Natural Aperture Photography

2012
Product and Service Marketing Plan

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Executive Summary

Natural Aperture Photography is positioning itself to become a highly demanded photography business in the saturated market of photography in the Pacific Northwest. We recently began the design phase of an information system; we have a website, and a working portfolio of a wide variety of photographs.

Proposal Description

The proposal is to market goods and services to a target market consisting of varying income levels. The first goal of Natural Aperture Photography is to appeal to the more affluent for artistic products such as high-quality framed prints. The second is to appeal to people with a range of incomes for services, but primarily those on a budget. It is also the goal of Natural Aperture Photography to distribute products in as many local outlets as possible and increase sales on the website.

Excitement for the Project

My excitement for this proposal is the ability to put together a marketing plan that I can use in real life. I am currently designing a database in one of my classes, and instruction manuals and tutorial videos in another. My hope is that when I am finished with school and have more time to work on this I can revisit, update, and expand it.

Targeted Audience

The targeted audience for this proposal is I, because I am the sole proprietor of the business. I hope that someday I can partner with other photographers and hire assistants, but for now it is just me. However, for the purposes of this assignment and assuming there will be more of us in the future, I will refer to Natural Aperture Photography as “we” and “us,” and products and services as "ours."

The targeted market for Natural Aperture Photography, in general, is both men and women between the ages of 25 and 44. Men tend to be amateur photographers who may be interested in purchasing instruction manuals. Women tend to be more family oriented, and are interested in portraits and wedding photography. Women are also more interested in art for their walls, as are businesses that need art for empty wall space in their offices. For services, the target market is local to the Northwest-- Portland, Seattle, Boise, and everywhere in between.

How it will be Completed

This marketing plan will be completed by analyzing data on our Facebook page as well as our website's statistics on Google Analytics. In the future, however, we will also analyze data via reports from our database which we are currently designing. Market intelligence through analysis of the competition's products, services, and prices will also be done to determine our external threats and marketing strategy.

Current Marketing Situation

Natural Aperture Photography entered the photography business three years ago with experience in nature photography and began doing portraits and weddings one year later.

Photography is the primary way people keep memories that last for years to come. With the advent of the digital camera and advanced editing software, photographers have suddenly sprung up everywhere and competition is fierce. Many amateur photographers charge extremely low prices, thereby undervaluing the work of professionals. It is imperative that our products and services have a high perceived value.

The economy has weakened over the past few years. Therefore, consumers carefully budget their money and are either doing tasks themselves, or trading with friends and family members who have specific talents. The challenge we face as a business is charging reasonable prices for services without undervaluing our work. We also must charge a high enough price to earn a profit, but not drive away those who are on a budget.

Regarding products, art is something that does not sell well during a weak economy, because most consumers do not perceive art as a necessity. Therefore, we will be targeting the more affluent consumers for our high-quality prints and other products. We will also be targeting businesses.

Market Description

Natural Aperture Photography's market consists of consumers and businesses that appreciate nature and need a solution to their interior decorating needs. The market also consists of young couples planning to get married, those who are very family oriented, and a few others who may want a photo for their resume or online social networking profiles. The remaining are those who are looking for gift ideas for holidays (Table 1, page 5).

The market increasingly consists of couples on a tight wedding budget who need a no-frills photo package. It is Natural Aperture Photography's goal to satisfy those needs.

Product Review

- High-quality prints in various sizes with UV coating and mounting. Matting, signing, and framing available.
- Customizable calendars and note cards.
- Stretched canvas gallery wraps.
- Splits and collages.
- Maternity and newborn.
- High school senior portraits.
- Family, child, and couple portraits.
- Engagement portraits.
- Wedding photography (traditional and non-traditional).
- LGBT commitment ceremony photography.
- Event photography.
- Coming of age ceremony photography.
- School and non-profit event photography.
- Sports team photos.

Table 1: Target Market

Targeted Segment	Customer Need	Corresponding Feature/Benefit
Middle class/middle income (consumer)	• Low-cost wedding photography and portraits • Gifts	• Low cost wedding photography • Disc of high-resolution photos included • Note cards • Calendars
Middle-upper class/income (consumer)	• Extravagant wedding • Full wedding package • Art for walls • Gifts	• Two photographers and assistant • Studio lighting • Print credits • Framed prints which may be purchased in sets • Note cards • Calendars
Small/medium businesses (business)	• Art to fill empty wall space. • Office supplies	• Framed prints which may be purchased in sets • Calendars
Families (consumer)	• Portraits (family, seniors, babies, kids, etc.) • Coming of age ceremonies	• Reasonable prices • Flexibility
Couples (consumer)	• Engagement photos • Anniversary photos • Possible non-traditional ceremony	• Portrait packages for all budgets • Flexibility • Open to non-traditional ceremonies
Schools and non-profit (non-profit)	• Event photography • Team photos	• Negotiable prices • Flexibility
LGBT community (consumer)	• Gay-friendly business	• Gay-friendly business • Open to non-traditional ceremonies

Competitive Review

Prices for entry-level DSLRs are steadily declining and there are many, readily available photo-editing applications. Because of this, the market is saturated with aspiring and advanced-amateur photographers. There are also many highly skilled professional photographers available. The Pacific Northwest in particular has many to choose from. To stand out from the competition, photographers must be original, creative, efficient, organized, tech savvy, and innovative. Simply taking a good photo is not good enough—we must create a work of art and be able to sell it. The goal is not to persuade them to come to us, but for them persuade us to meet their photography needs.

Our competitors are (Table 2, page 8):

- *Douglas Remington*. Based in Hillsboro, Oregon, Douglas is a nature and portrait photographer. He offers several kinds of prints. He has his prints done on archival papers with archival inks. Douglas also offers metal prints and prints on metallic photo paper. He has downloads for sale on his website as well.
- *Gary Randall*. Based in Brightwood, Oregon, Gary is a nature and portrait photographer. He sells prints online and uses metallic photo paper. Gary also holds workshops and "photowalks," and has frequent showings at local businesses.
- *Jesse Estes*. Based in Troutdale, Oregon, Jesse is a nature and child portrait photographer. His nature photos are outstanding, and he has them printed on archival papers with archival inks.
- *Fritz Photo*. Based in Portland, Oregon, Fritz Photo does amazing wedding and portrait photography. They have several high-priced wedding packages, and a special for winter and weekday weddings. They offer hair and makeup services for an extra fee. Fritz Photo has been featured in Popular Photography Magazine.
- *Jessica Hill Photography*. Based in Portland, Oregon, Jessica Hill does beautiful wedding photography. She keeps her pricing simple, and each package varies according to the client's needs.
- *Lauren Brooks*. Based in Portland, Oregon, Lauren Brooks teams up with her husband as a team to do wedding and portrait photography. They have a flat fee for weddings.
- *Reversed Lens Photography*. Based in Portland, Oregon, RLP is a husband and wife team. They have very unique packages and sessions available for very reasonable prices. We have been watching them for quite some time, and though they are very good, they don't branch out as far as their styles go.

Table 2: Competitors

Competitor	Primary Product	Features	Price
Douglas Remington	Prints	• Professional quality prints/archival	$75 - 465
Gary Randall	Prints	• Prints • Workshops	$40 - 175
Jesse Estes	Prints	• Professional quality prints/archival	$75 - 400
Fritz Photo	Wedding Photography	• Comprehensive wedding photography packages • Offers hair and makeup • Competitive portrait package • Two photographers	$1,299 - 5,299 ($1,299 is a Winter & Weekday special.)
Jessica Hill Photography	Wedding Photography	• Tailored wedding photography packages • Two photographers	$2,800+
Lauren Brooks	Wedding Photography	• Simple pricing • Two photographers	$2,800+
Reversed Lens Photography	Wedding Photography	• Several unique sessions • Competitive prices • Two photographers	$2,400+

Channels and Logistics Review

Natural Aperture Photography's products will be sold through a number of outlets, locally and online:

- *Gift shops*. We will continue to sell prints and cards at Be*Mused Gifts Inspired.
- *Coffee shops*. We will continue to sell at coffee shop showings.
- *Holiday bazaars*. We will continue to sell at holiday bazaars at local schools.
- *Art sales and craft fairs*. We will continue to sell at art sales and craft fairs.
- *Website*. Products and services of all kids will continue to be available on the website, and we will expand products in the near future to instruction manuals.
- *Online third-party websites*. We will continue to sell on CafePress, RedBubble, and Zazzle. We will update and add more products in the near future.
- *Craigslist*. We will post ads on Craigslist for products and services once per week.

SWOT Analysis

Natural Aperture Photography has many strengths, but our weaknesses need to be addressed. We need to purchase more lighting equipment, continue designing and implementing an information system, and look into more options for archival papers and inks for prints. We also need to come up with competitive wedding and portrait packages and rethink our pricing strategy.

Strengths

- *Intuition*. At Natural Aperture Photography our photographers are extremely intuitive and not set on using one single style of photography. We have a feel for what the clients want, and we deliver.
- *Diverse products*. The lab we use has a plethora of prints and other products to choose from, and we make them all available to our customers and clients.
- *Friendly service*. Our photographers are friendly and non-intrusive at events such as weddings.
- *Convenience*. With the Square card reader and smartphone application, we are able to take debit and credit cards on location.

Weaknesses

- *Lack of archival products*. As of right now, we do not have any options for archival papers and inks for our prints.
- *Restrictive schedule*. School.
- *Information system*. We are still working on an effective and efficient information system, so we don't have a complete system set up yet.
- *Lack of studio*. At this time we do not have a studio or studio backdrops or lighting.
- *Lack of storage*. We do not have a place to store a lot of inventory.

Opportunities

- *IT experience*. Pursuing an education in IT, Natural Aperture Photography has the opportunity to develop an effective and efficient information system.
- *Holidays*. We do not have holiday specific cards at this time, but we have the opportunity to create them.
- *Seasons*. Weddings and high school senior portraits tend to occur in the summer, so we have the opportunity to pick up more business during that time.

Threats

- *Competition*. There are a lot of photographers in the Portland area, and even more nature photographers in the Pacific Northwest selling prints. The competition is unbelievable.
- *Lack of time and money*. The competition has a lot more spare time and money than we do because most of them aren't pursing a higher education.
- *Equipment*. The competition has better equipment.
- *Economy*. The economy has weakened the past few years, so more people are having friends and relatives take pictures for them and they're hiring fewer professionals.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Intuition • Diverse Products • Friendly service • Convenience	• Lack of archival products • Information system • Lack of studio • Lack of storage
Opportunities	**Threats**
• IT experience • Holidays • Seasons	• Competition • Lack of time and money • Equipment • Economy

Objectives and Issues

The issues we have at this time are due to a lack of resources. With school, there is not enough time to do the things we need to do. There is also not enough money. We need to think of creative ways to get new clients to earn more money.

First-Year Objectives

- Sell $500 in prints.
- Shoot four weddings.
- Shoot 12 portrait sessions.
- Create mini-sessions.
- Create family/maternity portrait packages.
- Create specials.

Second-Year Objectives

- Sell $800 in prints.
- Shoot six weddings.
- Shoot 12 portrait sessions.
- Financially break even.

Issues

The main issue is that we do not yet have graphics designed for advertisements, and the database is not complete. We also need to update the service contracts.

Marketing Strategy

Natural Aperture Photography's marketing strategy is based on product and service differentiation. Our primary consumers are couples who want engagement, wedding, and anniversary photos. The next largest group is families who want family portraits, then high school students who need senior portraits. The final groups are businesses who need art for their walls and individuals buying gifts, cards, and calendars.

Positioning

Natural Aperture Photography will position itself as a versatile, flexible business that is able and willing to meet all photographic needs and desires. We do everything from non-traditional weddings to gay and lesbian commitment ceremonies. We are intuitive and versatile, not set in our ways. What sets us apart from the rest is that we do not do one particular style. We give you the style you want. We also sell a wide variety of prints on a variety of papers in a variety of sizes.

Product Strategy

Our products will be sold at varying prices, which will be determined by cost of goods sold and difficulty of photo capture. There will be no watermarks on them, just contact information on the back of the photo.

Service Strategy

Our services will be sold at varying prices which correspond to a service package. A contract will accompany each service, which the client must agree to and sign before any services are rendered. A deposit of approximately 30% of the total costs will be required at signing.

Product Pricing Strategy

Product prices will range from very inexpensive for small prints and individual note cards to a few hundred dollars for the largest prints. Right now the ordering process is through SmugMug, but we would like to take care of the orders ourselves. We would like to have them mounted, matted, and sign them before shipping them off to the customer. The prices of the extras (such as UV coating, mounting, and matting) will be included in the selling price.

Service Pricing Strategy

Wedding packages will be priced as they are listed on the website (ranging from $675 to $2,200), with extra options available "a la carte." Portrait packages will be priced as they are listed on the website ($50 to $450) with the option of a disc with high resolution photos for sale with printing rights ($50 for portraits and $100 for weddings). Both will have the option of extra gallery hosting for $5.00 per month.

Event packages are priced as they are listed on the website ($125 to $150 per hour), with photo sessions for schools and non-profit organizations being negotiable.

Product Distribution Strategy

Print orders will be fulfilled by Bay Photo. They will be sent to us and we will inspect them, mat the prints, and sign them before sending them to the customer. Everything else will be drop-shipped. We will burn discs of photos and mail them when necessary. However, all print orders will go through us first.

Marketing Communication Strategy

Our communication strategy will be to engage customers and clients with both continuous and pulse advertising. Newsletters will be sent monthly and be tailored to the customer (prints or services). We will use pulse advertising through online social media—blog, Twitter, Facebook, etc. Seasonal specials will be advertised. We will also consider contests and giveaways to gain interest and keep consumers engaged.

Marketing Research

We will use online polls and surveys to learn what people want as far as features in prints and options in wedding packages. We will also research the competition to see what they are offering so we can plan to offer something comparable or better. For past customers and clients, we will do satisfaction surveys and polls for them as well. They will all be tailored toward customer or client.

Marketing Organization

Bonnie Kirkpatrick is the sole proprietor of the business, the photographer, and everything else.

Action Programs

June. The database will be completed by June 30, 2012.

July. After the database is created, data will be entered and completed by July 31, 2012. Reports will then be created and data analyzed.

August. We will begin sending out polls and surveys. They will be tabulated by August 31, 2012. During August we will begin to organize holiday specials.

September. We will begin organizing wedding specials.

Budgets

Natural Aperture Photography has no money to budget at this time. Therefore, we will be creating our own advertising materials and ads. We will be using every free avenue of advertising available, such as Twitter, Facebook, blogs, and Craigslist.

Controls

Website analytics, expense tracking, and man-hours spent on projects. Ideas for organization—Microsoft Project, Gantt Charts, etc. Sales reviews must be done once per month, as well as customer service satisfaction surveys and polls.