns, direct marketing, exposures and increasing followers are cheaper in social media by highly targeted marketing. So, Nell can utilise this cheaper but effective trend to market their service.



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4. Creating Customer Value & Engagement

People are recovering from health, mental and financial crises. Their premium pricing can be an issue while choosing among Aspen's hotels. 44% of people look for discounts because they want savings for adventures (Lumsdon, 2015). Nell can focus on increasing economic options, by introducing new budget brands or acquisitions. Nell already offers amenities like a free pet, shuttle, health-care services but they can add complementary services like free meals for kids below teenagers, group-bedroom for friends staying together, all-included packages in discounts etc.

Nell doesn't have a well-designed application, any in-hotel booths for coffee, cash-out money, chocolate etc. They can launch an application that will include a booking system, website items, travel blogs, and a tour series of family, millennial, solo, couple genres. As they are often stock-out, they can add a referral system for such situations to recommend other properties to not turn down customers entirely which will create a good image for the brand. An all-in-one booth for coffee, hot chocolate, cash-out can also add value to guests' experience.

Finally, social media marketing to reach vast users and connect through satisfying travel ads can engage people with the brand.



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5. Effective Use of digital Marketing

To engage better with customers, Nell can develop some digital marketing options:

Mobile websites and apps are one demand now because 60% of prospects search for hotel apps to look for facilities (Kamata, 2021). So, Nell should design an app that will include reviews, video storytelling, blogs, 360-degree hotel view, user community, and ads besides the bookings and 3rd party integration. They can add easy checking, room access, online shopping, mobile banking and referral system to the app.

Nell can have an official YouTube channel that will include the adventures, cultural and artistic experiences, short-long tour plans, collaboration with influencers etc. Facebook ads are cheaper and the more ads people get exposed to, the more they tend to search the hotel (Ranjan et al., 2021). Nell can create travel ads for Facebook users. Social media influencers can affect the purchase decision of followers by suggesting brands. Nell can work with them to create content and engage their followers.

They can practice "Social Listening". Monitoring mentions, shares, comments and reactions they get can help in direct marketing. They can directly engage with the prospect through comments' replies, rewarding the highest sharers or best-unasked content creation etc. Search Engine Optimisation in YouTube, Facebook and Google can help get more exposers.

Email marketing is the best way for post-stay communication with current customers (Nast, 2021). Emailing to update about offers, programs, fests, packages, new additions etc. can keep them virtually engaged.



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Conclusion

The travel and tourism industry is recovering as people are getting into normal life. People are recovering from mental, physical and financial problems. The different internal and external environments are throwing challenges as well as opportunities like competitions, the economic crisis of people, technological development, social trends etc. The hotel remained closed from March 2020 till June 2021 that cause numerous losses and thus they need a recovery strategy. They should pursue other segments than the luxury. Nell should offer something for the economic class considering the “spend less, enjoy more” trend. They should focus on digital marketing to capture the increased internet economy. They must adopt digital media to attract tourists to boost their post-pandemic sales. A new application, mobile website, smart booths, influencer marketing and social listening can be a new addition to their current market strategy.



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