

Community Based Experiential Learning

Marketing Project Final Report

In partnership with:

City of Vancouver

Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

City Studio

The University of British Columbia

ECON 339

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Project Introduction

Our community partners were the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation (VBPR) and the City of Vancouver. The two are working together to increase the amount of low-income patrons that are accessing recreational facilities. This led to the creation of an initiative called the Leisure Access Program (LAP). The program provides low-income Vancouver residents with access to basic recreation programs and services at Park Board facilities at a reduced cost. This includes free public swim and a 50% discount to fitness centers. Currently out of 132,612 people who qualify for the Leisure Access Program, only 18,789 (14.2%) have signed up for the Leisure Access Program. VBPR observed that people within the lower income bracket do not use the city's recreational facilities as often as anticipated amidst efforts in incentivising them to use them more. VBPR's goal is to increase the usage of the subsidized recreational programs and services for people with low incomes.

Our goal was to help increase the use of these recreational facilities by improving already existing structures/measures that are employed by the VBPR. Furthermore, we also hoped to increase patronage by using more interactive and socially conscious measures. Initially, we aimed to increase LAP usage by 30% but upon reflection we adjusted our goal to a 4% LAP engagement increase by April 2020. We believe that this is a more feasible, realistic, and achievable objective.

Group Presentation Summary

The penultimate activity for our Community Based Experiential Learning (CBEL) was the final presentation with our community partners and members of our class. The aim of our presentation was to contextualize our project and to provide the analytical path we used to arrive at our solution. As young students, we value engaging in fitness activities as it improves our wellness and enables us to succeed academically. Hence, we chose to answer question 3, "*Why are people not using the Leisure Access Program (LAP) discounts? And how can we change that?*" because we were motivated to investigate the reasons why low-income families in Vancouver are not utilizing subsidized recreational facilities.

We employed a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis as our analytical method. Due to the time constraint, we performed an internet sweep of the [LAP Website](#) and conducted a SWOT Analysis of the existing LAP. Our findings are tabled below:

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The brochure of LAP is available in 9 languages. • The website contains a considerable amount of information on the benefits of accessing LAP. It is both mobile and desktop friendly. 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The brochure in English contains more information (4 pages) while the rest have 2 pages • The LAP webpage is hidden quite far away and you have to go through many links to finally find information. Maybe we should have a link that points straight to the LAP on the homepage
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The instructions of the application state: “Print clearly or the application will be returned.” This could be reworded so that people who want access to the program but are unable to fill in the application form correctly are not discouraged from applying. • Does not show whether low income residents are contacted for follow-up or updates i.e adding a newsletter or mailing list. 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Random Verification process (more information on this should be provided as this process may scare some families). • The processes in place reveal the financial identity of the people applying to LAP (the technology in place doesn’t do much in protecting their identity) • Needs vs. Wants (LAP is not necessarily what the people with low-income want.

To take advantage of the opportunities, the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation should capitalize on non-digital forms of marketing, which will be discussed later in our report. In doing so, they can mitigate the threats because they will increase awareness of the program to the targeted audience. However, one of the most significant threats is the Needs vs. Wants problem because low-income families are likely to prioritise needs such as food and shelter. According to the Income Elasticity of Demand (YED) theory, luxury goods such as recreational facilities offered by the LAP, have an income elastic demand ($YED > 1$). Therefore, low-income families will allocate more of their income on necessities such as groceries and rent which have an income inelastic demand ($YED < 1$).

Proposed Solutions

After conducting the SWOT analysis, we summarized the key weaknesses as: **Language Imbalance and Technological Intensive Marketing Strategies.**

We tailored our solutions towards improving the existing marketing strategy of the Leisure Access Program as a viable way to increase its patronage among low income families. We also considered that the best solutions need not be completely new ideas but can simply be improvements of already existing systems that have been put in place.

Language Use in Brochures

Currently, the existing brochures are available in 9 languages: English, Arabic, Chinese Traditional, Chinese Simplified, French, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese. There is a disparity between the content in the English and non-English brochures. We believe this disparity leads to a 4-page difference between the English and non-English brochures. To maximize our reach with the same information, it is imperative that the important details that may have been left out in the non-English brochures be added.

Furthermore, we strongly suggest additional brochures in these languages: Farsi, Hindi, and Punjabi. These additional languages are representative of their large representation in Vancouver. The Indian population is 10.1% with the Punjabis representing as much as 8% of Vancouver population (Census Canada). Additionally, as much as 35,725 people in Vancouver can speak Farsi (Census Canada). Adding these languages not only reflects Vancouver's multicultural nature, but ensures the LAP is accessible to as many people as possible. In implementing all of these changes and improvements, these brochures should not be limited to just digital versions but available in hardcopy in public places.

Print Marketing vs. Digital Marketing

Hence, our next solution is to diversify the current marketing strategy beyond digital marketing to non-digital. Especially considering the target group of this program, low-income families, it is best not to assume that they have easy access to the internet or mobile phones. Thus, the need to consider other forms of marketing. Our solutions link to one of Karl Marx's concepts studied in our course - the theory of the progression of technology. Technology under a capitalist system leads to the alienation of certain members of the population. It is clear to see that the emphasis on digital forms of marketing have isolated low-income families in Vancouver. Most of them do not have regular access to high speed internet or computers. In reducing room for assumptions, we recommend the use of posters and infographics - such as our project outcome - at vantage points. These vantage points are dense public spaces such as skytrain and bus stations and shelters.

Additionally, bus advertising is another marketing strategy that can be implemented. Since buses are the main mode of transportation for our targeted market, it is an effective way to disseminate

information about the program and its requirements. LAP information can be plastered on the exterior of buses that go around the routes that have the LAP facilities. Also, LAP promotional details can also be put in the interior of buses.

Lastly, we have an organic marketing strategy. Staff and volunteers from City Studio and VPBR could also play active roles in initiatives and programs that are set out to support lower income families in Vancouver. In doing so, these officials can form relationships with some of the low-income families. Subsequently, they can tell residents about the LAP program by word of mouth. We believe this is a more personal and interactive way of marketing which can spread awareness about the program at little to no cost.

Our Team

From the beginning of the project, we were able to capitalize on every group member's skills and experiences. That being said, teamwork was the core value of our project which guided our path to fruition. More specifically, we assigned different tasks to each group member depending on their experience and the skills they would like to develop. Firstly, Babatunde was the main communicator and liaison between the community partner and our team. His role was beneficial because it enabled a smooth flow of information and communication. Secondly, Sophia and Jovin were the main researchers as they have previous experience with extensive research on social justice issues and have worked on community-based projects in the past. We were able to draw from their past experience which guided the evaluative path we took in our project. Additionally, Ahmed has experience with presentation layout and poster design. Thus, Ahmed worked on designing our deliverables such as: the reports, the group presentation, and the LAP infographic. During the project, we were able to learn from each other, complement each others' skills, and share our experiences which laid the foundation of the success of our project.

Lessons from CBEL

Our CBEL experience has lasted two months so far and has been filled with challenges and triumphs. We have enjoyed researching the strategies that the city currently has in place. Our research, reports, reflection, and final presentation has significantly honed our project management skills that will be invaluable in our careers after graduation. Overall, time constraint was a major challenge throughout the project. This was evident in finding a time to meet as a team and connecting with our community partners and recreational centres. Moreover, we intended to conduct site visits on the recreational centers, but did not receive timely information from our partners. Ultimately, we were flexible and adapted to unforeseen changes to deliver our proposed marketing strategy.

Works Cited

Statistics Canada. "Census Profile, 2016 Census Vancouver [Population Centre], British Columbia and British Columbia [Province]." *Census Profile, 2016 Census - Vancouver [Population Centre], British Columbia and British Columbia [Province]*, 9 Aug. 2019, www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=POPC&Code1=0973&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&SearchText=Vancouver&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=0973&TABID=1&type=0