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NWA For The Nations: A Marketing Plan to Glorify Jesus in Every People in the World

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NWA For The Nations: A Marketing Plan to Glorify Jesus in Every People in the World
By:
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An Honors Thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Bachelor of
Science in Business Administration in Marketing

Sam M. Walton College of Business

University of Arkansas

Fayetteville, Arkansas

April 19, 2024

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Introduction

Out of all the 8.1 billion people in the world today, 3.39 billion of them have no way to access the truth of Jesus Christ. There are 7,246 people groups who will never hear or even know someone who has ever heard of what Jesus did on the cross (The Traveling Team, 2024). These staggering numbers are the reason for this thesis. I will develop a marketing plan for a conference called NWA For The Nations that will take place in Fayetteville, Arkansas on November 8th and 9th of 2024. More details of the conference will be discussed later, but it is a Christian missions conference that desires to helps Christians of all walks of life find their role in God's mission. The overwhelming majority of Christians are unaware of God's mission, so the conference will explain what God's purposes are in creation and what he desires for His kingdom on this earth.

Objectives for this marketing plan are to grow attendance from previous years and grow community involvement in the conference. Community involvement looks like getting more local churches and student ministries to promote and attend the conference. It is difficult to put an exact number on how many churches we are aiming for, but we are working on finding a number that makes sense. The goal of attendance for this year's conference is 1000 people which is plausible because last year's conference had around 850 people. There are also several personal goals that I am looking to achieve during this process. First, I am looking to grow in my marketing skills as I will write out a plan that contains terminologies and practices from my time in marketing classes in the Walton college. This thesis provides a great opportunity for me to showcase what I have learned these past four years in school. My presentation skills will also improve as I plan to meet with church leaders, student ministry leaders, and fraternity and sorority leaders to tell them about the conference. I will also learn more about social media skills

as I write out a social media plan to gain more awareness for the conference around Northwest Arkansas. Team building and leadership skills are also areas that I will grow in during this thesis. It will take a large team to put this conference on, and I am proud to play a role on that team to help grow attendance at the conference.

Background

To start off the background of this thesis, I will discuss more of what the conference is and why it exists. The conference website states that "NWA For The Nations missions conference is designed to help believers discover the call to missions, experience God's heart for the nations, & learn how to live life on mission. The conference will equip followers of Jesus to make disciples among the least reached peoples & advance the Kingdom of God through their passions & professions" (NWA For The Nations, 2024). The conference is run by a missions sending and mobilizing organization out of Fayetteville called Global Outfitters whose aim is to equip the greater Christian body to fulfill their role in the Great Commission. Nathan Allen, head of Global Outfitters, talked with me about how the conference is designed like a bell curve where there is something there for everyone. The person who knows nothing about missions and the person who is being sent to China tomorrow will benefit from what they learn at the conference. NWA For The Nations will be on a Friday night and most of the day Saturday with one main session on Friday night and two main sessions on Saturday. These main sessions will include worship music and a message from a keynote speaker. Other than the main sessions, there will be breakout sessions and track sessions. These breakouts and tracks will be more specific for people as they hit on different aspects of life such as the marketplace and overseas missions.

Now that we have discussed the general makeup of the conference, we can transition into why the conference exists. Barna Group completed a study in 2018 that found that 51% of

churchgoers in the US had never heard of the Great Commission (Barna, 2018). NWA For The Nations exists to make sure this number is much higher because it is vital to God's mission of reaching the world. Just before Jesus ascended into Heaven, He gave His followers marching orders which we now call the Great Commission. Jesus says in Matthew 28:19 to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (ESV Study Bible, 2008). This word "nations" is the Greek word ethnos which is where we get the word "ethnic" in English. Therefore, Jesus is telling us to go and make disciples of all "ethnic groups" (Piper, 2022, p. 159). As I stated earlier, there are currently 7,246 unreached people groups. According to the Joshua Project, an unreached people group is a people group who lacks enough followers of Christ and resources to evangelize their own people (Joshua Project, 2024). Most unreached people groups reside in an area of the world called the 10/40 window. The 10/40 window is from West Africa across Asia between 10 degrees latitude north of the equator to 40 degrees north. This area includes all Northern Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, and 96.6% of the unreached people groups in the world live in this window (The Traveling Team, 2024). This means that 3.28 billion people in the 10/40 window have no access to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Out of all the missionaries in the world, it is estimated that only 3.2% of them are working among the unreached. In terms of finances that are going to reach the unreached, for every \$100,000 that a Christian makes, they give \$1.83 to the unreached (The Traveling Team, 2024). As these statistics show, there is a great imbalance in the Church of how people and resources are being allocated to reach the unreached. That is why this conference exists.

Northwest Arkansas is a hotspot for missions in the United States because there are several missions organizations in the area and there are a large number of missionaries sent from here compared to the rest of the US. This makes NWA a great place for a conference like this because

there are resources to help put it on. If we are a part of God's family, then we are a part of the family business. The problem is, many Christians do not know about the family business of making His glory known in every people group of the world. NWA For The Nations will help Christians understand God's mission for His people while also helping them find their role in this mission.

Project Details

Target Audience

Before developing a marketing plan for the conference, the target audience for NWA For The Nations must be addressed. Overall, Christians are the main group of people that will be attending, but I will get more specific and dive into what this target audience looks like on a college campus and a thriving business community in Northwest Arkansas. I am currently enrolled in a course called "Social Media and Marketing" where we have been discussing target audiences and the best way to reach them. The professor talked a great deal about creating personas for people who would likely attend the conference. Once personas are developed, it will be much easier to determine specific ways to market to these individuals and get them excited about the conference. Based on what I have learned in class this semester, I have created three personas: Missions Macy, Global Greg, and Business Bill.

Missions Macy is a 21-year-old female college student at the University of Arkansas. She is majoring in psychology and is heavily involved on campus. She is in a sorority and involved in a campus ministry. A huge part of Mission Macy's life is community. She values it very much and likes to spend her time with friends and family. Missions Macy attends church every Sunday, but she does not have a clear picture of God's mission for the world and how she plays a role in it. She is a heavy user of Instagram and TikTok, so this will likely be the best way to reach her.

Also, the campus ministry she is involved in could help promote the conference so that she is able to learn about it while participating in the ministry. Missions Macy is similar to a lot of women that would be interested in NWA For The Nations.

Meet Global Greg. Global Greg is a 20-year-old college student at the University of Arkansas who is majoring in mechanical engineering. He is in a fraternity and is also involved in student government. As you can see, Global Greg is heavily involved on campus and values the opportunities to build relationships and expand his social network. He desires to use these relationships he has made to find a job in engineering while being able to make a positive impact to the world around him. Global Greg is active on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, so these are great channels to reach him for the conference. He is actively attending church, and he would be happy to attend the conference if his college ministry promoted it.

Lastly, Business Bill is a 45-year-old man who lives in Bentonville, Arkansas with a wife and 3 kids. He has an upper management position at Walmart, so he can provide for his family with no problems. His faith shows up at work in the way he displays his values and treats other employees. Business Bill is always looking for ways to become a better leader and make a bigger impact on his Walmart team. He balances work and family life well while he loves to play sports and get outside in the sun. He is an avid LinkedIn user and he also uses Instagram and Facebook. LinkedIn is the best way to reach Business Bill because he would love the aspect of meeting other business people who share a faith like his. The conference will have opportunities for businesspeople to network and share insights that they learn and how they can be a bigger light for Jesus in the marketplace. These personas will help better understand how to market to people who will likely attend the conference.

Social Media

Nothing will have a greater impact on growing attendance than social media. It has become ever so prevalent and a part of everyone's life, so I want to develop a plan to use it to increase awareness and involvement in the conference. The first order of business is to decide which social media platforms to use. Facebook is the most popular social media platform in the world with over 3 billion users globally per month, and Instagram comes in at 2 billion behind YouTube and WhatsApp (Statista, 2024). The older generations tend to use Facebook while the younger ones use Instagram, so both are great options to raise awareness for the conference. LinkedIn is another great platform to use because it is so prevalent in the business world. The conference will create value for businesspeople because they will be able to network with each other and learn lessons on how their business can be their mission field for Christ. I believe that it is best to use Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn to advertise for NWA For The Nations.

One of the biggest aspects with marketing different platforms is making sure your brand has the same message across the different platforms. You may not be sharing the same exact content on all platforms, but you should be telling the same story across all three platforms.

NWA For The Nations is ahead of the game because the conference already has a recognizable logo that is marketed on Instagram and their website, so that will be helpful for the brand to be noticed across different platforms.

Now that we have determined which social media platforms will promote the conference, it is crucial to discuss what kind of content will be made on these platforms. All of the content for NWA For The Nations will be strategically planned out and will include photos and short videos. The goals of this content will be to share information about the conference and to generate excitement by increasing impressions. The conference's social media platforms will

share updates about the upcoming conference, announce giveaways and sales, and give followers a behind-the-scenes look at what putting on the conference looks like. Also, we will create reels to post on Instagram and Facebook of clips from previous years to help followers get a picture of what the conference will be like. These reels will include short clips from keynote speakers, clips about the breakout groups, and clips from the agency fair where different missions agencies come to promote their agencies. Once of the biggest aspects of the social media strategy will be creating a sense of community. In my social media and marketing class this semester, we have been talking about how important it is for a brand to engage with their audience on social media. Followers will feel more connected to the brand if their questions and comments are seen and answered by the people running the brand's account. Being connected to followers on social media will boost brand loyalty and excitement for the conference.

Another topic we have covered in my social media and marketing class this semester has been influencer marketing. The influencer marketing industry is set to grow to around \$24 billion by the end of 2024, and 85% of consumers believe influencer marketing is an effective way to market to consumers (Geyser, 2024). In recent years, I have noticed that there has been a significant increase in Christian social media influencers on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. These Christian influencers have gained a massive following and have hundreds of thousands of followers that interact with their content on a regular basis. I believe that it would be well worth the time to seek out a Christian influencer to post about NWA For The Nations. There are several influencers and pastors that have significant following on social media that I believe could help promote the conference and get more people there. They could post a short video on their story talking about the conference and why people should attend, and this would help the word spread even more about the conference.

Paid social media advertisement will drive more users to NWA For The Nations' social media pages. Paying for ads on social media differs from organic posts in many ways. First, your brand can reach a much bigger audience when they pay for ads because more people will see it than just your followers. Also, paid ads are able to target potential customers based on their interests who otherwise would maybe never see a post by NWA For The Nations. Overall, paid advertisement will increase awareness for the conference on social media and help drive more people to the conference website. The marketing team for the conference must develop a budget for paid ads on social media. Costs for paid ads will differ on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, so it is important to research how much it will cost to produce advertisements. Paid advertisements will be a great way for people who have not heard of the conference to see it on their social media feeds.

The last major topic to touch on social media is a promotion calendar. As I have learned in my time as a marketing student, it is incredibly important to have a plan of when you will post and what you will post. Having a variety of content will make the experience better for the consumer because they will not be constantly interacting with the same form of content. A mixture of pictures, reels, short videos, and stories should be posted across all different platforms. A promotion calendar will help posts be consistent across platforms without being too frequent and upsetting the consumer. Planning specific times to post on social media is also important because there are times when posts usually have more success than others. For example, the best time to post on social media regardless of platform is between 6pm-9pm and 12pm-3pm on Fridays. Anwesha Ghatak and her team researched statistics from over 50,000 accounts across different platforms, and she gives the best times to post on each individual platform. For Facebook, the best times to post are 3pm on Wednesdays, 1pm-4pm on Thursdays

and Fridays, and 12pm-1pm on Saturdays and Sundays. For Instagram, the best times to post on weekdays are 6am-9am, 12pm-2pm, and 5pm-6pm. On weekends, the best time to post is 9am-2pm. For LinkedIn, your brand will have the most success on Monday and Friday at 12pm and 10am-11am on Tuesday (Ghatak, 2024). For the conference to be successful on social media, they need to post during these times, be consistent in the number of times they post, and post a variety of content across different social media platforms.

Email Marketing

Email marketing is another resource that will help boost attendance and grow engagement with the conference. There are several benefits to an email list, the first being it is cost-effective. You can reach a large audience without having to pay for advertisements on different social media platforms. Having a way to reach a large audience through email will save money for the conference because it does not cost anything to make. Another benefit of email is that you can measure results easily. Whoever runs the email campaign will be able to look at what users are clicking on and what they are not, how often they open emails, and how many times they click through to the main conference website. Tracking how users engage with the emails will help for future conferences as well. Customizing your own email contact list is another benefit. Social media platforms may change their algorithms and how you market the conference, but an email list is constant because you can send what you want to who you want at any time (Hoory, 2024).

When creating an email marketing campaign, you will want to develop a targeted list of consumers from previous conferences and social media. There is plenty of data available to the makers of the conference that contains information from people who have attended the conference in previous years, and it is a great idea to start with these people. Once there is a

strong list to send emails to, there must be a compelling subject line to get readers engaged. If the subject line of an email is not appealing, I will likely not read the email. Now that the email has been opened, there needs to be relevant and valuable information. This could include anything from conference discounts, conference info, speaker announcements, and stories about past conferences. Emails should include CTAs, call to actions, that lead consumers to a point of action such as purchasing a ticket or sharing the conference with others. These CTAs must be clear to readers to direct them to act. Additionally, the email templates used need to be compatible on desktops and mobile devices, and the emails should be designed in a way that is easy to read with clear headers and bullet points. Like social media, the email campaign should be on a schedule that does not overwhelm readers to the point of unsubscribing, but should be frequent enough to keep consumers in the know about conference happenings.

Churches and Faith-Based Communities

Churches and other faith-based communities around Northwest Arkansas have tremendous opportunity to get their groups involved in the conference. Nathan Allen, the man in charge of the conference, spoke about how there is a major emphasis on getting more churches involved from around the community. He told me about how there are a few churches that are bought in by helping get the word out to their congregations, but the number is still way too low for his liking. How do we fix this? Nathan mentioned the idea of getting his interns to go to churches around NWA and go directly to the pastors and present the conference to them. Hopefully this would lead to pastors wanting to sit down with Nathan and hear more about the value that the conference would bring to their congregations. Getting more churches involved could also look like offering incentives such as group discounts for churches if there are a certain number of people signed up from that church. Overall, the goal for churches is to have more

pastors talking about the conference on a Sunday morning and having them get their church to attend the conference.

Campus ministries are also another great way to get more attendees to the conference. As a student at the University of Arkansas, I have been involved in campus ministries for my four years here. There are several student ministries around Fayetteville and at John Brown University in Siloam Springs that could help a lot in getting their students to the conference. Thinking of Fellowship Bible Church and Cross Church alone, there are well over 1000 students that attend their college services weekly. Conference planners should get in touch with as many student ministries as possible and tell them of the value that the conference could bring to their students. Fraternities and sororities are also another great option to get students involved in the conference. There are likely believers in most every fraternity and sorority that have some sort of connection to the conference. It would be great to have those students speak about the conference or have Nathan come in and speak about it at the chapter's weekly meeting. There could also be some incentive such as a group discount for fraternity and sorority students to sign up. Getting more churches and faith-based communities to promote the conference would be a massive win in getting more people to the conference this year.

On-Campus Presence

There are over 30,000 students enrolled at the University of Arkansas which is yet another great opportunity to promote the conference. As a student for the past four years, I have seen success from on-campus presence such as posters and tabling. At the beginning of every school year, there are a ton of opportunities for organizations, clubs, and ministries to promote their events with whole days dedicated to helping students get connected. Leading up to the conference, it would be a great idea to develop creative posters and hang them all over campus.

These posters will be seen all over and lead people to ask questions and hopefully scan the QR code that will be on there. I have been a part of an event that implemented the same strategy to hang posters all over campus, and it was a huge success. There were over 1400 people that showed up to the event, and several people I spoke to said the only reason they were there is because they saw the posters around campus and were curious. Along with posters, setting up tables on campus is a great idea as well. Many other student ministries will set up tables by the Greek Theater and hand out free swag and food which helps start conversations with students. I believe that having an on-campus presence will allow more people to hear about the conference which will help bring more people to the conference.

Analysis

Leading up to the conference and after the conference, it is important to keep track of how the social media and email campaigns are doing as well as the overall statistics from the conference. From now until NWA For The Nations, social media numbers should be checked regularly. These metrics include engagement rate, reach, website traffic, and conversion rate. Engagement rate is how many likes, comments, and shares an account gets on their posts, and it helps see how involved users are with the content you are sharing. Reach is the term for how many unique users your content is reaching, so the goal should be to have as big of a reach as possible. Website traffic is how many people are clicking on your website from the social media account and what they are doing on the website. Lastly, conversion rate is one of the more important metrics with social media. A conversion occurs when someone purchases a ticket from the conference website, so it is useful to know how many people are buying a ticket that visit the website. All these different metrics are vital to grasp the success of the social media campaign and to see how social media influenced getting people to the conference.

The email campaign has metrics that we need to look at as well. First, open rates will tell us the percentage of users who open the email to start reading it. Having the open rates will help see how useful the emails are to the users. We will also be able to see click-through-rates which tells us the rate at which users click a link from the email that takes them to the website. One of the main goals of an email campaign is to drive traffic to the website which will eventually drive them to convert and purchase a ticket to the conference. The last major metric we need to look at is the unsubscribe rate. It is helpful to know how many people unsubscribe from the email list because it will help you determine how successful it is. The main reason people often unsubscribe from email lists is because the emails are too frequent which annoys the user. This is another reason why having an email calendar is great to have.

Lastly, looking at numbers after the conference will help see how all these different strategies helped the conference. The biggest number to look at will be total attendance of the conference. The goal this year is 1000 people, and I believe that is reasonable with the resources available. Another number I am looking forward to seeing is how many churches and other faith-based communities contributed. Having more churches involved would be a huge blessing to the conference and add value to everyone involved. Northwest Arkansas is already a missions hub in the US in terms of how many people are involved in cross-cultural missions, so I would love to see more churches and organizations learn their role in God's global mission of reaching the nations. Feedback from the conference from organizations involved and people who attended will help the planning for the next conference and will lead to better social media strategy.

Conclusion

Writing this marketing plan for NWA For The Nations has been a great experience. I have been taking in all sorts of new information over the last four years as a marketing student, and I

finally had the outlet to display what I have learned. In this conclusion, I want to begin by displaying four major takeaways from the paper:

- 1. Social media is the driving force in getting more people to the conference. The three platforms to focus on are Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn
- 2. Church involvement is another key in growing attendance, and meeting with church pastors in Northwest Arkansas to invite them to participate should be a large focus.
- On-campus presence at the University of Arkansas should be utilized more for this year's conference
- 4. A thorough analysis of social media metrics will lead to a better understanding of best practices on social media

The process of this thesis has been a long one, and I have learned a lot from the experience both personally and professionally. Personally, I grew in my faith a lot during this entire process. Attending this conference in 2023 changed the trajectory of my life for the better which I am grateful for. During this journey, I had the opportunity to sit down with several pastors, mentors, and friends and talk through this with them which reaffirmed my why behind this project. The reason I am doing this paper is because I have a desire to see God's glory acknowledged in every people group in the world because that is exactly what God desires for Himself too. I also grew in my discipline and creative writing skills. It has been several years since I have written a bigger paper like this, so it took me getting uncomfortable to produce a paper like this. Looking back on the personal objectives I laid out for myself, I would say that these have been achieved. Overall, my understanding of social media marketing has increased while I also grew in team building during the process of meeting with people important to the writing of this thesis.

Professionally, my writing skills were sharpened over the course of writing this paper as well as my communication skills meeting up with people who have knowledge about this field. All of college I have been learning about the ins and outs of marketing, and I am glad to have this platform to display what I have learned. Marketing is much harder than I gave it credit for, and this paper gave me a glimpse of just how much work goes into marketing for a company or an event like NWA For The Nations. This thesis has been a pleasure, and I am so excited to see how NWA For The Nations does this year and how it impacts the world for God's glory. John Piper says it best when he said, "All of history is moving toward one great goal, the white-hot worship of God and his Son among all the peoples of the earth. Missions is not that goal. It is the means. And for that reason it is the second greatest human activity in the world" (Piper, 2022, p. 7). NWA For The Nations is not the goal. It is a means for the glory of God among the nations. I will leave you with this verse that describes the end goal, and what is described in this verse is a real event that will happen which is why I have so much joy in writing this thesis. Revelation 7:9 states, "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands" (ESV Study Bible, 2008).

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Thesis Journal

8/30/2023

First meeting with Professor Geiger. I had a few ideas in my head that we talked through.

I decided I wanted to do something with missions.

10/14/2023

I met and talked with Brain Holmquist from Ethnos360 about missions. He lived overseas for a while so we talked through that and the importance of missions in our world today. He talked about how everything he has done is worth it even though it was very difficult at times

1/16/2024

I had lunch with Jordan Eoff. He led my trip to the middle east and helped me grow a ton in my faith. We talked through my thesis project and gave me some ideas about how to get missions in my paper

2/14/2024

Met with Nathan Allen for the second time. Talked me through details of the conference and how it is put together. He gave me great ideas about what he wants for the conference. He shared target market with me and objectives of conference

3/24/2024

Met with Nathan Allen again. We talked on the way home from spring break about the paper. He told me about the content of the conference and the target audience and how to reach them. He is focused on more churches telling their congregation about the event and student ministries getting involved.

Miscellaneous:

I do not have specific times and dates that I met with these people, but they all played a significant role in this paper by teaching me about the conference and about missions.

Brian Pope

Nate White

Ben Hopper

Jesse Rodriguez

Brandon Barnard

Cru international staff

Tim Huffine

Hudgens and Taylor Jeter

Sean Cooper

Seth Foor

Here is a post from the NWA For The Nations Instagram for last year's conference:











