

COMMUNICATING FREEDIVING TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

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Introduction

Freediving is relatively unknown to the general public, only a hand-full of people who truly understand what freediving is all about. Currently, media coverage about freediving are still very limited, and if there were some cover story about it, mostly are when a freediver attempts to break a world record or if there are fatalities relate to it.

During these record-breaking attempts, the general public will look at their breath-hold times and the depth of their dive and it easily create a perception that freediving can only be perform by “super” humans, people with special abilities. Furthermore, news on fatalities in freediving also strengthened their perception on freediving as an extreme sport.

Communication Strategy

In order to change the negative perception, we need to create a communication strategy.

According to ¹[epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov) communication strategies are plans for communicating information related to a specific issue, event, situation, or audience. They serve as the blueprints for communicating with the public, stakeholders, or even colleagues.

To develop a marketing communication strategy in freediving, I will adopt some of the theory from ²**Philip Kotler**. For this case I intentionally not to include the full framework because I think it's better not to go into details on the communication budget, or the measurement tools because it's different in each regions.

1. Identifying the Target Audience
2. Determining the Communication Objectives
3. Designing the Message
4. Selecting Communication Channels

Identifying The Target Audience

Before we can create “what” and “how” the content being communicated, first we need to divide the market into smaller groups, this is called market segmentation. According to ²**Philip Kotler**, segmentation is: “Defining a market into smaller groups who have distinct needs, characteristics or behavior and who might require separate products or marketing mixes”

Since our focus will be communicating to the general public, that means the segments include all age groups, sexes, and behaviors. In order to create an effective message to the general public,

¹ <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/community/pdfs/toolkit/comstrats.pdf>

² Kotler, Philip (2000). *Marketing Management Tenth Edition Millennium Edition*

let's consider freediving as a new product and we can use the adoption framework by ²**Philip Kotler** to divide the market. The framework is called the AIDA(Awareness/Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) framework which is normally used by advertising which describes different phases of consumer engagement.

Awareness/Attention

In this stage, people are aware and have heard about freediving

Interest

Those who are interested in the activity

Desire

People who are in this phase are eager to learn but haven't taken any action about it

Action

This is the phase where people take action and try freediving, either they try to learn by themselves or take a course in freediving

Based on the innovation phases framework, the majority of people are still either they are unaware of freediving at all or aware but do not have the desire to try. This can also mean that they have very little information about it. Although, the number of people who have an interest, have a strong desire and who already take action to self-learn how to freedive are increasing there are more people which are still unaware. Focusing on the majority type is the fastest way to grow the sport.

The short-term strategy is set based on the primary target audiences. Analyzing the current state, it's best to focus on building the awareness first.

Determining The Communication Objectives

Selecting the communication objectives allows us to prioritize the most effective and efficient media channels and to measure the results. To increase the level of awareness and to change people's perspective,, I think the goals should be:

- Increasing the general public's awareness on freediving as a safe sport/activity
- Generating interest in freediving

I think the communication objectives should be updated each year depending on the success of the campaign.

² Kotler, Philip (2000). *Marketing Management Tenth Edition Millennium Edition*

Designing the Message

Considering the communication goals, and the nature of freediving itself, the most efficient way to convey the message is through articles because it allow to explain and educate people on how to dive safely.

The Key message should remain short and use words which are easy to digest.

Key Message: "Dive Freely, Dive Safely, Freedive"

Dive Freely: The word "Free" has a perception that it's for everybody

Dive savely: Reminds people to consider the safety aspect

Although the key message should remain short, it is beneficial to be able to show facts to convince people that freediving is a safe sport.

Facts that can be used are comparing the freediving fatalities rate with the road fatalities rate.

According to ³**Divers Alert Network or Dive Wise**, the number of freediving fatalities are 308 people between 2006 and 2011, 92% of which are known to engage in these activities: Snorkeling and spearfishing 46% and 25% respectively, freediving 18% and collecting 11%. That means the number of fatalities purely from freediving is 51 people in 6 years, 8-9 people per year on average. Meanwhile, the number of fatalities in freediving competition under AIDA is only 1 person ever recorded. From the AIDA International statistics, there are around 12,000 certified freediver in the world. Using the ⁴Fermi Estimation, we can calculate the fatality rate in freediving will be 0.0008%.

Meanwhile, if we compare it to road traffic deaths according to ⁵**WHO (World Health Organization)** in 2010 there are 1.24 million of world's population die each year on road accident out of 1,5 billion vehicles registered in the same year.

Using The Fermi Estimation to calculate the fatality rate, approximately there are 12,000 certified freedivers in the world, with 1 fatality. The fatality rate will be $1/12,000 * 100\% = 0.008\%$. The fatality rate from road accident is $1,240,000/1,500,000,000 * 100\% = 0.08\%$. The statistics clearly show that you are much more likely to die from a road accident compared to freediving.

³ Dive Wise. <http://divewise.org/education/freediver-blackout/statistics/>

⁴ Fermi Estimation. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fermi_problem

⁵ World Health Organization. http://www.who.int/gho/road_safety/en/

Selecting Communication Channels

Communication channels are type of media used to convey the messages from the sender to the target audience. The most effective way to build awareness to general public is to use mass media which include:

- Television
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- etc

Over the past decade, with the development of technology, online media and social media is becoming more popular and transform into an effective and efficient communication channel.

Communication Channels	Channel Type	Target Audience	Key Messages
Television	Lifestyle, News,	All ages	Dive Free, Dive Safely, Freedive
Magazines	Lifestyle, Water Sports, News	Older audiences, 30-50 years old	
Newspapers	News, Lifestyle	Older Audiences, 30-50 years old	
Online Medias	Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter	Younger Audiences, 16-40 years old	

Communicators

The person who conveys the messages is as important as the message itself. In my opinion the one who is supposed to be conveying these messages is everybody who claims to be freedivers, especially the one who have a freediving certificate no matter which level they are.

In this case, since the goal is to create awareness and to convince people that freediving is for the masses, those who have just been certified are best influencers to attract the general public. It will be better if the individual is perceived as one of them, people who are considered by the target audience to have the same level with them. These people should be the main influencers especially those who have a large network.

Summary

In recent years, freediving has gained more awareness but in the mind of the general public, freediving is still unknown and for those who have heard about freediving, most of them consider it an extreme sport which they will never be able to do.

To increase the awareness to the general public, it's best to have a consistent and clear message/ campaign and this message should convey that freediving is a safe sport with knowledge in it's

safety. The main message should be something like “Dive Freely, Dive Safely, Freediving!”, the content of the message can reveal facts to help convince the doubters. The best way to convey this message is through articles in the mass media and social networks. In media such as magazines and newspapers, the most recommended type is through articles rather than news coverage to explain freediving to the general public.

References

- Kotler, Philip (2000). Marketing Management Tenth Edition Millennium Edition
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