

Planet Smoothie®

Planet Smoothie Grand Central Communication Audit

Sophia Brooks, Jackson Cherry, Lauren Handy and Annalisse Robbins

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Dr. Sarah Smith-Frigerio

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Planet Smoothie's Background and History

Planet Smoothie is the third largest smoothie franchise in the United States. Founded in Atlanta, Georgia Planet Smoothie began their journey in 1995. As a franchise they have over 100 stores across Georgia and Florida. In 2015 they joined the Kahala Brands family, which owns ColdStone, Pink Berry, Maui Wowie, Blimpie, Samurai Sams, Taco Time, The Counter, Baja Fresh, Great Steak and, of course, Planet Smoothie.

Planet Smoothie's mission is, "To make every guest's day better by serving great-tasting products as a celebration of health and happiness." As it is a franchise each Planet Smoothie location is independently owned and operated, which is something Planet Smoothie is proud of as they are supportive of entrepreneurship.

The Grand Central location is owned and operated by Ali Kader. As a former mechanical engineer with passion for philanthropy he left the corporate world with the intention to benefit the community. His location being conveniently close to the University of Tampa campus allows him to host several fundraising events for college clubs. Several of his employees come from the University of Tampa as well as the University of South Florida because he wants to provide opportunities and leadership for the next generation. He loves supporting organizations by donating a significant amount of his profits.

Customers of Planet Smoothie, Grand Central can definitely sense the passion that Kader has for smoothies and people. His goal is to create a welcoming storefront that locals enjoy going to, not only for the delicious sugar-free smoothies, but the positive vibes.

Situation Analysis (SWOT Analysis)

Planet Smoothie's Grand Central location currently has a lot of strengths in their communication tactics. Some of their strengths are that they are already partnered with many clubs and organizations at the University of Tampa and within the community surrounding (refer to items 6 and 7 in Appendix A). This is very helpful to the store as it is a great way for them to get their name out there to the many students and companies that surround them. The fundraisers have proven to raise a great amount of funds for the store and create new relationships with community partners (Item 9 in Appendix A). They also currently have 4.9 stars out of 5 on Google reviews (Item 10, Appendix A). All reviews state delicious smoothies, great environment, healthy options and extremely friendly staff/owner. This alone is a major strength of communication as it will keep new customers flowing in and curate the relationships of returning customers.

The main weakness of Planet Smoothie's communication as of now is the lack of engagement on their social media. Their Instagram has 493 followers, but they have smaller numbers in likes, shares, and comments (Item 1, Appendix A). Their TikTok and Facebook follow the same trend, with low engagement on posts (Items 2 and 3, Appendix A). This could be due to a lack of cohesive posts, most posts do not follow the same aesthetic which can be difficult for viewers. The posts mostly feature customers and fundraising events, rather than posts about products, new items, healthy options, etc.. It could be helpful to have an equal balance of both posts in order to promote the brand's products and environment.

There are many opportunities for Planet Smoothie to improve its communication tactics. Foremost, they can appeal to a wide range of audiences because of the different smoothie options they offer (Item 8, Appendix A). There are many different options and additives that can be put

in their smoothies to cater to every type of customer. If Planet Smoothie can focus content on these elements, they could market to a much wider audience. They also offer smoothie bowls which have become a very popular commodity in recent years, if these were promoted, consumers looking for a new smoothie bowl location would be attracted. One of the biggest opportunities for this Planet Smoothie location is that they have an upcoming partnership, providing smoothies and services to the New York Yankees 5k run. This will gain them a lot of new coverage. If they are to share this event/information on social media, they would gain new followers and customers from Yankees fans, runners, athletes, etc..

Possible threats to the company's communication methods are that many other smoothie brands/stores in the area may take priority over this one because they frequently post. Social media is such an important element of businesses today, and people tend to get most of their information from social media, if Planet Smoothie is able to curate a cohesive, appealing social media presence, they will gain the benefits. Another threat of communication being that because Planet Smoothie is a franchise, there are certain regulations and methods they have to abide by from corporate levels. This makes it hard to change much information on their “website”, which is a landing page from a corporation's overall site. This page does not feature much information about the specific store and its offerings, so this information needs to be shared on their social media instead.

Product, services, systems, strategies, implementation of communication plan

Planet Smoothie offers a wide variety of smoothie products, as well as acai bowls. They strive to accommodate all customers and all dietary needs. Whether you need a refreshing fruity

drink on a hot day, or just finished a workout and need a meal replacement shake, they have all the options for you. Not only can you choose from over 40 smoothies, but you can also add your own twist to satisfy your needs. Some of their add-ins include, meal replacement protein, non-dairy milks and nut butters, whole grain oats, leafy greens, and so much more. They advertise this through their website (refer to Appendix 3), making it easy and accessible to locate the different categories to choose from. Having over 40 smoothies on a menu can be overwhelming, so they categorized them into 8 different groups: New & Featured, Planet Favorites, Planet Life, Energy, Superfood, Protein, Meal Replacement, and Planet Kids. This helps customers narrow down their options to find the perfect smoothie for them.

Planet Smoothie, located on Grand Central Ave, has its own Instagram and TikTok (refer to Appendix 1 and 2) where they advertise different partnerships and organizations that they are working with. They also strive to build relationships with all their customers, especially UT students. Whenever groups of people come in, such as club organizations from UT, the owner of this location loves to post them on Instagram to help gain more students and participate in different fundraisers that are going on. Although there are some social media accounts for this location, it isn't very active with their product promotion. When walking into the store, there are always new smoothies featured, however it is only shown on their website and not their social media accounts. Their Instagram provides story highlights of the menu and the add-ins, however there aren't any posts about new and upcoming products that would catch customers' eyes and persuade them to come in. Their menu on the website emphasizes that they make smoothie bowls, which is also rarely shown on their social media accounts. Planet Smoothie is a very welcoming, friendly place, striving to form relationships and bonds with their customers which is an amazing attribute towards the company and keeps customers wanting to come back.

Constructive Evaluation

When taking a closer look at the effectiveness of Planet Smoothie's communication, we took note of a few things. Across Instagram and Facebook, the captions were typically very short and did not use proper punctuation. Using compelling and correct captions will help your audience better understand your message and engage with your content. Engagement is extremely important across social media channels, as it allows you to build a relationship with your customers and increase their loyalty. Consistency is another key piece to success on social media. This includes profile pictures, language used, content, and graphics. When creating captions it's important to keep in mind the "voice" of your brand. Your mission should be the guiding factor of your tone of voice and this will help you best convey your message to your audience. Captions should use the most concise language possible, without sacrificing any important details that will help your audience understand the goal of your post. Some posts require only one sentence, while others may need 2-3. Imagery and graphics can be used to help create a cohesive social media feed that helps your audience connect further with your brand. A great resource to create engaging and brand accurate content is Canva.

An area of your communication that serves as a great example of what could be done on other platforms are the locations Google Reviews. The reviews are overwhelmingly positive and demonstrate the businesses dedication and attention to detail regarding its customer experience. Translating this reaction to platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook could help boost brand awareness and drive new customer support. The welcoming energy that is presented in the store should also be felt across social media platforms to show your audience what they can expect. Social media platforms can be promoted in-store as well, and a great way to boost your following is to encourage existing customers to share their support via your platforms. Overall, the existing communication strategies are effective, but could become even better by sharing content consistently that is created against a set of brand guidelines. The existing customer base is very strong and provides you with a great audience to help support your social media presence.

Recommendations

After reviewing Planet Smoothie Grand Central's social media materials we have several recommendations to improve their online presence. The contact information on Instagram needs to be updated to the correct phone number and email address. Additionally the Instagram bio needs to be updated. The posts should be more focused and cohesive, so that the Instagram grid looks visually pleasing and on brand. Content should be consistently created in order to maintain a fresh look, avoid using the same content more than once. Captions should be proof-read in order to ensure there are no grammatical errors. Captions also have room for improvement as they can be more creative and informative. Instagram stories are a great way to interact with happy customers as well as provide updates and information on what is happening at the storefront, so this is something we can implement.

In regards to the type of content we want to see, and help create, is a feature story on Ali Kader, the owner of Planet Smoothie Grand Central, because he is so engaging with his customers and has a great story that is worth sharing. Along those lines we think it would be great to have a "Meet the Team" post that introduces the employees to reflect the welcoming nature that the store has in real life. We think having a smoothie of the week would be an excellent idea to highlight popular, seasonal smoothies, especially because the menu is so extensive. We can post all of these on both Instagram and Facebook. TikTok is a platform that we can focus on and grow. We want to create consistent content, making smoothies, showing the store, showing the most popular things on the menu, etc. On each of Planet Smoothie Grand Central's social media platforms we want to have a link tree in the bio in order for consumers to have easy access to every platform.

In terms of advertisement and making the location more known to the citizens of downtown Tampa we have some ideas. The location of Planet Smoothie Grand Central is conveniently located right by the University of Tampa, however, many students are unaware of the location entirely. We want to design, print, and post flyers all over campus to raise awareness that Planet Smoothie is just a walking distance away. In terms of inspiring customers to continue to return to Planet Smoothie Grand Central would be to have punch cards. Having a physical reminder to go to Planet Smoothie is extremely helpful and the concept of punch cards work as great incentives for customers.

Appendix A

1. Grand Central Planet Smoothie's instagram:
<https://instagram.com/planetssmoothiegrandcentral?igshid=MTA0ZTI1NzA=>
2. Grand Central Planet Smoothie's TikTok
https://www.tiktok.com/@planetssmoothiealtis0?_t=8Vvchy33SUY&_r=1
3. Grand Central Planet Smoothie's Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/people/planetssmoothiegrandcentral/100063950536699/>
4. Planet Smoothie's Corporate Website
<https://www.planetssmoothie.com/>
5. Grand Central locations specific page/website
https://www.planetssmoothie.com/stores/18127?utm_source=gmb&utm_medium=gmb&utm_campaign=gmb&utm_id=gmb
6. Instagram posts advertising fundraisers
<https://www.instagram.com/p/Ci0WWC0J0Pm/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=>
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CiscSIbuL8D/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=>
7. Instagram post showing community partners/clubs
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CinbAobOLZx/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=>
8. Planet Smoothie's Menu:
<https://www.planetssmoothie.com/menu/index.php>
9. Thank you notes to store from community partners and clubs
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EYTj3xa86rpVyGA7Ge-rG9Th7rpfKwyg/view?usp=sharing>
10. Planet Smoothie Grand Central's Google Reviews:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pGthz6NzAmSqN9GqFUehmyLn-zU_tTIOtbymXzABpss/edit?usp=sharing