

Audience Research on Café Sweet Street

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Abstract

Café Sweet Street is a small restaurant affiliated with the confectionary corporation, Sweet Street Desserts. The restaurant, located in Reading, PA, features food made from locally sourced ingredients. Café Sweet Street is currently attempting to compete with Reading's various restaurants and bakeries that are trying to become more health-conscious, as well as offering vegetarian or vegan options. Many of their competitors are taking advantage of exposure through social media, writing institutions, and popular food blogs. In a stark comparison, these small businesses are employing several different tactics in order to reach a new, broader audience. To identify the target audience this research is based off the demographics and psychographics of Café Sweet Street. The café perceives themselves in one way, however there are things that may run counter against what the company may say. What the company can do be true to the claims that they make and improve the wealth of the company must be discussed. More primary research methods are necessary to understand more about the organization and its target audiences. Café Sweet Street targets many different markets; however, it has a virtually untapped market right in its vicinity.

Background Research on Industry / Client

Located in Reading, PA, Café Sweet Street was a locavore concept created by the founder of Sweet Street Desserts, Sandy Solmon. Locavore means “someone who is committed to eating food that is grown or produced within their local community or region,” says Larry West from ThoughtCo.com. The café was created to add another outlet with more variety for Sweet Street Desserts. According to the café's website, the restaurant features “made-from-scratch signature dishes all from pure, locally sourced ingredients including the café's very own herb garden” as well as “artfully created” desserts. Café Sweet Street locally sources fresh produce from Taproot Farm, Primordia Farm, Dundore and Heister, Epic Acre Farm, and Organic B&H Produce. The café's website was created by Suzy Rae Designs, a local graphic design company for print and web. Chef Brendan Jones, who creates the dishes that are sold at the café, comes from a family with an interest in food. He attended the College of Culinary Arts at Johnson and Wales in Providence, Rhode Island, as well as, École Ferrandi School of Culinary Arts in Paris, France. He has also fed Martha Stewart his own dessert.

In the bakery industry, Café Sweet Street is considered a snack and non-alcoholic beverage bar, under NAICS code 722515. This specific business sector accounts for an estimated \$40.8 billion in the U.S alone. Café Sweet Street features made-from-scratch lunches from pure, locally sourced ingredients. Its menu includes non-GMO, kosher, gluten-free ingredients and options, with zero hidden preservatives or additives. This executive decision allows it to compete with Reading's various restaurants and bakeries that are trying to become more health-conscious, as well as offering vegetarian or vegan options.

Client Competitor Information

According to various review sites, some of Café Sweet Street's top local competitors are Unique Desserts by Chef Anne Louise, Dutch-Maid Bakery, The Well-Dressed Cake, and Wyomissing Restaurant & Bakery. Despite being small local businesses, many of these establishments are employed several clever and social-media savvy tactics in order to raise their public profile and build their reach. For example, Unique Desserts by Chef Anne Louise can be found in even the deepest corners of the internet. From offering discounts on Groupon to being featured in several Reading Eagle articles, Louise has found several ways to bring attention to her business's doorstep. Unique Desserts is also listed on Trip Advisor and The Knot, which is a popular Pennsylvanian wedding planning site. Another major tactic is that they advertise free in-store samplings on Facebook to their 2,000 followers. Dutch-Maid Bakery, another local establishment, participates in the Fairground's farmers market, is listed on Trip Advisor, and sells wholesale products. As a result, they have been able to open multiple locations and are currently running in the Sweetest Bakery in America contest. The Well-Dressed Cake has won several notable awards at the Mid-Atlantic Cake Show. They are featured in a Reading Eagle article, as well as several issues of American Cake Decorating magazine. Their various social media pages have an extensive photo gallery, advertisements for free taste testing, and features in Philadelphia magazine. Wyomissing Restaurant & Bakery consistently advertise their specials, community fundraisers, and promotional videos of staff on Facebook, exposing their content to over 13 thousand followers. In addition, they have been featured on the Berks County Eats blog and the Reading Eagle.

Target Audience Information

Like many other small local bakeries, cafes, and restaurants, Café Sweet Street attempts to maintain a public perception of a friendly local establishment that wants to build a tight-knit relationship with their community. They target all kinds of consumers, especially locals in Reading, PA. Their primary target audience are the residences around the café, which happens to be the only one of its kind. Demographics play a huge role when it comes to target audience because they want to know more of who the business is targeting and marketing too. According to the article, “The Effectiveness for Demographic and Psychographic Variable for Explaining Brand and Product Category Use,” by Geraldine Fennell, Greg M. Allenby, Sha Yang, and Yancy Edwards, companies use demographics and psychographics are being used to demonstrate the effect it has on consumption rates and product use. In their study they used for demographic's variables were based on people who were married, retired, based on gender and race. For Café Sweet Street, they target people based on their age, gender, and social class. The café itself can be seen to focus on the age group of young adults and older adults. The restaurant is designed in a rustic, modern, chic and minimalistic way which is could be more appealing young and older adults. The cafe's atmosphere also gives an image of sophistication. The environment gives a welcoming quality to the café, where people can socialize and enjoy the amazing desserts and dishes they offer. Gender is also a demographic that Café Sweet Street targets. Although they cater to all their customers, most of their target audience are women. Women are the main ones who have cravings for desserts. Lastly, the café caters to certain social statuses: middle and upper class. This is shown with the quality, price and design of the cafe. For this reason, Café

Sweet Street sells a variety of different desserts and dishes for a price that is not as affordable for the lower class.

Café Sweet Street does show who they target to through psychographics. One of the psychographics the café caters to are families. Families could come to the café and enjoy delicious desserts and dishes together. Having a family is a lifestyle people live by and in that family, they have values. In this lifestyle, people spend time with one another and people who spend money. Another psychographics the café offers their services to is people who are concerned about what goes in their food and people who want to live the healthy lifestyle. These people put more focus on their lifestyle because they care about what they eat. Café Sweet Street uses fresh ingredients and their foods are non-GMO. Not only do they care about what their customers eat, but they also provide a variety of vegetarian dishes. Having a vegetarian menu is very helpful for people who live that type of lifestyle. People who eat at Café Sweet Street are locals of Reading and showing their support to the café is an interest since they like purchasing food and desserts from there. Desserts always put a smile on people's faces and the café sells desserts as gifts and holidays. Giving desserts as a gift and for holidays is a way Café Sweet Street offers a service to their audience. This is important because people are always looking for what to get others and what kinds of special desserts are around that are based on certain holidays. According to the article "Segmenting customer brand preference: demographic or psychographic," by Chin-Feng Lin, the categories of VALS are believers, achievers, and experiences. The study based on believers is it "has some preference and like American products/established brands," would be the category of consumption. This study relates to Café Sweet Street because many of their customers are believers who purchase their stuff and know

what they want. Café Sweet Street has a huge audience they cater to in Reading, but it can be improved to bring even more business than they already have.

Gatekeeper Information

A gatekeeper is a person or thing that controls access to something, often existing mostly in larger businesses. Café Sweet Street can be considered a small business because it only has one physical location. Therefore, it is difficult to discern whether the café truly has any gatekeepers, however, owning a small business comes with its own obstacles. It can be argued that consumers, news outlets, and investors are the closest things to a gatekeeper for Café Sweet Street, simply because a small business needs a good operating plan in order to thrive. A business that is poorly organized or lead will often fail to please its consumers and investors. This is especially troublesome since a small tight-knit community often shares information by word-of-mouth, meaning trouble for a business that has dissatisfied consumers. Today's large variety of review sites also means consumers can destroy a business with just a couple of negative words and a click of a button. A decrease in visitors and sales means that any chance for profit will slowly dwindle, sometimes encouraging investors to pull out. In addition, news outlets can play a key role in helping small businesses reach a new, broader audience. A business can even use it as an opportunity to advertise to a new target audience or strengthen their brand loyalty with their existing one. However, negative news stories or articles can bring some unwanted attention to a business as well.

Another key element to a thriving food business is using the influences around you to your advantage, such as social media, writing institutions, and popular food bloggers. There are several platforms across social media that dominate the attention of millennials such as

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat. Popular local and national newspapers are Reading Eagle and Berks-Mont news. Similarly, Bon Appétit, Taste of Home, and Saveur are some of the most popular magazines about cuisine. Café Sweet Street could also benefit from exposure from some of the internet's top food bloggers like Minimalist Baker, Gimme Some Oven, and Our Food Stories.

Client Perceptions and Counter Perceptions

The Café Sweet Street website says that they are “a safe, dynamic, and gratifying environment.” With ratings of 4 out 5, being an eco-friendly and women friendly organization, as well as having non-GMO ingredients, the café seems to be winning the hearts of locals in reading and all around the world. But like most businesses, there is always room for improvement. However, while reading reviews on Café Sweet Street and how they run their businesses it seems they could improve how well they treat their employees.

The reviews range from poor, terrible, and excellent. One comment with a 1.0 rating says that the “company is going downhill; way too stressful cause upper management won’t hold themselves accountable for their mistakes.” Another comment with a 5.0 rating says “fast and easy and good people at the job always clean great environment and good job to be stable. Always on your feet and steady hours.” If the café took the time to read these comments, they could make improvements which will make it a much better environment.

In their corporate responsibility letter for Sweet Street Desserts, they claim things that have yet to be proven. The letter says that they are proud of their employees, women hold key management positions, personal and professional growth is achievable, and that they invest in

their employees. They also speak on giving away scholarships even though they do not target any college students or colleges.

Suggested Primary Research

In order to understand more about Café Sweet Street and their audience, one must conduct additional primary research. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods can be used to find more information on the audiences of Café Sweet Street as well as who they specifically targeted. Observations and surveys are ways to conduct quantitative research. One could sit in the cafe and observe the types of people that come into the cafe, making tallies of the different types, whether they be young adults, older adults, or families with small children. Observations of menu items ordered could show popular options of the cafe. Also looking at the prices of menu items ordered could help determine socioeconomic statuses of patrons as well as prices of popular items. Surveys could be conducted to find out reasons why customers continue to frequent the cafe. The surveys could be broad and simply ask for reasons why the consumers eat at the cafe. They could also be detailed and ask the customers if the reasons they attend Café Sweet Street have to do with the clean ingredient sourcing, price, food, location, locally sourcing, display of restaurant, etc. One could also ask how customers had heard of the cafe.

Effective mediums of qualitative research for this organization would be interviews and ethnographic research. Interviewing the founder of Sweet Street could shed insight on who believes the audiences of her cafe are and why, as well as her methods of targeting them. An interview with Chef Brendan would focus on answering questions on how he comes up with recipes that he believes consumers would buy, as well as ways he keeps them coming back. One could also interview the employees of the cafe to understand how conditions are at the restaurant,

as well as ways they employ customer service to keep customers coming. One final round of interviews would go to the businesses Sweet Street locally sourced from. These interviews would shed insight on exactly what they do in their business, what their audiences are like, how they treat animals and employees, and grow their plants. This information is also very beneficial to client perceptions as well as making sure that what Café Sweet Street is putting into their foods is what they advertise. The ethnographic research method includes frequenting the restaurant as a customer. By doing this, you can experience the food, the feel of the restaurant, and interact with the employees as well.

Conclusion & Statement of Core Problem/Opportunity

Café Sweet Street has a large market of consumers that it targets, both in demographics and psychographics. However, the café has an untapped market with college students. Expanding their target market to students would bring in much needed revenue, especially with their location. The Albright College campus is very close to the restaurant. The restaurant has a very modern feel to it, which can appeal to students, as well as cost effective food options. A café is a great hangout spot, especially for those who may want a place to meet with others to socialize, do assignments, or just have a different lunch spot than those included on the campus. In its current state, Café Sweet Street is having trouble reaching new audiences. Other similar local businesses are actively taking advantage of connecting with their audience over social media, which has only become more popular over the decades. Expanding the market to college students would also have added benefits. Students would be good not just as customers but employees as well. They would also bring in more customers by sharing the cafe with their friends and peers with them.