

Grappone Implementation Plan

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Introduction

In doing the exploratory research assignment, our team was able to learn a lot about the issues that lie within the automobile industry. The four major issues our team found were competition within the automobile industry, safety, perception of salespeople, and social media. Each of these issues impact the overall industry, therefore creating a need for consultants to create solutions to alleviate these issues. Grappone Automotive came to be back in 1924 when it was originally a gas station ran by Rocco and Emmanuela Grappone. The following year was when Grappone began selling the Oldsmobile and then soon after they sold Pontiacs at their Concord NH store. From here they began opening more stores such as the tire retread business in the 1940s do to low supply of rubber and then began a trend of selling used cars in NH. By the 1980s Grappone added their Nashua dealership with a Toyota, Mazda, Honda, and Ford franchise and then by 1995 they had Grappone Hyundai and Volkswagen. Now in 2016 Grappone has entered its fifth generation of owners (Amanda Grappone) and has modified the way people experience buying cars to make it more enjoyable and less stressful (Grappone Auto Group, 2016). The purpose of the interview questions that we formed were to help us gain a better understanding of the consumer's perceptions of the Grappone Automotive Group and their experience of the company. When conducting the qualitative research, we found many factors in common between many of the participants answers.

Body

Industry Exploration

When looking into the automobile industry we found four distinctive issues that repetitively came up. These four issues are competition within the automobile industry, safety, perception of salespeople, and social media. With the automobile industry advancing in car

technology and producing at a rapid rate car companies face the challenge of keeping up with one another while also trying to get ahead in their industry. A second issue within the industry is the struggle to keep up with safety. Safety is one of the features that many consumers see as a priority when purchasing their vehicles and with the all of the different aspects it can be hard to prove your automobiles are the safest. Another challenge the automobile industry faces is the perception of salespeople. It has been a stereotype for decades now that salespeople are often “pushy, smooth talking, overly confident people with the belief that they could persuade anyone to purchase something unnecessary” (The Eye of the Beholder). Lastly, a fourth issue that our team encountered when researching the automobile industry was a lack of social media accounts. Many car dealerships are not up to date and consistent with their social media accounts, if they even have any at all. Excuses such as clients cannot buy cars over Facebook or other social medias and keeping up with social media accounts is too much work are just a few of the reasons as to why car dealerships do not run and maintain social media accounts. It is important that companies in the automobile industry work to improve upon the issues they face so that they continue to run successful businesses.

Client Position

The next research our team conducted was in relation to current position of the Grappone Automotive Group and some of the company’s strengths and weaknesses. Grappone is currently in its fifth generation of owners and have made changes to the way that they sell cars and interact with customers. When speaking to Amanda, the current owner, our team learned a lot about the recent changes that the company has made over the past few years. The company is now based on no commission and no tricks or lies from Grappone salesmen and saleswomen. The organization also does not allow customers to negotiate the price of the vehicles, however, they

only have one fee and compared to competitors it is cheaper at Grappones because they only have one fee. The no commission and no-negotiation factors are relatively new to Grappone and have helped the company to establish its position in the industry. The factors largely came into play when our team dissected the strengths and weaknesses of the Grappone Automotive Group. Since Grappones is a long time business in New Hampshire the company has very strong relationship within the community as well as several different charities/non-profits. This variable can give consumers more trust in Grappone and feel more comfortable purchasing a vehicle from the business. Another strength within the company is its upfront pricing which allows customers to know that they are immediately getting the best price offered. Lastly, Grappone has a Leed Certified building which helps build the brand image and acts as a great distinctive competency.

It is clear that the Grappone Automotive Group has great qualities and is a strong business, however they do have weaknesses in their company. The first one is their “no negotiation” policy which does not allow consumers to negotiate the price of the vehicle they wish to purchase. This can create a hesitancy for the buyer. A second weakness that the company has is ineffective social media accounts. Instead of promoting the business, Grappone’s social media accounts are hurting the overall company due to irrelevant and inappropriate material being posted. Although the mission statement of Grappone has good intentions behind it, it is not realistic. Lastly, Grappone does not pay commission to its car salespeople which can be seen as a weakness because many salespeople get into the business to make money off of their sales; at Grappone they cannot do this.

Qualitative Research

Trying to accumulate people to participate in our qualitative research survey for the Grappone Automotive Group was a challenge in itself. It was very difficult to find individuals

who had purchased a vehicle from the Grappone Automotive Group. Our team members primarily went about inviting individuals to participate in the survey by going up to students, staff, and faculty members and asking if they had purchased a vehicle from Grappone. We often had people who had visited the Grappone Automotive Group or heard about the company, but had never purchased from it before. To expand our pool of interviewees, we decided to ask individuals that are not necessarily associated with SNHU, but are members of the surrounding community. Our survey found that some aspects of Grappone, that they find attractive, customers might not. The no-negotiation factor is appealing to some people, especially at first, but later on some people found that they could get a better deal elsewhere. Some people think that not being able to negotiate makes it seem like you are not getting a good deal and takes some of the fun out of buying a car. The Grappone Automotive Group just recently improved their mission statement and try to live by that. Some customers think that it is a good mission statement and they do abide by it. However, others think it may be a “sales ploy” or “cheesy” meaning that they are not sincere or it isn’t all that realistic. On the other hand, Grappone tries very hard to create a personal experience for everyone that walks through the door. Many people agreed with this statement that they liked that the people remembered their names, the salespeople were honest and made the process quick and easy. When Grappone thinks of themselves a lot of it is based around family, the employees and of course the customers, throughout the survey it seemed as though the people agreed.

Conclusion

In doing this exploratory research assignment, our team was able to learn a lot about the issues that lie within the automobile industry. While we were able to think of some ideas on our own, the research was able to help us dig deeper into the industry and get down to four major

issues that are occurring in the industry. Each one of these challenges affects the industry in a different way, which can either give a company advantages or disadvantages depending on how they adapt to them. In many cases with these issues it is a matter of how fast a company can get ahead of their competitors when adapting. Overall, the automobile industry faces their own set of issues that they must continuously reassess in order to maintain a successful company.

Going into the spring semester our team has conducted a plan to help improve the Grappone Automotive Group. Our focus is on the social media aspect of the company and ways to improve their current accounts. The Grappone Automotive Group currently has a Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Flickr. However, currently they do not have a qualified professional managing these accounts. Our team is recommending that Grappone hire a professional to manage these accounts, overall improving the content and activity. Another recommendation our team suggests is a fundraiser, particularly the Drive 4 UR Community, sponsored by Ford. However, the money would not go towards the Grappone Automotive Group it would be for a charity or nonprofit of the companies choice. This fundraiser would be a good opportunity to inform potential customers about their products. Amanda has stressed many times that people are unaware of their no-negotiation policy and would like to spread the word. Doing this fundraiser would be the perfect opportunity to do so, as well as inform people on their products and raise money for the charity or nonprofit of their choice.

In order for our recommendations to be properly implemented, our team has come up with a step by step plan. The first, and most important part to this plan is hiring a qualified professional to manage the social media accounts. This is the first and most important step because the individual that runs all of the social media accounts becomes the face of the company and is responsible for building the brand image and brand loyalty on the social media

accounts. It is crucial that this person is dedicated to not only the company, but also to the social media because they need to be keeping up with all of the sites on a daily basis and getting back to individuals that may reach out to the company through social media. The individual who manages the accounts has a lot of responsibility and, therefore, the Grappone Automotive Group must be critical when making the decision of who will be the social media manager. The next step would be to plan a large event, such as a fundraiser, to attract current and potential customers. This would allow the Grappone Automotive Group to inform customers about its products, services and no-negotiation factor. In addition, the fundraiser could be for a cause that the community cares a lot about and this would create a strong brand image for the Grappone Automotive Group for partnering themselves with a cause that others are influenced by. The last step of implementation would be to post about the fundraiser on all of the social media accounts. This would both draw attention to the event and to Grappone's newly updated social media sites. Overall, by following just these three main steps, our team believes that the Grappone Automotive Group can build up its followers on social media accounts and gain more customers.

References

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