

Secondary Research on Hallmark Visitors Center

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Part I: Research about the Organization:

A.

Founded in 1910, Hallmark set out with a mission to foster a more emotionally connected world (Hallmark, 2017). As stated on their webpage, “Throughout the company, we aim to be good community partners, believe embracing diversity and inclusion is the best way to understand and serve our employees and consumers, and strive to be environmentally responsible. This all helps to fulfill our purpose of inspiring meaningful relationships and enhancing lives.”

Opened in 1985 to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Hallmark, the Hallmark Visitors Center acts as a hub for those interested in Hallmark’s identity, branding and story (Hallmark Visitors Center, 2017). The Center displays their history through multiple mediums, including: old films, exhibits and ornament collections. Among the most popular exhibits are The J.C. Hall of Christmas Trees, bow machine and the keepsake ornaments exhibit. Since opening, there have been over 2.7 million visitors due to the wide variety of activities for all ages, and free admission (Hallmark Visitors Center, 2017).

The Hallmark Visitors Center is located in Kansas City, Missouri, next to Hallmark headquarters. More specifically, the Center can be found in the Crowne Center Plaza making it a convenient location for KC visitors and city dwellers. Demographically speaking, the average income for millennials within this area is 73 thousand dollars, making it is an upscale area of the

city surrounded by many shops and restaurants such as Toy Time, The Apothecary, Crayola Cafe and Kansas City Fudge factory (JCCC, 2017).

B.

Being such an upstanding and developed company, Hallmark has run many initiatives and campaigns to spread their message and inspire meaningful relationships. In one such campaign, Hallmark worked to uncover the little moments from one's hometown that made the idea of home so touching. At an art show in Minnesota, writers from Hallmark reached out to locals asking about stories and memories that made them think of home. One specific woman noted that she got to know her husband through the cards they sent back and forth, giving Hallmark the idea to create cards that connect people. Playing off this platform, Hallmark launched a test in Kansas towns such as Lawrence, Topeka, Leavenworth and Kansas City, to see if "hometown" cards could sell. It was through this campaign research that Hallmark got the idea to set up a year round display in the Hallmark Visitors Center where guests could see videos, hear the stories and sample the cards created through the stories (Swann, 2014). To this day, visitors at the Center can watch artists from Hallmark go through the creative process and influence the art.

Being the massive entity that it is, Hallmark also works to push green initiatives, educational help and human services within the global community. Since 2006, Hallmark has cut waste by 61 percent, energy by almost 40 percent and water usage by 25 percent (Hallmark, 2017). One example of this is through Hallmark's donation of extra product to military, educational and human service organizations. Scraps of paper from Hallmark's factory in Kansas City are donated to Kaleidoscope, a children's art center for projects and learning. Kaleidoscope

was co-founded by Steve Doyal, the Senior Vice President of Public affairs and Communications for Hallmark Cards and is also located in Kansas City's Crowne Center (Epic Innovative Events, 2015). As its own entity, the Hallmark Visitors Center donates artwork from past exhibitions to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, thus benefitting the direct public.

C.

Though Hallmark hosts a slew of online accounts, the Hallmark Visitor Center itself does not have many social media accounts. Facebook appears to be their main form of outward communication, and their page shows posts about their upcoming events, Hallmark history and Visitor Center information. The Hallmark Visitors Center also shows up on Facebook as a tagged location, making it accessible for millennials to talk about their experience with their friends.

Hallmark's social media can be seen as an extension for the visitor center, and works to promote Hallmark's overall brand. On twitter, Hallmark posts about popular national holidays such as grandparent's day or Labor Day. To try and keep up with millennials, Hallmark stays on top of daily trends and makes use of the different ways through which information can be shared on social media. As an example of this, Hallmark tweeted out a short video of different doodles to anticipate the season of pumpkin spice- a popular seasonal drink among millennials.

The week of August 6th to the 13th Hallmark's account tweeted 15 times a day, updating the public with fun tweets and infographics. While 15 tweets a day seems to be the company's norm, on days leading up to popular holidays, such as Valentine's Day, Hallmark sent out 33 tweets (Twitter, 2017).

This data shows that the account was more active during the days leading up to a holiday than on days when Hallmark participated in smaller events such as conventions or tree decorating contests. Another comparison can be drawn from the days leading up to events. For instance, Hallmark started posting about Valentine's Day in January to get people excited and to remind millennials to buy cards, whereas for the tree decorating contest, Hallmark only gave a single tweet reminding the public.

During the Valentine's Day season, Hallmark promoted a commercial in which a male interior designer was proposed to by his boyfriend (McNamara, 2017). This specific campaign went viral because of Hallmark's dedication to make the holiday less heteronormative. Through using democratic principles that millennials connect with, Hallmark was able to increase sales and support their mission of diversity and inclusion.

In a separate initiative, Hallmark created a catch phrase, "One Card Many Backstories." This phrase was used to celebrate the diverse couples that buy Hallmark cards. Hallmark then used the hashtag, #CareEnoughToSend, to get people involved first hand in the commercial and to spread the message (LezWatch Commercials, 2017).

In the future, the Hallmark Visitors Center could create their own Twitter or Instagram accounts to engage the audience in what they are doing and the larger Hallmark brand. Strategies such as responding directly to followers on social media would allow the public to give feedback and allow the Visitors Center to promote its events.

Conclusion:

The Hallmark Visitors Center, located in Kansas City, Missouri, offers an assortment of activities and events for the whole family. When visiting people can be hands on with the bow-making machine or they can follow the timeline of the company to become more informed. The Visitors Center strives to be an inclusive and fostering environment to connect people and support Hallmark's greater mission of, "inspiring meaningful relationships and enhancing lives." Hallmark has worked to achieve their goals through inclusive advertisement campaigns such as the #CareEnoughToSend viral twitter commercials. The company is environmentally conscious and focused on bringing people together. The Hallmark Visitors Center is an extension of Hallmark because it works to share Hallmark's history and legacy with the public.

Part II. Research about the Industry:**A.**

The Hallmark Visitors Center operates within many different environments. Not only is the center in the tourism and travel destinations category, but it is also in the Kansas City Crown Center making it competitive with surrounding businesses and leisure activities. Outside even of both of those markets, exists an online market that deals with the branding of the Hallmark Visitors Center over other centers in the area.

When people are touring the Hallmark Visitors Center, they are most interested in looking at the card Christmas tree and the bow-making machine. Guests also all talk about walking away with a series of postcards that highlight the history of Kansas City. To get more

hands-on experience with the company, the creative team is available during the week between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m., and open to talk with the public about the creative process. While the age group that visits the center most often are just older than the millennial demographic, a few millennials talk about loving the selfie station and crafting their own bows on online sites such as yelp and tripadvisor.

The Hallmark Visitors Center is not too big in size and is said to take just about 45 minutes to an hour to get totally through. Hallmark as a business, however, is a multi-billion dollar brand that contains six diverse businesses within its portfolio. In fact, Hallmark also sponsors Crowne Center's Kaleidoscope, a free creative art experience for children as well as a Hallmark Gold Crown store located on the second level of the Crowne Center.

Hallmark ranks 35th on Forbes Magazine's list of the largest privately held U.S. companies. Though we do not know for sure the market share, Hallmark notes on its webpage that the consolidated annual revenue in 2016 was an estimated \$4 billion. The Visitor Center itself though does not generate much of its own revenue, apart from the small gift shop located upon the end of the tour.

Some of Hallmark Visitors Center's biggest competitors in the travel destination and tourism category are Walmart's Museum located in Bentonville Arkansas, Hannibal Missouri's home of Mark Twain and Branson Missouri's travel destinations. According to a blog from CEB marketing and communication, some of the top corporate visitor centers are: the McDonald's Museum, Coca Cola World, the Harley Davidson Museum, The Levi Strauss Museum and the Intel Experience

When looking at all of these various environments, it is important to keep Hallmark's platform in mind; "Hallmark helps to foster a more emotionally connected world.

B.

With Hallmark's Visitors Center being in the middle of a popular district in Kansas City the organization deals with a lot of competition, especially during the holiday season.

LEGOLAND, SEALIFE Aquarium, and Kaleidoscope are some of the Visitors Center's biggest competitors that draw large crowds of young children and families. With the Hallmark's Visitors Center offering activities like the bow-machine, Hallmark live, and the J.C. Hall Christmas Trees, this center offers a family-friendly environment with an edge over their competitors; free admission.

A family trip to Crown Center can become very expensive very quickly. LEGOLAND and SEALIFE Aquarium do not offer free admission, which is a big draw for many families with young kids in the area. Luckily for Hallmark's Visitors Center their family-friendly art gallery, Kaleidoscope, offers free admission. This will draw crowds of families who are looking for a more affordable day of fun. Hallmark's ownership of Kaleidoscope provides an amazing opportunity to advertise their Visitors Center that is located in the same district and also offers free admission.

One of the biggest target markets for Hallmark's Visitors Center and its surrounding competitors is millennial mothers. These women tend to have younger-aged children which is who LEGOLAND, SEALIFE Aquarium, and Kaleidoscope are looking to draw to their attractions. Free admission plays a big part in drawing millennial mothers as many of these

women are early in their careers and often fresh out of college with debt. Kaleidescope and Hallmark's Visitors Center are able to draw a lot of their target market of millennial mothers with this deal while also offering an affordable alternative to the other pricier attractions in the area.

C.

Hallmark's two biggest card-making competitors, Blue Mountain and American Greetings, lack a visitors center that makes the Hallmark experience more tangible. Blue Mountain specializes in E-cards which means the company has less opportunities to expand their market mix compared to Hallmark. American Greetings is currently the world's largest greeting cards producer even though this organization does not have its own stores. Partnered with CVS, this company has licenses with Care Bears, Strawberry Shortcake, and Kelly Clarkson that have helped make them so successful.

Although these two card companies compete directly with Hallmark, they both offer different things with Hallmark offering the widest variety of products. Not only does Hallmark offer the Visitors Center in Kansas City, it also offers a more interactive art gallery in the same area to appeal to the younger crowd. This plays a big role in Hallmark being a top greeting card company over its competitors. It offers a tangible, personal experience that allows its consumers to come visit with Hallmark artists and see historical sides of the company like the J.C. Hall of Christmas Trees and the wall of Keepsake Ornaments inside the Visitors Center.

Atlanta's World of Coca-Cola is a great example of a corporation's visitors center that has been very successful. This huge complex offers interactive experiences for Coca-Cola

consumers to become more educated on the history and process of the making of their products. While this large attraction does not offer the free admission that Hallmark's Visitors Center does, their complex offers many more activities and interactive play including watching Coca-Cola being bottled in its classic glass bottles. Harley Davidson's Museum located in Milwaukee is located in a beautiful facility that shows the history of its company and the invention of motorcycles. While Coca-Cola World and Harley Davidson's visitors centers draw different crowds to their facilities, they each offer experiences that will draw their consumers so as to create that more personal interaction with these companies that people hear about and buy from everyday.

Conclusion:

The Hallmark Visitors Center provides an affordable alternative to the sometimes pricey entrance fees of other attractions in the area. Their other attraction, Kaleidoscope, also provides free admission for families on a budget which creates a great opportunity for the Visitors Center to market for families to come check out their organization after their time at Kaleidoscope. The Hallmark Visitors Center provides a more personal, tangible experience with its consumers that its competitors do not offer. This is a reason why they are consistently the top greeting card company in the world.

Part III: Target Audience

A.

The target audience for Hallmark Visitors Center is millennials whose ages range from

late 20s to early 30s. Millennials follow trends and are attracted to free things, yet understand that quality is better than quantity when making purchases. They are a very social group of people who understand that many of their hopes in life require hard work. Some of these millennials are students with aspirations of graduating with a degree and eventually a degreeed job. Millennials are also currently workers and parents (Gray, 2016). The term millennial moms can be used to describe many young mothers within the millennial age group. Millennial mothers are noted to be “family oriented, digitally savvy, highly social and information hungry” (Phillips,



2012).

(Infographic, 2017).

Millennials are known to be social media wizards and cautious consumers. They value family, friends, self-acceptance, trust and entrepreneurship. Millennials buy cards for special occasions like weddings, birthdays and holidays. However, they often opt to send a text or email message rather than a card.

In order to attract millennials to the Hallmark Visitors Center, one must make the branding content relate to millennials values and psychographics. Advertisements directed to millennials must be brief, informative, entertaining and relevant. Millennials are drawn to affordable products, and are interested in coupons, discounts, raffles and contests (Gray, 2016).

While the Visitor Center is located in the Crown Center, making it a family-friendly environment with surrounding attractions such as Kaleidoscope, Crown Center Ice Terrace, Sea Life Aquarium and the LEGOLAND Discovery Center, Hallmark Visitors Center has found that they are still failing to increase traffic through their museum with the target millennial group.

Given these facts, our group has come up with some concepts and events that we believe will help the Hallmark Visitors Center attract this millennial demographic. As stated earlier, millennials are active on social media and like free stuff. The Visitors Center is already at an advantage in this category because admission is free and each guest leaves with a series of cards and a bow from the bow-making machine. However, where the Visitors Center fails is through its lack of social media, and therefore, lack of communication with millennials. The creation and posting of new content would allow the Visitors Center a platform upon which to build their brand and attract a new set of consumers.

Around the holidays, the Hallmark Visitors Center could put on events that include live music, free food and tours for friends and families. Millennials love to be social, and events like these could draw in large crowds of millennial families if advertised well.

In order to reach the younger ages within the targeted demographic, Hallmark Visitors Center could host events for ages 21+, which would include games nights, drinks, music and free food. Events like this one would facilitate conversation and socialization which emphasizes Hallmark's platform of creating meaningful relationships.

Year-round, the Hallmark Visitors Center could open up a small bar to serve drinks to millennials. This would increase the Hallmark Visitors Center revenue and create buzz within the millennial age group. Millennials would be able to sip on their favorite drink while touring the Hallmark Visitors Center and spending time with friends and family.

For millennials looking for employment opportunities, Hallmark Visitors Center could host an event about jobs within the industry as a way for the public to network with the Hallmark Brand. Creators, artists and writers for Hallmark would give presentations explaining what they do and show consumers the projects they are currently working on. This event would reach out to millennials interested in employment opportunities in areas such as art, photography and writing. Complete with free food and brochures including the different jobs or internships that Hallmark has to offer, this event has the potential to draw in a huge untapped millennial community.

Though millennials have found that it is easier to send a quick "Thank You" text to someone instead of a card, they also understand the increased value of written word. Hallmark

Visitors Center could play off of this idea by creating advertisements directed at millennials using emotional storylines to highlight the notion that buying cards is more meaningful than sending a text.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, millennials are a very social group of people that can easily express exactly what they want. Both values and emotions play a big role in attracting this type of target audience, so relating millennials values into the exhibits and events featured at the Hallmark Visitors Center will increase the chances of them visiting. Including free merchandise and promoting events will draw millennials in and keep them in the loop with the Hallmark Visitors Center. Events such as family nights and games nights will encourage millennials to post on social media about the Hallmark Visitors Center leading to more millennials hearing about the Center and its programs.

Part IV: News & Social Media

A.

In the news and on social media, the Hallmark Visitors Center is seen as a fun, free exhibit that “tell[s] the story of the world’s largest greeting-card company” (“Hallmark Visitors”, n.d.). Many articles highlighting activities in Kansas City mention the center, along with the rest of the Crowne Center and Hallmark attractions. It is rated one of the top seven “world-class” museums in Kansas City (Blount, 2017), and has a prominent “nostalgic theme” by taking visitors down memory lane and showing old Hallmark advertisements such as the “get-a-Kleenex commercials and movies” (McClintick, 2017). The Hallmark International

Exhibition at the center is a hit with many visitors, displaying over 100 countries that the Hallmark brand has reached (“Hallmark”, 2016). While many tourism articles mention the center as a budget friendly attraction while visiting Kansas City, most updates on the center and its new exhibits come directly from visitor’s Facebook feeds.

B.

While articles on the Hallmark Visitors Center are hard to find, many online reviews give an insight to visitors’ personal experiences while visiting the attraction. On TripAdvisor, Yelp, Facebook, and Google, reviews on the center range from young adults to middle-aged audiences from all over the country. On Yelp.com, audiences are able to see if the reviewers are credible if they have reached the status of the “Elite 17,” which is based on quality of reviews, history with the website, and having a clear, honest profile. By looking at these credible reviewers’ opinions, consumers learn that the center embodies the spirit of the Hallmark company and helps educate the public on the history of one of “the companies that helped shape American history” (Courtney, 2016, para. 2).

Most reviews range from four to five stars, raving about the in-depth history of the company and nostalgic short film about Hallmark’s founder, J.C. Hall (TripAdvisor, n.d.). The film makes people leave the center “with a new appreciation of the care put into their products” (Robert, 2015, para. 4). Visitors feel comfortable at the center, with its friendly employees and home like atmosphere. Many of the positive reviews on these sites come from visitors who grew up with Hallmark and enjoy the company. They are reminded of their childhood while touring the exhibits, like the Ornament and Christmas Tree displays.

As a millennial, finding an affordable attraction worth your time is difficult. Many struggle financially, either from student loans or smaller salaries at the beginning of their job, and have to keep a budget in mind while choosing attractions to visit. Since the Hallmark Visitors Center and its parking are free, it is an easy place to go to without worrying about one's wallet. Most of the reviews we analyzed mention how great the center is because it is free admission. According to Trip.com, 98 percent of the reviewers recommended the center for budget travelers.

The younger reviewers spoke highly of the interactive exhibits, like the bow machine, Selfie Station, and ability to watch the card-making process by a Hallmark employee on weekday afternoons (Jean, 2014). Hallmark has already begun to appeal to the younger generations by adding exhibits like the Selfie Station, which is a fairly new trend in our society. Additionally, the center's art exhibit, featuring Norman Rockwell and Winston Churchill originals, attracts students and art and design admirers (Trip, n.d.).

While most reviews are positive, some reviewers complain about how hard it is to find the center (Courtney, 2016). The center needs to be better publicized around the area so consumers can hear about the attraction and easily find its location. Due to the small space of the center, some visitors believe all the information is cramped together and overwhelming (Ginger, 2013). Some reviewers in the past couple years believed the center was starting to look old fashioned, and as a "creative company that sets trends," it should have a more modern, fresh look (Susan, 2010, para. 2). A renovation, which has been scheduled for the fall of 2017, may attract a younger crowd to the museum (Hallmark Visitors Center, n.d.).

Conclusion:

Overall, the news and social media depict the Hallmark Visitors Center as a “can’t miss” attraction in Kansas City if you are on a budget. Reviewers believe the center gives a nice tribute to the company and an interesting, fun way to teach the public about the history of Hallmark. The center does a great job with two-way communication on social media, especially through Facebook, by responding to reviews with answers to questions and comments to clear up misinformation on a review (Facebook, 2017). This is a very helpful tactic with connecting to younger audiences and shows that the company cares about the consumer and wants to continue to improve so visitors can have the best experience possible at the center. While some of the reviews are from the millennial demographic, most come from an older audience who appeal to the nostalgic atmosphere that Hallmark tends to create. To gain more opinions from the younger generations, Hallmark must continue to advertise the Visitors Center as a free attraction and produce modern exhibits that millennials can relate to.

Part V: Research from the literature:

The articles on the Hallmark Visitors Center describe the company’s values and influence on society and our culture. As a company, their goal is to connect one person to another by creating cards for certain events and celebrations. The Visitors Center strives to celebrate the history of this company and display the years of their creative, diverse works and awards that Hallmark has achieved. This family-oriented company has a strong consumer market with older generations, but has struggled to connect with millennials. The articles describe millennials as enjoying quick, affordable and unique entertainment. They expect an updated media platform

that offers benefits and two-way communication. The Hallmark Visitors Center is seen as an affordable tourist attraction in Kansas City and is highly recommended for fast, educational entertainment. Their new exhibits have begun to connect with this younger generation through technology and social connection and will continue to renovate to make the experience as enjoyable as possible.

Part VI Conclusion:

While Hallmark has been a leading brand over the past few decades, they have had difficulty connecting to millennial audiences. Through our evaluation of the organization and analysis of the target audience, we have come to realize that Hallmark's values align well with those of the millennial target group. By utilizing this commonality, Hallmark must rework the platforms through which their messages are being sent in order to adapt to a changing society. While the Hallmark Visitors Center exists in many different environments, in order to stay competitive, the company must stay up to date with a millennial audience. Reading reviews off of sites, such as Yelp, can help Hallmark see which aspects of their center millennials are enjoying. With the influence of technology and social media, it has become challenging to find new ways to reach this group. However, an increase in millennial targeted events, interactive exhibits and social media usage would be a great way to attract and engage younger audiences.

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I have read my team's secondary research report and have shared my edits, when necessary, for the parts I was not directly responsible for. I approve the version of this report for submission.

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