Old Dominion University

Consumer Analysis Project

*The Disney Cruise Line*

Group 7

MKTG 402

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Consumers are undeniably an essential facet in dissecting various marketing endeavors, and analyzing the diverse buying patterns of individuals in today’s society. Being able to examine and evaluate consumers from a variety of industries is imperative in operating an assortment of different marketing techniques. The cruise line industry has been a prevalent part of society, since its introduction in the early 1900s. More specifically, the Disney Cruise Line has undoubtedly been the ring leader in the cruise line industry since its first ship set sail in 1998. Understanding the various marketing practices of this industry and exactly how they affect the purchasing decisions of its consumers is essential in operating efficiently from a marketer’s and consumer’s point of view.

To begin, this project includes several developed premises and objectives, which will aid in analyzing the consumer behavior pertaining to the Disney Cruise Line industry such as:

1. Identify and describe the cruise Line product/service market
2. Analyze the various consumer behaviors associated with this service
3. Determine the various industry trends and how they affect consumer's purchasing decisions
4. Detail predictions about the Disney cruise line’s growth in relativity to the industry

By developing these various project objectives, we will be able to better understand the inner workings of the cruise line industry as a whole, in addition to dissecting various consumer behaviors within this industry and the effect that it may have on the future outcome on the industry as a whole. The cruise line industry is most certainly admired amongst individuals in today’s society, and has produced an annual growth rate of 7%, which illustrates its growth in popularity since its introduction more than a century ago. The companies within this particular industry “communicate” with each other, which influences one another, and amplifies the industry. Top market trends that have been occurring within this industry include: “All inclusive” deals, major ship refurbishments , instituting more name brand products on board, improved telecommunications, and an increased number of local ports and departing areas. In addition to the assortment of market trends, this industry must also take various macro-environmental factors into consideration. Firstly, in order to partake in the activities of this market, individuals must have some form of gross income, allowing them the possibility to take a vacation/cruise. Next, the state of the economy is a major factor that should be taken into serious consideration, in relation to this industry. Whether the economy is facing a depression, or in a stable and flourishing position, will dictate a consumer’s propensity to spend excess money. Furthermore, environmental trends are also a factor in the cruise line industry. Sea activity, possibilities of hurricanes, and water patterns can potentially effect a consumer’s decision on whether or not to take part in activities within this industry.

It goes without saying that the consumers are an essential component of any functioning market. The primary consumers that identify with the Disney Cruise line can be broken up into three primary demographic profiles including: age groups, geographic regions, and income brackets. There are four primary age groups of individuals who take part in the Disney magic along with their parents including:

* + 6 to 36 months – infants & toddlers
  + 3 to 11- children
  + 12-14 “Tweens”
  + 15-17 teens

These age groups are responsible for making up the majority of the cruise’s population, accounting for nearly half off all passengers.[[1]](#footnote-1) Individuals located near Disney’s docking ports, and departing areas have a higher propensity to travel aboard this particular cruise. These areas include: Miami, Vancouver, Barcelona, San Diego, San Juan and Venice. Also, consumer’s income is another form of demographic profiling in this industry. Individuals deriving from a middle class, and upper middle class are more prone to participate in the Disney cruise adventures.

The consumer decision process analysis is a vital component in every purchasing verdict. These decisions are often complex, and involve numerous steps that must be completed, in order for the individual to feel as though they are making the correct choice. It goes without saying that infants, toddlers, children. Tweens, and teens (the primary demographics of the Disney Cruise), cannot not go through this process on their own. The parents of these individuals must go through this analysis, with their children in mind, and make the best decision for the family as a whole.[[2]](#footnote-2) Firstly, the consumer must recognize the need for a cruise. The urge to vacation and sail must be a predominant factor in the individual’s mind. After recognizing the problem, the matriarchs of the family can then do an information search on the product. By surfing the web for anything related to the Disney Cruise Line, the consumers will be more likely to have a better understanding of the details of how this line operates, and everything they have to offer to passengers. Next, one must compare and contrast various elements of the Disney Cruise Line, against their competitors. Evaluating alternatives can also lead the consumer to look at other means of vacationing, such as: flying via plane to a location, or taking a road trip. Continuing further, after a substantial amount of research has been done, and various factors have been taken into consideration, the consumer must make their final choice. For instance, the consumer decides that the Disney Cruise appeals the best to their family, and will suit both the children and the parents comfortably. Finally, the outcomes of the decision are presented. This stage is result-oriented, with a primary focus being on the pros and cons of the decision that was made.

Continuing further, consumer perception plays a substantial role in their buying behavior of a particular product or service. Consumer's perception can come from several facets such as: word of mouth, television/ magazine advertisements, reading online reviews, and comparing competitor's prices. What does an individual immediately think of when they hear the phrase, “Disney Cruise Line”? These associations are important in understanding how a consumer views a product, and if they will ultimately purchase it or not. First time cruisers have high expectations of luxury and fun when choosing a line. Several primary factors are taken into consideration such as:

* Price/ scheduling
* destination
* accommodations
* family and friends' recommendations

 If they are a repeat customer, then it proves the consumer was pleased with their first experience on board. An enjoyable experience will sit well in their memory, and they will be prompted to book with Disney again. Conversely, if the consumer had an unenjoyable experience, they are more likely to perceive anything associated with Disney to be unenjoyable, as well as provide negative feedback to family and friends. Furthermore, recognizing what motivates an individual to make a purchase is essential in understanding their buying behavior. Consumers are motivated to choose this cruise line for a variety of reasons:

* Desire for excitement
* Competitive prices
* Seasonal events (holiday specials, summer packages)
* Family events
* Destinations

Parents choose this cruise ship because of the perception that the entire Disney enterprise has managed to create for itself as well as their own personal experiences with Disney. They know that their vacation will be full of activities, events, and shows for their children, giving them memories that they will never forget. Disney has created a magical, fantastical, and dreamlike perception of their products and services over the past century, and consumers are prompted to entrust their vacations to such a charming corporation.

Understanding the personalities and lifestyles of your main consumers, is essential in being able to cater to their desires. The Disney Cruise is comprised mainly of, Adults (25+) with young children, ranging from infant to seventeen years old. This cruise is extremely family oriented. You will not find any casinos on a Disney Cruise ship, being that their goal is to deliver a family driven experience. Most of the persons aboard a Disney Cruise are from Middle to upper middle class families. There is an additional charge added to anyone traveling alone, in hopes to prompt consumers to travel with their children or with a close companion. Most often, these cruises consists of families of four (two adults two children), and all of the cruise activities are constructed around this family-oriented assumption.

Consumer’s attitudes towards the Disney cruise lines are positive, fun, and adventurous. Since the cruise line is family oriented, the consumer’s values are centered on a strong family unit, and the desire to do things together as a family. Consumers know when attending a Disney cruise that every member of the family, no matter what age, will have entertainment. Attitudes are formed by positive experience with other Disney recreation parks, products, and the well established brand overall. Children prefer Disney as brand for various products since they idolize the fantasy lifestyle. Attitudes could have also been formed from bad previous experiences with other cruise lines that were not kid-friendly. Children may have been bored before, and may not have had enough activities that keep them engaged. Childcare may not have also been provided, and children under a certain age are not always permitted. As a result, Disney cruise lines are viewed in a positive light when their consumer needs are met. Continuing further, the attitude change process is important for brands to correctly market their product. Attitudes towards brands are analyzed in order to better understand how their opinions influence their purchasing decisions. People view cruise vacations as a superior value, more than that of regular vacations. “Nearly twice as many (17 percent) equate cruising with very high value as land-based vacations (9 percent)” (Gerlak, 2011). Disney cruises counteract this assumption by offering more activities for the price of the cruise. They use persuasion by offering special savings and financing options to make affording the cruise easier for consumers. The biggest influence when selecting a cruise for consumers is destination, followed by cost. Top destinations also include the Caribbean, Alaska, and the Bahamas (Gerlak, 2011). The Disney cruise lines offer the majority of the top most wanted destinations, which will persuade consumers to choose them over other cruise lines. Disney’s persuasive message is “Disney Cruise Line has selected the most stunning destinations—in the most exciting regions around the world—for cruises you and your family will always remember” (“Disney cruise lines”). Disney is trying to persuade consumers by making their destinations seem exclusive and intriguing.

The Disney Cruise Line deals with a wide array of attitudes, in relation to their product and services. By instituting the “persuasion “technique, this cruise line would be able to change attitudes of various individuals. Persuasion is a primary marketing front, which attempts to lure consumers into the magical world of Disney. This line primarily institutes the persuasion techniques by the use of consistency. Presenting the same, family-friendly, and trustworthy products and services for the past century has helped create a sense of consistency amongst consumers. Furthermore, appealing primary to consumer’s emotions is what works best for this product. Emotion appeals such as: humor and sympathy. After watching Disney movie after Disney movie, it is every child’s dream to go to Disney Land and Disney World. This alone would influence the decision to take the Disney cruise or to take another family-friendly cruise. Conformity may also be a part of this influence. Even though a different cruise line may have better reviews or a cheaper price they do not have the Disney name.

The households of the Disney cruise average customers consist of two adults and two children. These families are considered to be a part of upper-middle class. The male is the wage earner and the mother is usually a full-time homemaker. The children of these families are part of the decision-making. The adults want to enjoy their time but they also want to make sure their children are having the best vacation possible. Furthermore, Personal and social conditions influence how consumers spend their money. Passengers of Disney Cruises are typically in the working class and above who have families. They have disposable income that they have saved to book this cruise, and the desire to travel.  Income groups do have a serious impact as well.  Cruises may be planned ahead of time so money is saved at intervals in order to book.  However, on many cruises there are certain price points for basic to luxury cabins and a variety of packages to choose from.  Depending on a consumer's income, it could either benefit or prevent them from staying in certain cabins and buying specific bundle packages. In addition, various subcultures may have a definite interest in the Disney Cruise Line. Subcultures can include the major categories such as: their nationality, geographic region, race, age, gender, occupation, and social class. The following subcultures, illustrated below, are imperative in analyzing consumer behavior:

* Nationality: An American wanting to book a cruise outside of the U.S.
* Geographic Region: the majority of cruise passengers are from different parts of the country but want to travel outside of their country.
* Race: The US is racially diverse, and this can be seen on the cruise.
* Age: All kinds of ages, from small families with young children, a newly-married couple, a family with grandparents on board, etc.
* Gender: can be both male and female
* Social class: Depending on the luxury of the booking, social class can range from working class, middle class, upper middle class, to upper class families.

Furthermore, as a marketer of the Disney Cruise Line, it is imperative to recognize various cultural influences that could possibly have an impact on a consumer’s behavior. Since cruise goers are often well educated, learning and socializing are important to them. They are often explores, who take multiple vacations per year. Cultural influences arise from their lifestyles of middle to upper class individuals. Families are often seeking adventure, time together, and an escape from their busy lives. Families who wish to spend more time together and travel with one another value a family unit, and have been influenced by pastimes or previous generations. Other influences could come from friends and families who have attended cruises before, and persuaded them to try one. As a marketer, one should be aware of the value this consumer segment places on family units. Disney Cruise lines offer something for every member of the family, as well as activities that can be done together. Commercials and other ad campaigns could depict families with children having fun together on the cruise ship, and enjoying time away from their everyday lives. Ads should also enforce that the cruise brings new exciting adventures that can be experienced together. Disney cruise lines could also be marketed to other cultures. Perhaps the young single consumer that enjoys exploring, socializing, and learning would enjoy the cruise line. Since Disney is typically a brand associated with children, young adults or adults in their thirties who are nostalgic about being young may be attracted to a Disney cruise. Similar to the Disney theme park advertisements, Disney enforces that message that there is fun for the whole family, and not just children. Their ads sometimes even show young couples that enjoy the parks. This would be useful in attracting other cultures other than young children.

All factors considered we have learned an immense amount of information about the demographic of cruise goers, especially those who attend Disney cruises. It is most certainly interesting how one’s upbringing and culture can affect not just their purchasing decisions, but their traveling decisions as well. If possible, we would have liked to discover more details about the Disney cruise lines specifically. We felt as though research was limited for Disney cruise line consumers, and only a few websites were available that provided me with the information. This project has worked as a beneficial tool, in discovering the mysterious consumer mind. We are now more equipped to appeal to consumer’s beliefs, interests, and previous purchasing patterns, from both a marketer’s and consumer’s point of view.

Appendices.

*Appendix A*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Disney Dream | Disney Fantasy | Disney Magic | Disney Wonder |
| # of passengers | 4000 | 4000 | 2700 | 2700 |
| Crew | 1458 | 1450 | 950 | 950 |
| Passengers < 18 | 2000 | 1500-2000 | 1350 | 1350 |

*Appendix B*

*Appendix C*

References

Gerlak, L., & Peikin, D. (2011, August 9). Clia’s 2011 cruise market profile reports positive consumer attitudes. *Cruise Lines International Association*. Retrieved March 5, 2014, from [http://www.cruising.org/vacation/news/press\_releases/2011/08/clia’s-](http://www.cruising.org/vacation/news/press_releases/2011/08/clia's-) 2011-cruise-market-profile-study-reports-positive-consumer

“Disney cruise line”. (n.d.). *Disney Cruise Line*. Retrieved March 5, 2014, from http://disneycruise.disney.go.com

1. See Appendix A , cited from ask.com [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Appendix B, “Decision Process Analysis” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)