

Buying and Merchandising Operations Research Event

Maine West DECA

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I. Executive Summary

Business - Sweet Mandy B's Old Fashioned American Desserts: Sweet Mandy B's is a highly acclaimed, upscale, boutique bakery that offers premium baked goods, catering, and custom orders. It is run as a sole proprietorship, includes forty employees and is located in the heart of the Lincoln Park neighborhood of Chicago. It was the first old fashioned American dessert shop in Chicago, and for several years possessed a monopoly of the product in Lincoln Park. However, after a competing firm entered the market and implemented online marketing strategies, the growth of Sweet Mandy B's has slowed substantially. Recognizing this problem, the owner Cindy Levine asked us to analyze the most allocatively efficient marketing strategies for her business and its target markets.

Our Mission: To develop an effective marketing plan for Sweet Mandy B's in order to broaden consumer base and increase sales.

Our Strategy: Our approach to research, analysis, and amendment was based on microeconomic concepts. Analyzing reasons behind the target markets' decisions, especially emphasizing respective elasticities of demand was the basis of our research. We also needed to classify Sweet Mandy B's products as economically "normal" or "inferior," in order to craft promotions that would most effectively capture the predicted effect that expected rises in income would have on the dessert market.

Research Methods: Our team began the project by researching the degree of effectiveness of technological marketing using secondary sources, as well as methods businesses could take to differentiate their products from their competitors. We also used secondary sources to research Sweet Mandy B's and Lincoln Park. Additionally, we refined our knowledge of microeconomic concepts, in order to maximize revenues from our marketing activities. Our primary research activities included interviews with the owner of Sweet Mandy B's, several employees and customers, and the owner of the only competing firm in the vicinity. Additionally, 50 customers were surveyed on their usage of social networking tools and the internet.

Findings and Conclusions:

- Current marketing efforts are minimal, there is little growth in consumer base, little growth in sales
- There are two target markets that could be identified: DePaul University students, and young families
 - Demand of students is *elastic*, while the demand of young families is *inelastic*
- There are low costs associated with technological marketing, and usage of social networking tools is simple
- Social responsibility is a major non-price competitive factor. Consumers are more willing to buy products from firms aiding a charity
- *Price discrimination* maximizes economic producer surplus, and requires a variable pricing structure

Our research indicates that Sweet Mandy B's requires an aggressive technological marketing strategy, as well as strategic alliances within our community in order to most directly access Sweet Mandy B's target markets. The business can only expect to see increased revenues from the income effect resulting from post-recession increasing incomes if target markets are convinced that Sweet Mandy B's is the most viable supplier of desserts. Due to the difference in elasticity structure between the two target markets, we have concluded that the most allocatively efficient method of marketing is specialization based on what each group needs. For college students, we feel price promotions will result in the highest increase in quantity demanded. This resembles a price discrimination structure that will maximize Sweet Mandy B's producer surplus. We feel that excelling in non-price competition, such as social responsibility marketing, tradition marketing, and brand name marketing will lead to the greatest increase in quantity demanded for young families, as this group's price inelasticity of demand suggests lowering the price for this group will produce lackluster increases in sales. In formulating our actual marketing plan, we decided to focus extensively on potent social networking opportunities, as they most strategically communicated to our target markets, were low cost, and were most dynamic.

Recommendations:

<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Operation T.R.E.A.T.S</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>Budget</u>
-Improve sales -Improve customer base -Provide price promotions -Point out non-price marketing strategies	Technology Resource Endorsement And Tangible Sponsorship	-Use social networking to connect to target market -Run promotions -Benefit the Children's Memorial Hospital -Run several promotions	-Year 1: \$9,400 -Year 2: \$6,400 -Fiscally possible by Sweet Mandy B's -Customer feedback to note returns on investments

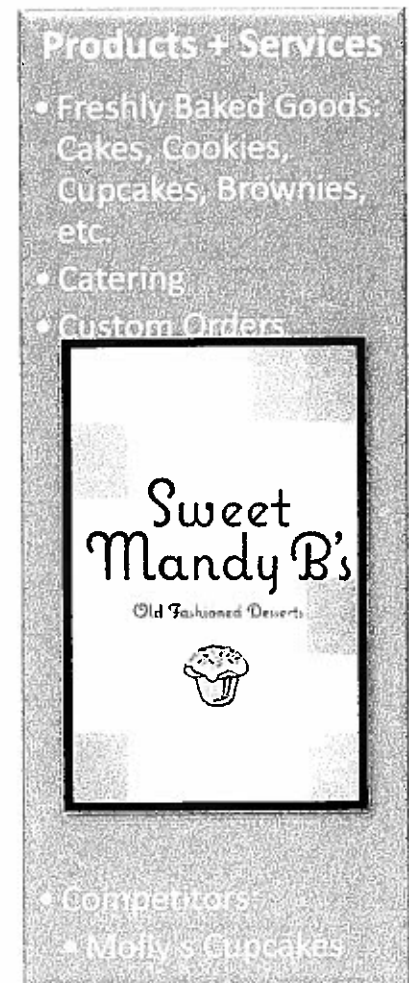
II. Introduction

a. Description of the Business

Sweet Mandy B's is a privately owned old fashioned American dessert shop located in the Lincoln Park neighborhood of Chicago. Cindy Levine opened in 2002 as a sole proprietorship, naming it after her children Mandy and Brian (Brian provides the "B"). The business quickly grew, and now boasts about forty employees and dozens of products available for purchase or catering. Sweet Mandy B's was the first boutique dessert shop in the Chicagoland area, and has proven to be a pioneering firm in creating a market for premium baked products. It is recognized as one of the most respected businesses in Lincoln Park, and a model in the dessert industry.

The shop features an inviting, ambient atmosphere, with its pastel color scheme, dollhouse décor, comforting seating areas, and unique fountain. The seasonal window display and the nursery theme are highly recognizable by, making it a staple in the Lincoln Park neighborhood. The store's counters proudly display the many sweet products offered and a large chalkboard notifies guests of the weekly specials. The shop features seasonal and holiday products, such as fresh fruit cakes and gingerbread cookies, and also gives customers the option to custom order. Sweet Mandy B's take pride that all of their goods are made carefully, and with the best quality ingredients.

Sweet Mandy B's sells a diverse array of products including award winning cupcakes, pies, pretzels, cakes, candy apples, cookies, breakfast treats, and brownies. Their prices



accommodate middle-high income clientele, with the prices varying from \$2.00 for a single cupcake to over \$80.00 for specialized cakes. Though Sweet Mandy B's has not been professionally rated, it has received a 4.5 star rating on user-based rating sites containing over 600 reviews. Many consider Sweet Mandy B's as having the "best cupcakes in Chicago" and as having a "grandma baked" appeal.

The owner of Sweet Mandy B's, Cindy Levine, believes that although her shop continues to be profitable, its consumer base has peaked due to a lack of advertising and promotions, as well as due to a lack of an online presence. She provided our team with the following mission:

Mission: To develop an effective marketing

b. Description of the Community

Economic: The Lincoln Park neighborhood of Chicago has an extremely diversified economy which thrives on the prosperity of small businesses and retail chains, especially upscale clothing boutiques, bookstores, restaurants, cafes, and nightlife facilities. It is recognized nationally as one of the most exclusive and affluent neighborhoods in Chicago. Chicago as a whole is a global economic and financial center. Its greatest strength is that its multifaceted corporate presence: its strong government agencies, the presence of several public and private universities, Midwestern offices of global financial firms, and retailers. Due to its positive economic climate, Chicago is by far the leading metropolitan entity in the Midwest, and is one of the largest economic centers in the world.

Geographic: The shop is located just three blocks from DePaul University and about five blocks from Metra and CTA stops, providing easy access to a variety of customers. Sweet Mandy B's is located near high end boutiques for women and children, a café, and a casual restaurant. Just off the street is a



Figure 1 - Sweet Mandy B's Location

large residential neighborhood of Lincoln Park condominiums and apartments.

Demographics: Research for this study was attained from the U.S. Census Bureau. Sweet Mandy B's is located in Lincoln Park, a city bordered by the Kennedy Expressway and Lake Michigan. With 64,320 inhabitants, a median home appraisal value in the \$500,000, and crime rates far

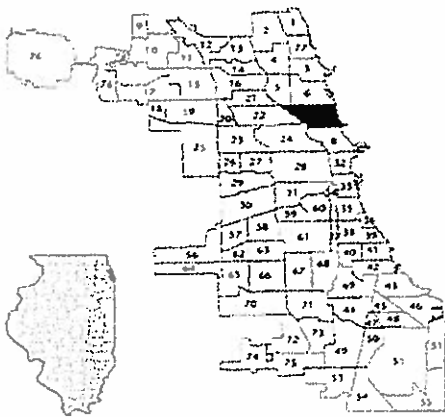
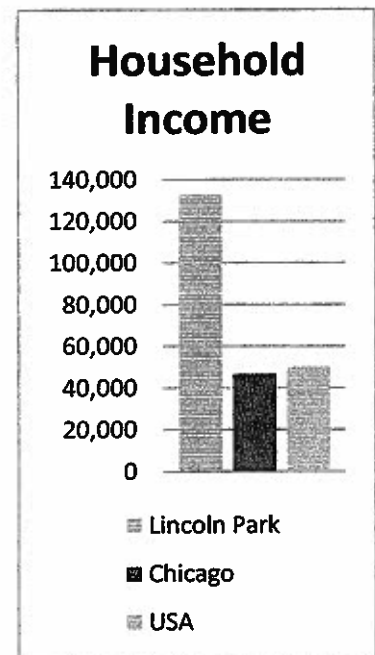


Figure 2 - The Lincoln Park neighborhood where our target markets are located

lower than Chicago averages, Lincoln Park possesses a well educated, affluent population. The median family income is \$132,894. This compares to the national average of \$50,046, putting Lincoln Park in the upper-middle class and upper-class brackets.

Socioeconomic: In order to maximize our understanding of the socioeconomic status of residents of Lincoln Park, we utilized the Claritas Market Segmentation Research Tool. By researching Lincoln Park, we were able to identify 5 primary resident types that defined the various ways of life of typical Lincoln Park residents.

The segments are described below:



American Dreams: These residents are upper-middle class urban families, purchase upscale products, are college educated, and are ethnically diverse. The adults in this segment hold mainly white-collar jobs. The group loves to indulge on luxurious furniture, food, electronics, and pets.

Bohemian Mix: America's strongest liberals, the Bohemian Mix residents are upper-middle class college students and graduates. They are normally in their 20s and 30s, and are likely patrons of cafes, nightclubs, and movie theaters. Most of the Bohemian Mix residents hold or will hold white collar jobs, and live in high-rise apartments, brownstones, and condominiums.

Money and Brains: The Money and Brains group resemble a group of urban elite. They are the most educated, the most advanced in their careers, the most wealthy, and have the most sophisticated tastes. They lead small families, and live in single family homes and brownstones that they own. They are mainly white-collar managers, and use excess money on lavish food, cars, homes, furniture, and services.

Young Digerati: The most tech-savvy group, the Young Digerati consist of wealthy college students and graduates who have disposable income to spend on the latest technological products. In addition to technology, the group spends on expensive furniture, dine in expensive restaurants, buy brand name clothing, pay for gym memberships, and buy premium or organic foods.

Upper Crust: The wealthiest and most exclusive group, the Upper Crust is a haven for couples in their 30s and 40s with young children and the most lavish standards of living. Usually the Upper Crust has one or two young children, own their own homes along with other properties, and hold the highest college degrees.

Figure 3 - A \$4.5M Lincoln Park Brownstone



III. Research methods used in study

a. Rationale and description of research methodologies selected to conduct the research study

The objective of our research was to analyze the current marketing strategies implemented by Sweet Mandy B's. The purpose of this research was to meet our goal to propose a dynamic, technologically supplemented marketing plan that would improve our customer base as well as help improve sales. Both primary and secondary research methods were used, and the results were analyzed in order to develop a cost efficient, innovative marketing plan.

Primary Research	
Research Method	Rationale
Interviewed Owner Cindy Levine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To gain knowledge about the current financial and marketing situation of Sweet Mandy B's, to discuss promotional methods being used or future promotional methods than can be done Given background information on the shop, information on market structure, information on management structure, information on target markets, information on product selection and rationale, and business expansion objectives
Interviewed Sales Associate Jenna and Baker Alex Bennett	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To get an idea about the profile of a regular customer To understand the time and cost associated with putting up appealing displays for the shop's ambiance To inquire how they maintain relationships with their customers To acquire information on the profiles of various employees
Interviewed Customers: 1) Benita Anthony 2) Femia Lukose 3) Parker Stephenson 4) Marta Vukasin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand their desires and accessibility to media outlets To determine responsiveness to potential marketing strategies To learn more about the target market demographic

Surveyed Anonymous Customers (50 Customers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand how well-known Sweet Mandy B's is and what promotional methods will be most successful in attracting more customers
Interviewed the Owner of Molly's Cupcakes, Our Prime Competitor (John Nicolades)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To acquire information on how similar businesses implement marketing strategies to increase revenues and maximize market share To learn about their missteps and develop a financially efficient marketing plan

Secondary Research	
Research Method	Rationale
Research Databases <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lincoln Park Chamber of Commerce DePaul University Federal Trade Commission Claritas Segmentation Tool 	To gain factual data and statistics about the target market, the local sector, general consumer behavior, and geographic features of the area
Online Review Sites <ol style="list-style-type: none"> yelp.com centerstagechicago.com chicago.menupages.com urbanspoon.com cupcakefetish.com 	To gain knowledge of the niche market's perception of Sweet Mandy B's, the firm's popularity among internet users, and the firm's ability to compete with rival firms in Lincoln Park
Economic and Business Textbooks <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Colander's Economics</i>, 8th Edition <i>Marketing Essentials</i> <i>Glencoe Marketing Series: Retailing</i> 	To understand the fundamental principles of economics and marketing in order to relate them to the operations of Sweet Mandy B's
Online Marketing Strategy Articles <ol style="list-style-type: none"> "Rich Internet-Mistakes to Avoid" and "Business Uses for Twitter" Jodi Mardesich "Journal of Strategic Marketing" Volume 18 Number 7 December 2010, Routledge "Marketing Automation" Jim Walton "Social Network Marketing: What works?" Sunil Gupta "Directory Journal: Internet Marketing and Social Media Blog" "How to Use Social Networking Sites for Marketing and PR" New York Times "Debunking Six Social Media Myths" B.L. Ochman 	To gain insight on internet and social media marketing through experts in the field, existing examples, and advice on how to effectively use technological resources

B. Process of conducting the selected research method(s)

Owner Interview: In order to gain more information on Sweet Mandy B's, a personal interview with the owner, Cindy Levine, was conducted at the bakery on November 16th, 2010. In the interview, we obtained information on the history of Sweet Mandy B's and its role in the Chicago dessert industry boom. Additionally, we learned of the current marketing and financial situation of Sweet Mandy B's. We also obtained substantial information on the target market and regular customers at the bakery, as well as significant insight on the product selection and rationale and business expansion objectives.

Employee Interviews: On the same day as the owner interview, November 16th, 2010, we conducted employee interviews with a sales associate and a baker. These interviews allowed us to understand more in depth about the profile of a regular customer and employee in order to understand the environment that Sweet Mandy B's has to offer as well as its target market. We were also able to gain knowledge about the time and cost associated with the upkeep of the bakery and displays, which helped us understand the efforts behind the shop's current marketing techniques. Additionally, we were able to interpret how well the employees would be able to manage online marketing tools and handle other promotions. We were also able to observe the interactions between the employees and their customers firsthand while conducting these interviews.

Customer Interviews: Also on the same day, customer interviews were conducted with random customers coming into the shop for the purchase. The customer profiles ranged from college students to young couples. Questions were asked that allowed us to better understand their desires and accessibility to media outlets in order to determine the course of our marketing plan. We especially focused on where they lived, worked, or went to school, how often they made use

of the internet to look up places to shop, and how often they used social networking tools, such as Facebook.

Customer Surveys: On November 16th, 2010, we also distributed fifty short surveys for customers to fill out in order to better understand how well-known Sweet Mandy B's is and what promotional methods will be most successful in attracting more customers. Questions were asked pertaining to their accessibility and usage of media outlets in order to determine our social media marketing techniques. Surveys were collected on November 30th, 2010.

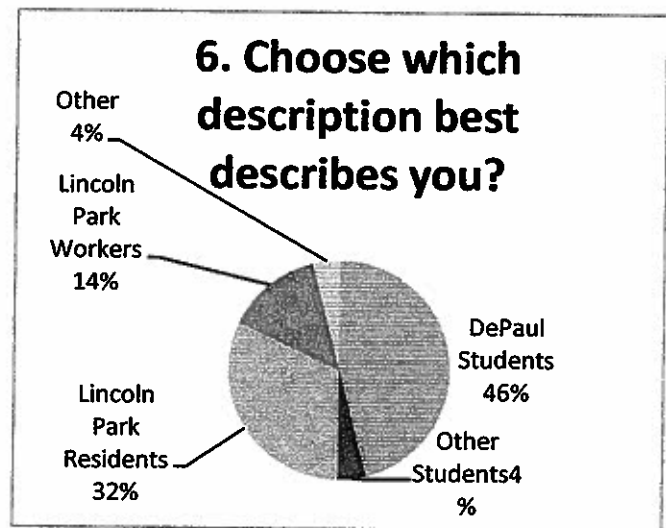
Competitor Interview: Additionally on November 30th, we visited competing dessert shop Molly's Cupcakes, where we interviewed the owner and main baker John Nicolades about how his business made use of marketing tools (both print and online). From this interview we learned the growth potential that a successful marketing program could bring to Sweet Mandy B's, as well as information regarding the costs of marketing tools.

IV. Findings and Conclusions of the Study

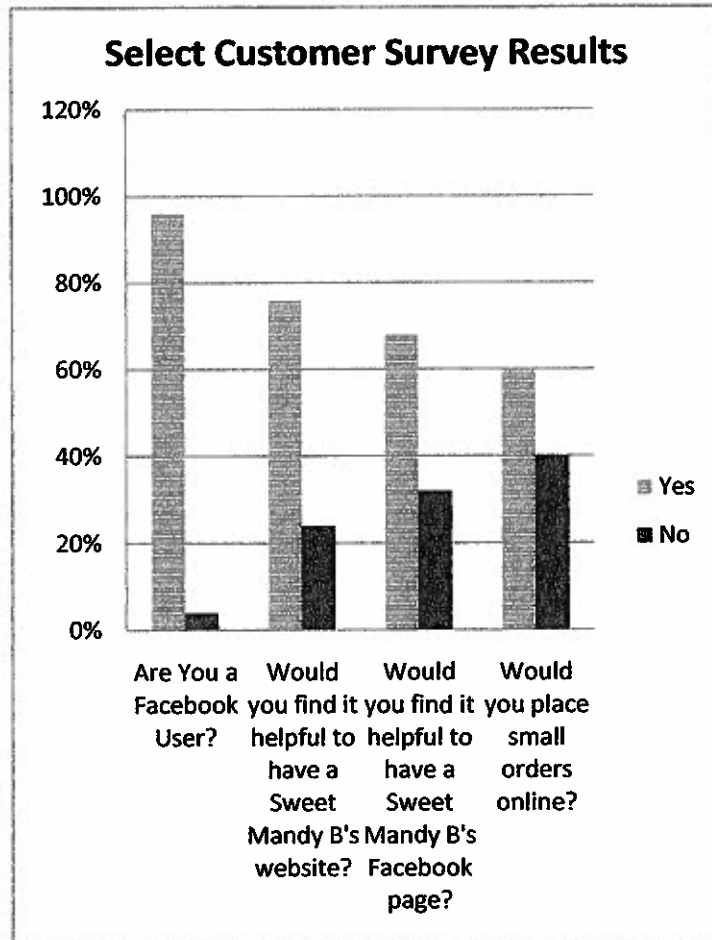
a. Description of the business's target market

We performed a variety of tests to discover the primary target markets of Sweet Mandy B's. From the interview with Cindy Levine, the owner, we learned that about 40% of her target market consists of college students and 35% of it consists of young families.

According the surveys, 46% of the customers were college students and 32% were Lincoln Park residents. On the two days that we visited Sweet Mandy B's, we spent over an



hour observing the customers. What we noticed was a plurality of college students and many young couples who came into the shop with their kids. After matching the results of our research with the socioeconomic groups that the Claritas market segmentation described, we concluded that the target market for Sweet Mandy B's consists largely of the "Young Digerati" group, as this group includes the students and young parents that we found frequented the shop most. This is



also supported by the fact that an overwhelming amount of customers made use of Facebook, and a majority would like to see Sweet Mandy B's as an online presence. Although this group is the most prominent, all five market segments are potential patrons of Sweet Mandy B's, as they all like to spend money on premium items such as luxury foods.

As a synthesis of our market segmentations and our research findings, we can say conclusively that the target market of Sweet Mandy B's includes both local college students (DePaul University is blocks from Sweet Mandy B's) and affluent young families. Both these groups reside within walking distance, rely heavily on technology, have disposable income and demand for high-end food items. However, the degree of their demands for these items differ in elasticity. The price elasticity of demand for Sweet Mandy B's products is more elastic for

Sweet Mandy B's Markets

Young Families

- Inelastic Demand
- Take-Out
- Larger Volumes
- Less frequent visits

Students

- Elastic Demand
- Eat-In
- Smaller Volumes
- More frequent visits

college students, as they have less disposable income. Our interview with owner Cindy Levine revealed that college students enjoy the fact that the store's products remind them of home and that students particularly appreciate them during and after exams. This does not, however, provide an incentive to purchase that would classify their demand as inelastic. Though Sweet Mandy B's products are not easily substitutable due to the fact that there is only one direct competitor, students can spend their money on different things that will have the same effect on them.

However, families with children have a more inelastic demand for the products, as they are pressured by children to buy Sweet Mandy B's products, and have much more disposable income and purchasing power. The average income for these families is \$130,000, both parents have college degrees, and the family consists of at least one child under the age of 10. This suggests that it is more important to create a price incentive for the college student market buy more Sweet Mandy B's products, as

the current young family market segment would respond less to a decrease in price. Therefore, while we will look to attract new families with our

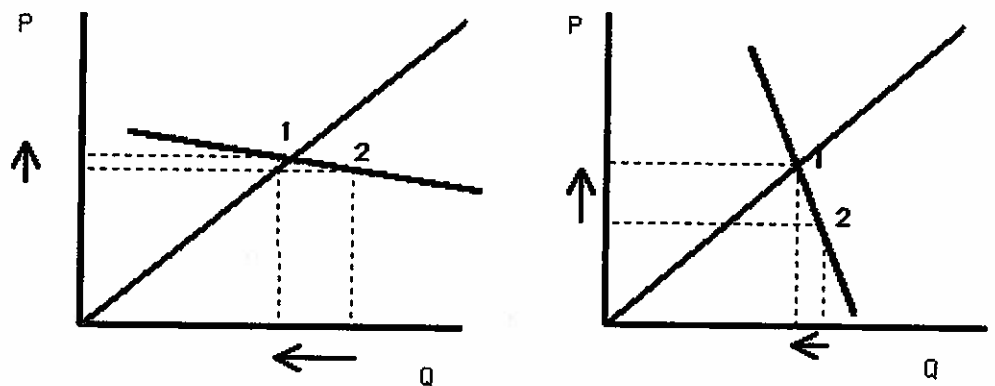


Figure 4 - Left: elastic demand of students. Change in price leads to large change in quantity demanded. Right: inelastic demand. Changes in price lead to small change in quantity demanded.

promotions, we will need to do this through differentiating our product.

We conclusively decided that Sweet Mandy B's products are considered "normal" goods economically to both of our target markets. This means that as consumer income increases, demand for Sweet Mandy B's products will also increase. Additionally, we have identified the dessert industry in Lincoln Park as an oligopoly. It consists of only 2 firms, and the fact that our marketing plan is in some ways a response to Molly's Cupcakes' successes in promotions demonstrates that decisions of competing firms are taken into account. This demonstrates a necessity to differentiate our products and advertise in order to command market share of both of our target markets. As income rises in the next few years due to an improved economy, we must ensure that the increase in demand for premium cupcakes leads to improved sales for Sweet Mandy B's.

b. Description of the current promotional activities

Our research revealed how Sweet Mandy B's makes use of the promotional mix:

Advertising – Bakery owner Cindy Levine has never used outside advertising for business since it opened in 2002. She does not have a website, does not use print or digital media (including

Figure 5 - Stained glass and pastel awnings line the storefront



newspaper advertisements, television ads, internet ads, and e-mail ads) of any sort to promote Sweet Mandy B's. Internal displays make up all of the advertising for the business. Sweet Mandy B's' storefront is decorated by a pastel colored entryway with awnings, a window with a stained glass cupcake, and window displays that sometimes feature seasonal products amidst a homely setting. Inside the store, posters and

woodcuts of children and animals with cupcakes and other treats decorate the walls. In a way, the decorated take-home menus, the Sweet Mandy B's labeled boxes and bags, the chalk-written seasonal specials, and the product display next to the register adds to the advertising, as it shows the consumer the products Sweet Mandy B's offers while staying in the fun dollhouse theme of the shop.

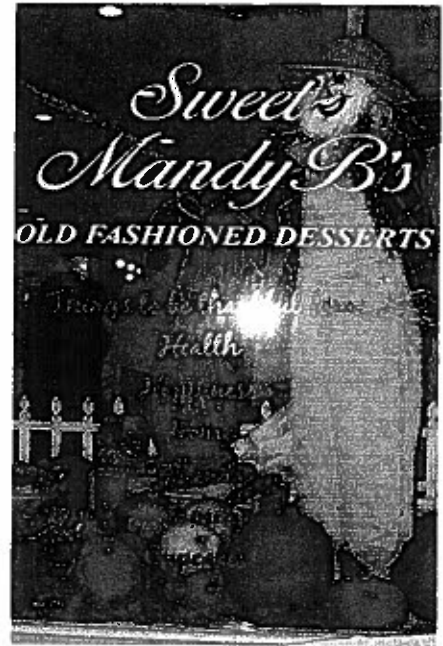


Figure 6 - Storefront display

Personal Selling – This is an important aspect of Sweet Mandy B's promotions. Customers are always greeted by the friendly staff, often by first name as many customers are regulars at the shop. The employees regularly mention new or seasonal flavors for cupcakes and other products, and ask if the customer wishes to purchase any.

Sales Promotion – Sweet Mandy B's does not make use of sales promotions. Coupons or rebates have not been created and there are no contests or sweepstakes involved.

Figure 8 - Small sample of the wide acclaim Sweet Mandy B's receives on online review websites

Public Relations/Word of Mouth – Sweet Mandy B's has not used paid public relations to promote their products. Non-paid marketing in terms of word of mouth promotion has been instrumental in building a customer base, especially among

the college student clientele. Reviews of Sweet Mandy B's are overwhelmingly positive, and raters on yelp.com proclaim that the shop offers "the best cupcakes in Chicago" and that the old-fashioned treats remind them of "grandma's baking." Many reviewers claim to have visited Sweet Mandy B's because of positive reviews on yelp.com or from their friends.

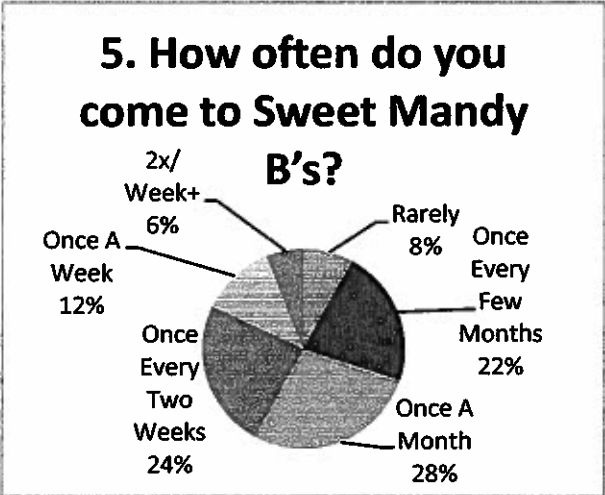
Direct Advertising – Sweet Mandy B's uses direct advertising to a small extent. To directly communicate to customers, they have decorated take-home menus, catering menus, and seasonal product menus available near the register. Sweet Mandy B's does not compile an e-mail or telephone directory for convenient direct advertising.

Figure 9 - Dessert menu



c. Effectiveness of the current promotional activities

Though they are limited, the promotional activities of Sweet Mandy B's so far have been effective in creating a strong customer base. The business incurs almost no fixed advertising expenses, and most of the promotions are through the attractive ambience of the business or through word of mouth. The store, despite not having any sort of website or social networking aid for itself, has been able to gain customers through the aid of online ratings sites and recommendations from others. A problem with the current promotional activities is that they seem to have plateaued. As most customers are regulars, according to the owner and an employee, it can be inferred that the customer base is fairly



static, a barrier to growth in the business. Additionally, Sweet Mandy B's no longer has total market share over the dessert market in Lincoln Park, as competitor Molly's Cupcakes is located

one mile away from Sweet Mandy B's, offers similar products, and markets to a similar clientele. Molly's Cupcakes makes use of additional marketing outlets, such as an interactive website with order information, menus, photo galleries, and press coverage/ratings.

d. Conclusions based on the findings

From our various forms of research, we concluded that Sweet Mandy B's needs to focus on technological and target market oriented promotional activities in order to broaden the consumer base and increase sales. The current marketing activities lack the breath necessary to command market share of the dessert industry in Lincoln Park. As household income rises as the recession comes to an end, the income effect will increase demand for desserts in general. In the oligopolistic Lincoln Park dessert market, it is necessary to differentiate our products in order to capture the increased sales that increased incomes will surely bring.

Owner Interview Findings: Cindy Levine, Founder and Owner

Key Findings:

- 9 years of experience in the dessert industry
- Expressed interest in Internet marketing and increased promotional activities, and ensured adequate current assets to pay for new programs
- "I named the shop after my children Mandy and Brian. Brian's name is the B"
- "I love the fact that I know almost all my customers because the vast majority regularly visit the shop. Still, the fact that we don't get new customers is a little troubling, because it shows that my business isn't growing like other businesses in Lincoln Park are anymore. For two years now my sales have been pretty constant."
- The target markets of students and young families account for about 75% of business
- Pioneering firm in dessert industry, but has lost market share to its main competitor, Molly's Cupcakes
- "Right now I don't really do any kind of advertising. I don't have a website and don't really do promotions."

Conclusions: Our interview with the owner of Sweet Mandy B's provided our team with insight regarding the lack of advertising efforts made by the business, and allowed us to analyze the business's problem in attracting new customers. In the past, Sweet Mandy B's possessed a

monopoly in the dessert industry in Lincoln Park, but the entry of competitive firms into the market has led to decreased market share. We feel that in order to attract more customers, marketing efforts are necessary. In the interview, several marketable aspects of Sweet Mandy B's history were revealed. For example, the fact that Sweet Mandy B's was named after the owner's kids provides a sense of sentimentality that provides a new dimension of competition. Additionally, the fact that Sweet Mandy B's has been established longer than any business of its kind in the Chicagoland area allows marketing on the dimension of history and originality. As a medium for these marketable aspects, we feel internet marketing is most viable.

Employee Interview Findings: Sales Associate Jenna, Baker Alex Bennett

Key Findings:

- "I would say I know most of the customers that stop by every day. Sometimes regular customers bring friends and their friends become regulars, but we don't get a lot new customers that come in by themselves" – Jenna
- The cost of the displays are extremely low. The decorations in the displays are bought at discount stores and are kept for reuse each year.
- "I tell Jenna and the others to always put the seasonal cupcakes and cookies on the first shelf so the customers can see them. Our customers already know all our year-round treats, but some of them don't know about the seasonal ones." – Alex
- The sales associates often carry conversations with the customers, usually just friendly small-talk. They possess relationships with most of their customers that make the customers comfortable. Customers often follow suggestions of the staff as to which seasonal products they should buy.
- "I could definitely handle running a Facebook page, and as long as Cindy lets us know when she's planning a new discount we'll all know how to manage them." - Jenna
- Jenna works part time and is a DePaul student who frequented the shop

Conclusions: Our interviews with Sweet Mandy B's staff members reasserted the finding that many of the business's customers were regular. We also learned that a potentially successful marketing technique lies in creating an incentive for current customers to bring in friends, as this would broaden the consumer base. We also learned that the business accrues no advertising expenses in its current state, so rather than adjust its marketing plan, we in fact only need to

create one. We learned that the staff seems confident they can both handle some online marketing tools and handle the promotions correctly.

Customer Interview Findings: Benita Anthony, Femia Lukose, Parker Stephenson, Marta Vukasin

+

Customer Survey Findings: 50 Collected Surveys

Key Findings:

- DePaul students, such as Femia and Parker, like to come buy cupcakes or cookies after exams. They both almost always take what she buys home, instead of eating in.
- “Usually I’ll come here with my kids after work and we’ll each eat a cupcake, but today I’m just picking up my order for my daughter’s birthday cake.” – Benita
- Marta is a freshman at DePaul and came to the shop with her friend Femia. She said that she was glad Femia introduced her to Sweet Mandy B’s and that she’ll probably come back if she’s walking by.
- All four interviewed customers said that they heavily used Facebook and the internet, and 96% of those surveyed said that they used Facebook.
- A majority of customers said they would find a Sweet Mandy B’s website, Facebook page, and order page useful.
- Survey data supported target market information, as well as customer retention information

Conclusions: The customer interviews and surveys revealed to us that the consumer base would respond affirmatively to online marketing tools and promotions. We also saw that the business was still able to grow due to word-of-mouth marketing of its consumer base. We feel that taking advantage of this through incentives to bring in new customers will benefit Sweet Mandy B’s.

Competitor Interview: John Nicolades – Founder and Baker at Molly’s Cupcakes

Key Findings:

- Opened up for business approximately 3 years after Sweet Mandy B’s did.
- Shop is named for John’s grade school teacher who always baked cupcakes for students’ birthdays, and this is featured on their website.
- The firm is proud to be socially responsible by donating a percentage of their sales to local schools.
- “The website is useful to manage catering orders and I think the gallery of cool products Molly’s offers is a big reason people stop by. The pictures show that our cupcakes aren’t just everyday cupcakes you can buy at Jewel. They’re special and one of a kind, and our customers get that.”

Conclusions: By looking at the marketing model of Molly's, we were given an example as to what worked in marketing premium baked goods, and why it worked. What we found particularly important in our conversation with John was the fact that he believed that the website gallery allowed his business to differentiate its products from other competitors. In an oligopolistic market, product differentiation is key, and it is absolutely essential for Sweet Mandy B's to demonstrate why its products are unique, desirable, and superior in order to increase sales and strengthen the consumer base. We also saw a potential in cause-marketing, as John believes that the fact that his business gives back to the community grants goodwill.

Secondary Research Findings

-Research Databases, Review Sites, Textbooks, Social Media/Internet Marketing Articles-

Key Findings:

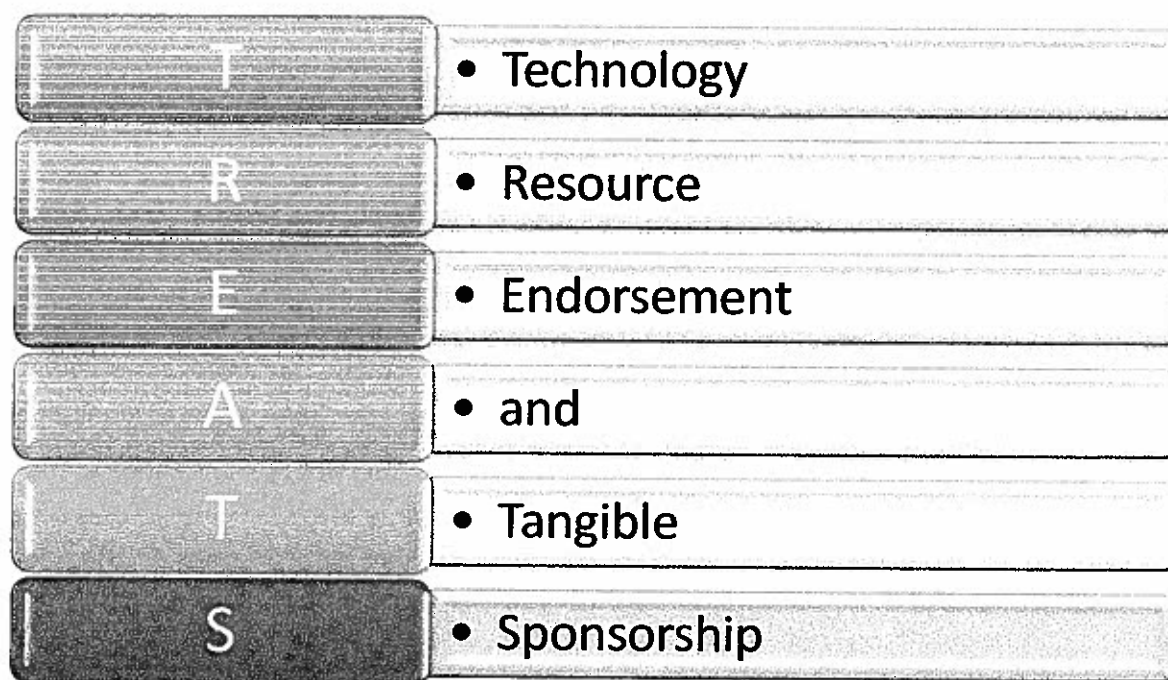
- Internet marketing for retail firms is usually cost efficient and increases sales
- Online order pages for in-store pickup result in effortless sales. They require a single startup cost and lack any maintenance expenses
- Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are extremely low cost, and for most businesses, provide returns on investments higher than 500%
- Cause-based marketing provides customer support and goodwill for businesses, people are more likely to buy higher priced goods if a charity is involved in some way
- If a price promotion is exclusive to a group with a high elasticity of demand, then the responsiveness of that group to the promotion will be high
- In dealing with groups with inelastic demands by price, other dimensions of competition must come into play
- Review websites such as Yelp.com have very high followings and sway many customers into visiting shops
- Niche market review sites such as Cupcake Fetish are powerful in comparing similar firms and choosing the best of the bunch

Conclusions: While conducting secondary research, we gained information regarding the relative success and cost efficiency of technological marketing tools across all industries, as well as the marketability of cause affiliations. Additionally, we feel that Sweet Mandy B's high ratings on general and niche review websites should be emphasized to consumers and that the potentially high returns on investments of social network marketing is attainable for Sweet Mandy B's. The

research also demonstrated that it would be more allocatively efficient to focus discount promotions to college students with elastic demands, while the young family target market must be convinced of the differentiability and superior quality of Sweet Mandy B's products.

V. Proposed Strategic Plan – Operation T.R.E.A.T.S

Marketing Strategies: In order to launch and promote Sweet Mandy B's, we have devised a full marketing plan, named Operation T.R.E.A.T.S:



Operation T.R.E.A.T.S will ensure the effective use of both technological resources, such as the creation of a website, Facebook page, Twitter page, Groupon, and e-mail list of customers to communicate promotional events, as well as make use of real-world sponsorships with DePaul University and Lincoln Park to maintain our community driven image in the local sector.

Promotional Mix: We are implementing a full-fledged marketing operation in order to increase sales and strengthen the consumer base. We have defined the marketing mix (4 P's) for our business as the following:

1. **Product:** Sweet Mandy B's highly diversified product line will create demand within the American dessert industry. The nostalgia associated with our products will be especially important for people who have recently left their families, such as young parents and college students. Our marketing plan will focus on emphasizing differentiation, as we feel that product distinction is the main factor in young families' choices between firms.
2. **Place:** The location of Sweet Mandy B's in an economically diverse sector, as well as its proximity to public transit, is a large asset. Additionally, Sweet Mandy B's is located near upscale residential neighborhoods and DePaul residence halls. Mandy B's already attracts walking and automotive traffic due to attractive signage and interior décor. Our marketing plan is focused on attracting consumers within Lincoln Park.
3. **Price:** Sweet Mandy B's pricing reflects a typical upscale bakery. We feel the pricing structure has resulted in a greatly reduced quantity demanded in the student market. By decreasing the prices of our products for students through promotions, while maintaining normal prices for families and other groups, we hope to increase total profit and consumer base. This promotional system (minute price discrimination) is ideal for our profit maximizing bakery firm, as products are not easily resold, and our target markets remain largely separate. In order to utilize the market, we must offer discounted prices (at least periodically) to students to increase quantity demanded and the perceived value of our products by this market over time.
4. **Promotion:** We hope to make use of technological marketing tools, as well as establish relationships with Lincoln Park and DePaul facilities. Operation T.R.E.A.T.S revolutionizes the method of promoting our business by relying largely on internet marketing on social networking websites, our own website, and direct marketing e-mail lists. Additionally, we hope to advertise around DePaul's campus by providing Blue Demon memorabilia, student discounted pricing, and making use of the school newspaper to advertise in. This would establish a healthy relationship with the university and its student body that would popularize our business through the institution. This is important because new students come to and leave DePaul each year. This means that promotions must be strong each year to attract and retain student customers. Additionally, seasonal specials, emphasis on sentimental values, and cutting edge innovation in technology will help our business stand out in the face of the competition. We hope to perform two types of specific promotions in order to maximize producer surplus. The first is price promotions and will be mainly targeted towards college students. The purpose of this is to take advantage of the elastic demands college students hold for American desserts, as decreasing the price will lead to a greater consumer response to our product. The other is differentiation marketing, and will target the young families who comprise the other section of our target market. The main goal of this is to convince local consumers that Sweet Mandy B's desserts are unique and of higher quality than competing firms. The entire promotional campaign of operation T.R.E.A.T.S is included in detail in this section.

Website: (Top-home page, green tiles=press tab, webcam=cam tab, bottom right=welcome page)

MENU

CUPCAKES • MORE TREATS • ORDERING • OUR MISSION • PHOTO GALLERY • PRESS • CAN

Welcome to Sweet Mandy B's

I began my baking career in my home kitchen, baking cupcakes and other desserts for my two children, Mandy and Brian. After encouragement from my family and friends, I decided to open an old-fashioned dessert shop in the heart of Lincoln Park. Named after my children, Sweet Mandy B's has become a well-known staple in the Lincoln Park Community.

Our mission is to put smiles on the face of children throughout the community. We donate cupcakes to the Children's Memorial Hospital, as well as various activities throughout the community.

Candice Levine
FOUNDER

Instagram Facebook Twitter

www.GrandmaJunkies.com/like list

LOCATION
1260 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago

BAKERY HOURS
MONDAY: 12:00pm - 10:00pm | TUESDAY - THURSDAY: 8:00am - 10:00pm
FRIDAY - SATURDAY: 8:00am - 12:00am | SUNDAY: 8:00am - 10:00pm

CONTACT
TELEPHONE: (773) 341-1171
EMAIL: us

Live Bakery Webcam

Webcam Loading...

Webcam: Curious about what's going on behind the scenes at Sweet Mandy B's? Check out our webcam! You can see our entire kitchen, and you can watch our bakers do everything from rolling dough to putting frosting on cakes. Enjoy!

Where to Buy

Figure 7- Top: home page, Green Tiles: press tab, Webcam: "cam" tab, Bottom Right: welcome page

Facebook and Twitter Pages:

The image shows two social media pages. The top page is a Facebook page for 'Sweet Mandy B's'. It features a cupcake profile picture, a cover photo, and several posts. The posts include a 'Grand Opening Kickoff' announcement with a coupon link, a post about 'CUPCAKE WARS?' with a photo of a game board, and a post about donating a cupcake to a hospital. The bottom page is a Twitter page for 'SweetMandyBs'. It features a cupcake profile picture, a cover photo, and two tweets. The first tweet promotes a 25% discount for a weekend. The second tweet promotes a 'buy one get one free' offer for cupcakes. The footer of the Twitter page includes copyright information for 2011 and various social media icons.

i. Goals

Short Term Goals	
Goal	Rationale
Launching Facebook Page, Twitter, Website	So all future promotions are implemented, business is able to make use of a promotional medium it has not used before
Notify customers of online resources for Sweet Mandy B's	So consumer base is aware of new marketing tools and begin to use them

Organize method in which promotions will be processed	To ensure efficiency in staff handling of the new online tools and to be able to assign relevant tasks to each employee
Train employees in using online resources	To ensure efficiency in staff handling and to ensure that staff is able to answer consumers' questions regarding the tools
See a 40% R.O.I within 6 months of the promotion's initiation	To ensure that the changes made are working and that the tools were a good investment for Sweet Mandy B's

ii. Long Term

Long Term Goals	
Goal	Rationale
Improve sales	After appealing to both price-elastic and price-inelastic groups, we hope to minimize lost revenues accrued from current customers who take advantage of price promotions, therefore, generating economic consumer surplus. Improved sales through promotional dual pricing and non-price marketing would maximize producer surplus and minimize opportunity costs.
Develop a strengthened consumer base	The price promotions should attract a wider group of students, while our non-price promotions should attract more young families.
Have customers become accustomed to online resources	In order for promotions to be successful through a large customer base that regularly uses the developed tools
Develop further name recognition	To have an established name for further enterprise growth, to be well known among locals, to be more recognized for both our products and prices than our competitors are.
Simplify the ordering process through online order/in-store pickups	To encourage additional sales and reduce congestion in the store. These additional sales will increase
Simplifying the catering process	To encourage difficult orders to be processed through a standardized online form, freeing time for employees

Expand product flavor line	Attract more customers, consistently offer new products, demonstrate dynamic nature
Make use of social responsibility marketing (sponsoring a charity)	Demonstrate empathy for a cause, encourage sales through social awareness and allowing people to help the cause through purchasing our products
Further involve the business in the community and educational institutions	To ensure a healthy relationship between the city, locals, DePaul University so that new residents and students are immediately familiar with Sweet Mandy B's
Gain the capital necessary to open a second location	To be able to expand the enterprise, sales, product line, target market, capacity
See 100% R.O.I within 16 months of the promotion's initiation	To ensure that the changes made are still working, that the tools were a good investment for Sweet Mandy B's and should be kept

b. Proposed activities and timelines

As the overwhelming majority of the target market makes use of social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter, these tools are instrumental in expanding Sweet Mandy B's as a promotional presence. Additionally, the fact that there is no website for Sweet Mandy B's and that competitors have been able to make use of websites to promote their business prompts the creation of our own. These technological tools will be the main outlets of promotion for Sweet Mandy B's, and are the backbone of Operation T.R.E.A.T.S. The specific promotions and timelines, divided by medium of technology, are as follows:

Technology Resource Endorsements (Website, Facebook, Twitter) – Eternal Time Frame		
Activity	Description	Purpose
1. Story of Sweet Mandy B's	History and profile of Cindy, Mandy, and Brian Levine	Improve community ties, give a face to operations
2. Compile e-mail list to send coupons	Compile direct marketing database	Build customer loyalty, direct marketing outlet

3. Links to coupons	Online promotions	Improve sales
4. Cupcake Wars - Facebook Application	Interactive game, cupcake contest	Interactivity, contest will attract attention
5. Send a Premium Sweet Mandy B's Cupcake to friends on Facebook	Cupcake Wars Facebook App will allow users to send a \$1 digital cupcake to friends. By doing so, a cupcake will be sent to Children's Memorial Hospital.	Social responsibility marketing will attract more customers, promotes word of mouth, boosts reputation of firm
6. Online Order Page	Allows customers to make a small order to be picked up in stores through an online form	Increase accessibility and revenue
7. Critic Features from select online review sites	Share professional opinions and posting positive critic and user reviews	Build credibility, improves reputation, demonstrate customer satisfaction
8. Live Webcam	Look into our bakery	Cool feature, build attention
9. Digital Menu/Gallery	Digital product info	Easy accessibility
10. Online Order Page	Online sales	Improve sales
11. Groupon	Lifestyle promotional tool	Low cost access to target markets

Tangible Sponsorships (DePaul University, Lincoln Park) –Eternal Time Frame

Activity	Description	Purpose
1. Bulletin Board in local businesses	Make use of local advertising, advertise products(not price), and Children's Memorial Hosp. link	Improve visibility, access target markets directly
2. Advertising in "The DePaulia" and Radio DePaul	Make use of monthly low cost, highly patroned media, advertise promotions to encourage students	Access target market directly

3. Blue Demon Wednesday for DePaul Students on DePaul themed cakes	Once a quarter discount on DePaul themed cupcakes	Special discounts for students, incentive product and pricing
4. Formal Donations Benefitting Children's Memorial Hospital	Collect donations. For every \$1, we donate 1 cupcake to the kids,	demonstrate values, social responsibility, dedication to fulfilling mission
5. Apply to compete in Food Network's "Cupcake Wars"	Compete against other premium bakeries for \$10,000 prize, which would be donated to Children's Memorial Hospital	National coverage, marketable event, social responsibility marketing, easily promoted online
6. Apply for a TLC show	Day to day show featuring operations of our bakery	National fame, extremely marketable, wide audience

Specific Promotional Events

Name of Promotion	Description	Purpose	Time Span
Bring a Friend Day Coupon	Customers who bring a friend to Sweet Mandy B's will get buy one get one free cupcake.	Increases word of mouth marketing and improve consumer base	First Saturday of each month
Mandy and Brian Day	Half-off cupcakes to honor the birthdays of Cindy Levine's children	Targets families, boosts reputation	March 8, Sept 17
Valentine's Day Special Coupon	25% off Seasonal item	Holiday ads	Week before
Mother's Day Special Coupon	25% off Seasonal item	Holiday ads	Week before
4 th of July Special	25% off Seasonal item	Holiday ads	Week before
Halloween Dress-Ups	Free seasonal treat to a anyone dressed up	Will increase traffic, targets young families	Oct 31
Thanksgiving Special Coupon	25% off Seasonal item	Holiday ads	Week before

Countdown to Christmas Coupon	Daily seasonal specials at 25% off for Christmas.	Promote seasonal products	Dec 17 - 25
Kids Eat Half Off Day Coupons	Discount for dine-in families	Target young family market	Third Saturday of each month
"Checking In" and "Tweeting" Discounts	iPhone and iPod Touch that use the "Checking In" feature on the Facebook Application at Sweet Mandy B's or tweeting "@ Sweet Mandy B's" will get a buy one get one free cupcake	Increase traffic on certain days, word of mouth marketing through Facebook wall posts and news feeds	Once a Month
Bring Your Entire Family In Day	Families that come in together and eat in the shop will get a 25% discount on their purchase	Targets family market, advantage to eating is an appeal to impulse purchases	Once every Season
Make Your Own Cupcake Contest	User submitted cupcake flavors (from the Cupcake Application) will be judged by employees, winner will be announced and honored with \$50 and 12 free cupcakes, cupcake will be added to menu	Will encourage curiosity in business, diversify flavors, interactive activity with community	Once Every Six Months
*Note: Customers may bring in coupons received as Tweets as equivalent to print-out coupons.			

C. Proposed budget

Realistic Marketing Budget: After calculating the first year's marketing expense for Sweet Mandy B's to be \$9,400, we called Cindy Levine and summarized our proposed strategic plan and price. She commented that our marketing plan was in her ballpark estimate of what she wanted to spend on advertising, and agreed that the specialized marketing for each target market reduced waste and reduced unearned income due to promotions. We sent her a copy of our final project for her to use in implementing marketing programs in order for her to meet her goals.

Advertising Expenses (Economic and Accounting)

Sign, Furnishing, Menus, Displays	• \$15,000 (currently held assets, no additional purchases will be made)
Website Development/Maintainance	• \$3,000 startup, \$50-100/month (graphics/applications)
Social Media Maintainance	• \$0 startup, \$50-100/month (promotions/graphics/applications)
E-Mail Direct Marketing	• \$0/month (cost reflects current cost of employees, so no additional expense is accrued)
Print/Tangible Promotional Tools	• \$250/month, \$400/month in November and December
Social Awareness	• \$100/month, \$200/month in December
Decreased Revenues	• \$300-500/month depending on promotions (as an opportunity cost, not included in accounting records) We expect that after about three months, these decreased revenues will be made up by new sales
Total Marketing Costs	• Advertising Expenses for 1st Year (includes Website Development/Maintainance, Social Media Maintainance, Tangible Promotional Tools, Cost of Donated Cupcakes to Hospital = \$9,400 (\$6,400 for each additional year)

D. Proposed metrics to measure R.O.I, sales, customers, traffic

In order to track the success of Operation T.R.E.A.T.S, we will measure how many Facebook fans, Twitter followers, and website visitors we have at any given moment. Further measurements include compiling data on how many orders were placed online, and the popularity of applications. For individual promotional events, the number of coupons received, and the number of people involved in contests can be measured exactly. Changes in monthly sales from their historical averages should be tracked. Additionally, general responsiveness to promotions, general increases in traffic, and relative newness of clientele will be noted by employees. For more precise feedback, we suggest that Sweet Mandy B's asks customers, Facebook fans, Twitter followers, website visitors, and those on the e-mail list to fill out a short

survey regarding their uses of marketing tools promotions, and whether or not the promotions played a role in their purchasing products from Sweet Mandy B's. After analysis of these surveys over several months, adjustments to T.R.E.A.T.S should be made.

In order to measure the return on investment, gross income before the promotions should be subtracted from gross incomes after the promotions, and the average quantity of income growth from the last three accounting cycles should be subtracted from the difference. This number roughly represents the marginal growth of Sweet Mandy B's sales as a result of the promotions.

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VI. Appendix

Customer Survey:

1. Are you a Facebook user? Y/N
2. Would you find it helpful to have a Sweet Mandy B's facebook page? Y/N
3. Would you find it helpful to have a Sweet Mandy B's website? Y/N
4. Would you order online? Y/N
5. How often do you visit Sweet Mandy B's? Rarely/Once every few months/ Once a month/Once every 2 weeks/Once a week/More than once a week
6. Choose which best describes you DePaul Student/Other Student/Lincoln Park Resident/Lincoln Park Worker/Other

E-Mail from Cindy Levine (cindylevine1131@gmail.com)

Dear Roshan, Susan, and Hiteshree,

I'm so thankful for your efforts in analyzing my business's marketing situation and making amazing suggestions for me to use to help my business grow.

It is not everyday that one is fortunate enough to come about three students who are so dedicated, talented, and creative. Not only was I excited to work with you on promoting my business, but I was amazed by your professionalism and evident background knowledge in economics and marketing. Before this experience, I never even knew what price elasticity meant, but now it's my new secret weapon!

While I thought that all of your analysis and suggestions were fabulous, I would especially like to thank you for your ideas to implement different promotions for different groups. Not only will this save me money, but it will help me communicate directly to the groups that provide the backbone of my business. I also *love* the idea of having a webcam in the bakery and working with Children's Memorial. I started baking because I loved to see my kids smile, and putting smiles on the faces of kids in the hospital will be a great experience. I will be meeting with a website developer in February and plan on bringing your research paper along with me, because I want to use almost all of your ideas. The ideas you gave me about using Facebook and Twitter are some of the most innovative, trendy, and (best of all) *affordable* I've seen! I can't wait to get T.R.E.A.T.S (love the acronym by the way) up and running!

Thank you again, and stop by the shop anytime!

Cindy Levine
Owner of Sweet Mandy B's

P.S If I ever make it onto the Food Network or get a TLC show, I'll owe it all to you!



Figure 8 - The two of us enjoying Sweet Mandy B's cupcakes with friends