

COASTAL HOUSING: MBA MARKETING MANAGEMENT ASSIGNMENT

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for JAYNE WILLIAMS

COASTAL HOUSING

It has recently been recognised that *'to maximize customer satisfaction, companies have long emphasized touchpoints. But doing so can divert attention from the more important issue: the customer's end-to-end journey,'* (Neher et al, March 2016). With this quotation in mind and following on from the presentation, you have been tasked with

critically appraising how the chosen organisation [Coastal Housing] can create innovative marketing strategies for raising awareness of the brand

as well as

managing and evaluating the customer journey across a variety of communication channels to ensure current and future stakeholders' expectations are fulfilled.

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1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report follows on from the presentation given on 8 December 2016 which undertook an environmental marketing analysis and analysed the customer journey for Coastal Housing¹. The following recommendations are made.

From the presentation:

- Production of a leaflet /flyer to raise awareness amongst an older demographic of the services Coastal provides
- Development of an App for the organisation to ensure contact
- Provision of specialised care for the elderly, perhaps considering the American, and Dutch supported and mixed living models
- Work with media and television, perhaps to work on a small series relating to social housing, its customers, financial and other challenges, and company organisation
- Green energy: solar panels and/or ground source heating in new build developments and promotion of this

From the report:

- CIM for Staff training building marketing skills for differentiation and on the back of skills in the workplace training that exists, and can be supported by Welsh Government
- Create marketing section within the organisation to focus on identifying either new market segments or development of existing segments

¹ Coastal Housing is referred to as Coastal throughout, after the initial full reference

2: INTRODUCTION

Coastal Housing, the organisation for which this report is written, is a not for profit registered social housing organisation based in Swansea. Formed in 2008 from the merger of two social housing associations, the organisation is one of the largest in the Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and Carmarthenshire area, with 5,500 properties of varying types.

This work will appraise how the chosen organisation can create innovative marketing strategies for raising awareness of the brand as well as managing and evaluating the customer journey across a variety of communication channels to ensure current and future stakeholders' expectations are fulfilled.

The topics to be discussed will be the current marketing capability of the organisation, the identification of strategies for marketing and tactics for achieving them, and engaging with the targeted segments in ways relevant to both the organisation and the target market.

The aims and objectives of the report are that having identified the above areas and assessed their viability, recommendations will be made to guide the organisation in the achievement of its aims.

Within the scope of the report, theories and frameworks will be applied to the existing organisational situation.

3: MAIN RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

This section looks at the results of the research for the presentation (XXX *et al*, 2016), their implications and from this identifies means of creating marketing strategies and brand awareness; also to manage and evaluate the customer journey within Coastal.

3.1 INFORMATION FROM PRESENTATION

The presentation has analysed the PESTEL and Sector external environments; internal environment; future challenges; customer journey and touchpoints identified by Coastal; current marketing ability; recommendations. The external and internal audits were undertaken following the mode laid out in Jobber and Fahy (2012); Porter (2008); and Lynch (2003).

The main results showed a potential risk from cuts in EU grants via WEFO as these form up to 20% of the Coastal financing for projects (Stokes, 2015 and Welsh Government, 2016a). Other cuts to local government are likely and therefore an increased pressure on organisations like Coastal to provide housing.

Coastal has strong internal organisation (Doyle, *et al*, 2016 and Stokes, 2016) and this is vital for agile and appropriate action in services differentiation (Kotler, 2001). Combined with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act (Welsh Government, 2015) upon which all actions must be sustainable, and the Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-2023 (Welsh Government, 2014) where positive, active aging is emphasised gives Coastal an opportunity to lead.

3.2: HOW CAN COASTAL HOUSING CREATE AN INNOVATIVE MARKETING STRATEGY?

Building on the internal competences of the organisation as identified within the presentation (XXX *et al*, 2016, and Prahalad and Hamel, 1990) would strengthen an already capable organisation. Using their vanguard systems and lean operations, with a low operational responsibility bar; gives the staff members the opportunity to not only have the ability or confidence to come forward with ideas, but also to create ideas and put them into operation (Stokes, 2015). A whole marketing process (Kotler, *et al*, 2013) encompasses the direction and implementation of a strategy and is based on exchangeable value and customer understanding.

The promotion of the organisation as described in the presentation is wide; television and media presence, housing awards, listings within Times Top 100 companies and Best Companies and the ability to have a strategy to market themselves and create brand resonance would be innovative (Keller, 2016). Currently, there is no marketing section (Coastal, 2017) and whilst this is undertaken by other members of staff (Stokes, 2016) this should be created as a priority.

Who the decision maker is will also impact direction and strategy of marketing. In this case, whilst the staff are empowered to make and act on their own decisions, but for creating a marketing team and identifying the nature of a marketing strategy, and a market planning process, the Board would have responsibility, but also practising the staff 360 input that Coastal practice as a matter of course (Stokes, 2016). Piercy and Morgan (1994) note that having a planned process should take into account the behavioural nature of the organisation and this, looking at Coastal's current

operational nature, would be undertaken. Research would also consider the need for the product, in this case by looking at the Welsh Government Local Housing Assessment Guide (Welsh Government, 2016d).

When a strategy for marketing is decided upon, there are already contacts with the media to promote this, or if there are issues with the legality of advertising social housing, there would be potential for a “fly on the wall” type short series of programmes as has already been carried out for local police and ambulance services. A series following the homeless people of Swansea, made in conjunction with charities that support the homeless, was well received and also raises issues around why people need social housing and how they become homeless (BBC Wales, 2014). A programme/series with Coastal may go some way to dispelling myths about people who are vulnerable and require support and also draw attention to the reasons why support is needed, for instance, the lack of affordable housing for young people and the lack of affordable housing for the elderly. Associating Coastal with positive experiences (XXX *et al*, 2016) via an integrated marketing campaign (Brassington and Pettitt, 2006) and publically so will build brand resonance (Keller, 2016).

In identifying the nature of the strategy, undifferentiated, concentrated, or differentiated (Dibb *et al*, 2006), using the experience and capabilities of the longer term staff would aid clear understanding for direction. In Coastal’s case, a concentrated strategy would allow identification of targeted segments (Jobber and Fahy, 2012) if they wished to focus on elderly or young singles care, for example, or a differentiated strategy whereby teams would identify a marketing mix as a tactic

that could achieve the strategy. Decisions for the percentage of revenue to be spent on marketing as a not for profit organisation would have to be carefully made as part of the initial strategy.

Concentrated marketing may, however, create too large a response, and overselling a product that may not exist, thereby creating long waiting lists may create an adverse customer opinion which requires marketing control (Jobber and Fahy, 2012). Looking at the product anatomy, Kotler *et al*, 2013) the core product of the organisation, the house or flat, could be identified as augmented if it were adapted to suit the customer needs and thereby creating value for the organisation reputationally and for the customer and potential customer. Campaigning for societal awareness of social housing would add differentiation and innovation. The conversion of non-user to user would be valuable in an expanding market, for example for elderly care, and is considered by Hollensen (2003) in a product situation, but equally applicable with “inducements” such as tailored adaptability.

Having a strategic marketing objective that will build rather than divest or hold (Jobber and Fahy, 2003) is within the reach of Coastal as they build their internal strength on a vanguard system with leadership that supports staff empowerment and trust (Inman and Belasco, 2014).

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) could be undertaken with TV/Social media/linking with local and national charities, for example, Shelter Cymru or the Trussell Trust; in Swansea the Missionaries of Charity, perhaps especially at Christmas. Promotions would have to be suitable for both the organisation, customer

and potential customer as well as raising awareness. Leaflets could be distributed via social services. A concentrated campaign, perhaps may be too big an outreach, and may create large waiting lists and lead to disappointment.

Ansoff (in Dibb *et al*, 2006 and Hollensen, 2003) identifies the nature of growth in detail for a marketing strategy matrix; for Coastal, existing products are strong in the existing market, there is a waiting list but generally short; a new market of customers would be perhaps to target the elderly (with a growing aging demographic) having developed suitable housing for market penetration. An existing product in a new market could be spreading towards west Wales, potentially student homes in Carmarthen for UWTSD.

New product in the existing market could be a crèche or elderly care;

New product in a new market could be sheltered communities following the American example for either elderly care; or also following the American market to have assisted living, where small groups of three or four live in a house with a “carer”. The Dutch and Scandinavian models where students live in low rise apartment blocks with elderly people also has potential and is achievable in south Wales.

This as an ethical model would be perceived as acceptable in the current marketing environment (Jobber and Fahy, 2012) Most of these options would also link very well with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, and the promotion of communities and physical and mental wellbeing. Funding to help this may be available from Welsh Gov for the customer in renting or buying (Welsh Government 2016, b, e) and the support of Business Wales.

When the European Union Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund funding stops after Brexit (Welsh Government, 2016a), and this is an unknown, there are some funding streams that may be available and any avenues need exploration. Given the base of Coastal's' internal structure, as a successful model this could also be marketed nationally, nationally within the UK or internationally.

This would then naturally expand what the Brand does stand for and what its resonance is. Coastal's name and reputation as a not-for profit organisation would clearly then be linked with wellbeing and vibrant futures for all generations, especially if linked with social strength and support for low paid parents, campaigning for affordable housing, awareness of managing on benefits and the need for long term social support (Walters, 2016).

Create value in order to capture value: if Coastal increase their reputation and brand resonance (Kotler *et al*, 2013, and Keller, 2016) then they are in a strong position to ensure that the customer recognition of this creates a trickle down process whereby those aging customers would look to Coastal as first choice for housing. A metric for recording how well the customers are served is examined in Daft (2001); using this, Coastal seem aware of the mission scorecard and goals (Daft, 2001).

Keller (2000) looks at the Points of Parity (POPS) and Points of Differentiation (PODS) to maintain a sustainable, customer focused organisation and using this to compare Coastal with its nearest identified competitors such as Gwalia, Tai Teulu and Valleys to Coast, shows that Coastal are again in apposition of strength and are market leaders rather than market challengers followers or nichers (Brassington and

Pettitt, 2006). The creation of value for the company will also create value for the customer and collaborative value (Chernev, 2014). Dibb *et al* (2006) looked at non-profit marketing, and this is eminently suitable as Coastal are a not for profit organisation. It falls into two categories of non-profit organisation marketing and social marketing, and both are applicable in that a service is provided by Coastal as well as a product and the social element is designed to influence the acceptability of social ideas, in this case social housing (Dibb *et al*, 2006)

3.4: THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

The customer journey identified should be seamless (Maechler, Neher and Park, 2016); this journey is the goal within the organisation. Levitt (1960) noted that in marketing, everything “*must follow had thinking about the customer*”; these are the important bases on which the journey must be founded. Identifying this within Coastal, the whole process from first contacting Coastal to the aftercare for the tenant when they have moved in should be seamless and customer focused.

Richardson (2010) plans a process through awareness, engagement, purchase and use, and notes that the process can be tailored for service or product, which should lead to delight. This is if the customer is understood, building on understanding.

Research identified points at which service users (customers) were at the delight level (Kano, in Jobber and Fahy, 2012). Identifying what influences customers in this marketing arena is different from the leads to purchasing a product, as they may be impelled by uncontrolled personal circumstances onto this journey (Jobber and Fahy, 2012) and unlikely to re-use a service or product but would be highly likely to recommend as a result of their delight. It could be considered that the more

touchpoints that exist, the more elements are likely to go awry or complicate, although with an often vulnerable customer base it ensures that there is an auditable framework to allow progress and check satisfaction. The organisation must be customer centric, and information gathered and understood in order to be successful; this is examined by Louth (1966) and Coastal have much information from customer satisfaction surveys, and also from the Welsh Government performance indicators (Welsh Government, 2016c)

Surveys are a good way of benchmarking the customer journey, as long as the respondents tell the truth. Some customers may prefer the paper or digital survey option for anonymity, but there is also the social listening which is becoming much more active and “Big Data” collection accurately records customer activity on websites such as google Analytics (Google Digital Garage presentation, 2016) and Launcha (Woodman, 2016). Digitisation moves fast and there are opportunities to collect and interact in real time (Van Bommel *et al*, 2014, and Edelman and Singer, 2015) which Coastal has on their website. Google also provide free digital skills learning tailored to any needs online, including marketing (Google, 2017).

However, as Schultz (1997) notes, it is not only understanding the technological data, which drives innovation, but being able to understand the psychology of the human customer and to blend the two by mining the information. Too many survey requests may not inspire happiness, but the interviews in the presentation clearly illustrate that Coastal’s customers are more than happy to explain the areas that for them provide “delight” (Kano, in Jobber and Fahy, 2012).

Customer focused as an organisation, being customer centric (Maechler, Neher and Park, 2016), is shown by Coastal's four pillars of sustainable tenancies, sustainable communities and sustainable economies thereby sustaining Coastal as an organisation (Coastal, 2015) and the interlinked nature of this is clear in their ethos. By providing their tenants with training in skills to enable them to sustain their own tenancies, they give life skills and help to provide a platform for moving forward; identifying this situation and remedying any needs gap is not only a positive touchpoint but inspires credibility in the tenant – landlord relationship (Coastal, 2015). If any of the pillars is not maintained, then a skew becomes obvious and this would show in the relationships with the customers.

Other verbal informal feedback shows that Coastal's customers are happy with the end to end journey and often feel very confident with contacting coastal and there is expectation that they will be answered by "friends" who respect them, act responsibly and keep confidences (Respondent 1, *pers comm*). This also seems to ensure a balance between the customer and staff and reflects the fact that the properties are well maintained by both Coastal and by the residents. The All Wales Tenant Satisfaction Survey shows Coastal's figures are significantly ahead of the market average for satisfaction at all levels (Coastal, 2012), and this will be a target for Coastal to build on: there has been no survey since 2012 and one should be undertaken soon, in 2017, as there is a five year difference and outlooks and expectations may have changed.

Word of mouth acts as a good reference and the next generation of the tenants come to Coastal in the secure knowledge that they will be assisted. As the presentation

(XXX *et al*, 2016) showed, in giving under 25s housing opportunities, they are helping young people at risk be housed, and avoiding a downward spiral of vulnerable housing or homelessness. This positive experience for young people gives a smooth element to a customer journey that might otherwise fail, and takes into account customer emotions (Magids *et al*, 2015). Using a model for segmentation, targeting and positioning would link in with collection and analysis of big data in a nested approach (Bonoma and Shapiro in Hollensen, 2003) and lead to greater understanding of a target market through macro/micro segmentation and analysis. Yulinsky (2011) considers tactical segmentation as a specific approach for targeting new customers and matched this with the organisations' internal strength.

Ensuring the internal strength of the organisation meets not only basic needs but exceeds them, places Coastal in an excellent position in the customer journey – the customers satisfaction surveys, both for Coastal itself and for the federation as a whole show that Coastal have a higher satisfaction percentage than average (Coastal Housing, 2012) .

This not only shows that the customers are willing to give their opinion but also that Coastal take account of the customer expectations. Inman and Belasco (2014) discuss the fact that Coastal's systems are regularly reviewed to ensure more value to the customer and remove any blockages that slow the service process. Mapping the customer journey (Richardson, 2010) not only at its four main touchpoints (XXX *et al*, 2016) but also the sub points within these will also ensure that the touchpoints are noted, and that if there are occurrences, where there are problems, there can be a link to where this can be resolved (Richardson, 2016). Contact through multimedia

and encouraging community spirit of support (caretaker responsibility) will also ensure that expectations are not only met but exceeded.

This element of partnership and collaborative working is essential to ensure a smooth customer journey; noted by Burnes and Dale (1998) and by Gratton and Erickson (2007). Coastal practice this at the moment and regularly review its effectiveness (Inman and Belasco, 2014); if a marketing team is created, their focus should be based on training to achieve success, and be with Chartered Institute of Marketing membership and marketing qualifications. Leadership to promote empowerment would also allow a significant collective input to give a position of strength.

4: CONCLUSIONS

Because Coastal, as an organisation that monitors the external environment and ensure the internal environment functions appropriately, they are in a strong and agile position to expand into their targeted segment in any chosen and identified strategy and will be able to ensure that they have the capabilities to implement the tactics necessary to achieve these; given the criteria necessary, they are a market orientated organisation and not static.

Their resourcing, both financial and human, creates an agile organisation with employees capable of making decisions and acting upon them; this refers not only to any customer requirements or experiences on the customer journey, but to the wider social housing market and awareness and knowledge of the sector.

Both of the aims of this report can be achieved by Coastal's identifying their own marketing planning process and creating a framework which will be achievable and meet the SMART targets (specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and time sensitive). For both elements, the strategy and tactics would be decided by the Board of Directors and implemented and controlled by the employees.

5: RECOMMENDATIONS

These are made partly based on the results of the presentation, but also on the results of this report. It is believed that all the recommendations are achievable within a diminishing funding climate, are SMART, and will ensure growth of Coastal Housing, both reputationally and internally as an organisation.

From the presentation:

- Production of a leaflet /flyer to raise awareness amongst an older demographic of the services Coastal Housing provides
- Development of an App for the organisation to ensure contact
- Provision of specialised care for the elderly, perhaps considering the American, and Dutch supported and mixed living models
- Work with media and television, perhaps to work on a small series relating to social housing, its customers, financial and other challenges, and company organisation
- Green energy: solar panels and/or ground source heating in new build developments and promotion of this

From the report:

- CIM for Staff training building marketing skills for differentiation and on the back of skills in the workplace training that exists, and can be supported by Welsh Government
- Create marketing section within the organisation to focus on identifying either new market segments or development of existing segments

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