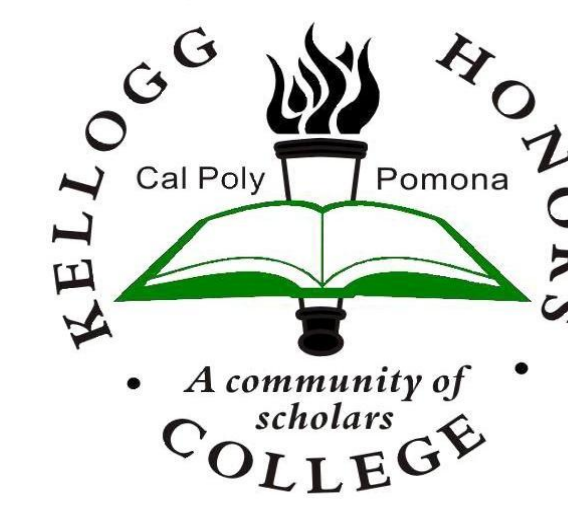


POSITIONING THE HIGH SIERRA CAMPS TO THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION



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ABSTRACT

The Millennial Generation (those born between 1980 and 1999) is now the largest generation in the United States, making up roughly one-third of the total U.S. population. Although Millennials are not currently the core customers of airlines, hotels, travel companies, and other sectors of the hospitality industry, they will be within the next five to ten years when they enter their peak earning, spending, and traveling years. It is critical that companies take action now to begin earning the business and loyalty of this powerful generation. The goal of this research was to develop a positioning statement for the Delaware North Companies' High Sierra Camps (HSC) that specifically targeted the Millennial traveler. To develop the positioning statement, secondary research was conducted to discover the necessary components of an effective positioning statement. A literature review was also done to determine salient attributes for lodging guests. Once those components and attributes were determined, primary research was then conducted to analyze the travel habits of the Millennial traveler, their travel needs, and how they perceive various attributes of the HSC. The gathered primary and secondary research was then used to create a positioning statement. A snapshot of the resulting consumer insight is provided, and the elements of the positioning statement are explained. Research methodology and procedures are also elaborated, and limitations to the data's validity are discussed.

WHAT IS A HIGH SIERRA CAMP?

The High Sierra Camps are one of several lodging accommodations available within Yosemite National Park. Unlike the majority of the park's lodging facilities, the High Sierra Camps are located in the quiet backcountry of the Sierra Nevada. There are five High Sierra Camps within Yosemite National Park. The camps are spaced roughly six to ten miles apart along a loop trail, forming the "High Sierra Loop". The camps are inaccessible by car and must be reached by foot or mule ride. The length of the hike to a High Sierra Camp varies, depending on the specific camp and the trailhead in which one begins their hike or mule ride. The shortest trail, however, is roughly 1 mile long. Visitors of the High Sierra Camps stay in tents with a concrete base and canvas walls and covering. Each tent is equipped with twin-size steel frame beds and mattresses, pillows, and woolen blankets or comforters. Wood-burning stoves are also included in each tent at four of the five camps. Tents do not contain en suite bathrooms, though restroom facilities are available at all camps. In addition, hot showers are available at three of the camps. A full breakfast and dinner is also included in the price for each stay. Both meals have a fixed menu and are served "family style" at a set time for the entire camp. Though meals have a set menu, the menus change each day and special requests may be made ahead of time to accommodate any dietary restrictions. Sack lunches are available as well if preordered and purchased the night before they are needed. Due to the remote location of the camps, there is no Wi-Fi, cell phone service, or electrical outlets available. However, the setting of each camp is uniquely spectacular, with each camp offering various opportunities for exploration or quiet appreciation of the area's natural beauty. The High Sierra Camps also practice a GreenPath philosophy, which aims to minimize the impact of the camps on the environment. Ways in which environmental impacts are reduced include minimizing waste, recycling, composting, eliminating social trails, seeding restored areas with endemic plants, and asking guests to supply their own towels and sleep-sacks or linens.

METHODOLOGY

The determination of the positioning statement was divided into two parts. The first part consisted of a literature review of past studies and publications in order to produce the shown list of positioning statement components. The second part consisted of primary research aimed to collect consumer insight relating specifically to the High Sierra Camps. Such insight included the travel habits of the Millennial traveler, their travel needs, demographic information, and how they perceive various attributes of the High Sierra Camps. The consumer insight collected was in the form of both quantitative and qualitative data, though a greater amount of quantitative data was collected. The data was gathered using a paper-and-pencil questionnaire that was designed based on questionnaires previously used for similar purposes, as well as incorporating the specific questions needed to be answered for this research. A 5-point Likert-type scale of importance was used (Very important, Important, Neither Important or Unimportant, Unimportant, Very Unimportant) to evaluate how important each of the listed attributes were to each participant towards their decision to visit the camps. In conjunction with importance, the participant was also asked if the particular attribute affected their decision to visit the camps in a positive or negative way. These two responses were later combined after data entry to create an additional variable that more accurately portrayed the participant's attitudes. This variable used a 10-point scale, with Very Important/Negative being the lowest value and Very Important/Positive being the highest value. The way in which the questionnaire was conducted was similar to the approach and construction used when testing a new product. It was necessary to include a brief informational presentation on the High Sierra Camps before distributing the questionnaire, as most people are unfamiliar with the lodging product. All information included in the presentation was gathered from the High Sierra Camps website (<http://www.yosemitepark.com/high-sierra-camps.aspx>). The photos within the presentation were from multiple sources, including the previously mentioned website. The presentation was intended to provide only information one would acquire from visiting the website. The presentation and questionnaire was given to 113 Cal Poly Pomona students attending three different Hospitality Marketing Management classes. All submitted questionnaires were completed and no responses contained any evidence of being unreliable. Only four submitted responses were eliminated due to their age exceeding those within the Millennial Generation, leaving 109 usable responses. Because a convenience sample of California State Polytechnic University, Pomona students was used for the research, there are several limitations to the research that decrease the validity of the research results. Firstly, the subjects of the sample were all enrolled in a hospitality course required of all hospitality students. Thus, the participants were likely students of California State Polytechnic University, Pomona's Collins College of Hospitality Management. This threatens the validity of our research due the participants' above average knowledge and passion towards hospitality, hospitality companies, and hospitality products and services. Second, the distribution of males and females within our sample were largely skewed. Females outnumbered males almost 4 to 1, as compared to the 51% male and 49% female distribution amongst American Millennials. Each of these unique features has made the sample unrepresentative of the true population, thus decreasing the validity of the research. It is advised that additional research be conducted for more accurate and reliable results.

SURVEY RESULTS

Highest Rated Attributes

1. Surrounded by hiking trails and natural environment
2. Small, intimate, friendly staff
3. Breakfast and dinner is included in stay
4. Camps incorporate GreenPath philosophy
5. The small size of the camps creates a "community" atmosphere

Lowest Rated Attributes

1. No locks on rooms
2. Possibility of shared rooms
3. No en suite bathrooms
4. No Wi-Fi, cell phone service, or electrical outlets
5. Stay in canvas tent cabins with steel frame beds and wood-burning stoves

67% have not camped in the past 2 years
68% have never visited Yosemite National Park
95% have never heard of the High Sierra Camps
0% have visited a High Sierra Camp

Which types of leisure travel destinations appeal to you?

Relax and Unwind 80.7%	Warm Weather and Beach 77.1%	Adventure & Outdoor Travel 71.6%
Food and Wine 67%	Family Oriented 66.1%	'Once in a Lifetime' Destinations 65.1%
Luxury Travel 57.8%	Nature 54.1%	Snow & Ski 53.2%

POSITIONING STATEMENT COMPONENTS

TARGET MARKET

- Direct towards their needs and/or wants

POINT OF DIFFERENTIATION

- Differentiates the brand from its competitors

IMAGE

- Create an image you want your target market to have of you
- Personalizes

PERCEIVED BENEFITS

- Communicate those benefits and target those seeking such benefits

BRAND PROMISE

- What you promise to the people purchasing your product

POSITIONING STATEMENT

Enjoy the magnificence of California's timeless natural beauty at Yosemite National Park's High Sierra Camps. Unlike traditional vacations, a stay at the High Sierra Camps allows visitors to comfortably experience adventure, tranquility, and peace in the quiet backcountry of the Sierra Nevada. By providing you with canvas tents, beds, restrooms, and home-cooked meals prepared and served by our friendly staff, you can relax and enjoy the wilderness of Yosemite National Park.