ASHESI UNIVERSITY

A MARKETING PLAN FOR GRACEFUL GARDENS EVENTS CENTER.

An Undergraduate Applied Project Report submitted to the Department of Business

Administration, Ashesi University in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award

of Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration.

B.Sc. Business Administration

by

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MARKETING PLAN FOR GRACEFUL GARDENS

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Applied Project Report is the result of my own original work, and no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: ....

Candidate's Name: Naa Lamiley Adjoa Yaba Mills

Date: ....

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this Applied Project were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on the supervision of Applied Project laid down by Ashesi University.

Supervisor's Signature: ....

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Date: ....

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Graceful Gardens Event Center is a garden event center in Tema, run and owned by a sole proprietress, Ms. Esther Adjei. Graceful Gardens offers its garden space to clients throughout Tema and beyond, for social and recreational events.

Ms. Adjei has been running the center for five years and desires to grow her business by generating additional revenue, promoting her business and increasing her client base. This project, with the aid of a need's assessment, validated the stated problem and the data indicated that Ms. Adjei possessed, but failed to properly utilize the skill and resources necessary to merit an increase in her revenue and client base. Thus, this project devises a solution for Ms. Adjei to effectively optimize her skill and resources to generate increased revenue and a larger client base.

Available literature revealed marketing frameworks and models, as well as success factors that have been effective in solving similar problems in the industry. The findings aided in the development of a marketing plan, modeled by the service marketing mix framework whereby strategies for each of the 7 P's under the framework were proposed to redesign product offerings as well as improve processes, pricing strategies and promotional efforts towards increasing revenue and client base.

An implementation plan was included to serve as a guide on how best to use this solution to achieve optimal results. Some recommendations were made on financial planning and upscaling options available to Ms. Adjei that could be implemented to further achieve her goals and objectives.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

The events industry has gradually become a lucrative business in Ghana and all over the world. The need for events spaces in Ghana has risen as more people like to celebrate events in grand style, making events centers more desirable to individuals (Tannor, 2019). The purpose of this project is to determine how the owner of an events center in Tema can find multiple sources of revenue by optimizing her space as well as create and maintain a strong client base using effective marketing techniques. This will be done by drawing up a marketing plan best suitable for the owner and comprehensive enough to use and understand. This chapter of the project gives a brief company profile and an overview of the external industry within which the business operates with the aid of a Porter's Five Forces and a PESTEL analysis. The chapter also covers an evaluation of the company using a SWOT analysis.

1.2 Company Profile

Graceful Gardens Events Center is owned and run by a sole proprietor, Ms. Esther Adjei, in Community ten, Tema. The owner, who also runs a freelance landscaping business, started five years ago by giving her garden space out to friends and family to host events because of its aesthetic ambiance. Guests of friends and family subsequently expressed interest in hosting their events at her garden, and the idea to start up Graceful Gardens Events Center was conceived. Since the center is currently only a garden space, the business requires minimal logistics and employees and, thus, only employs gardeners to maintain the garden and two caretakers to look after the garden. In addition to leasing out her space, the Graceful Gardens owner includes security and sanitary packages.

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Clients are given the option to be provided security personnel during their events. The

package also includes obtaining mobile washrooms to save clients the hassle of having to

do so themselves, which reduces the inconvenience.

1.2.1 Mission and Vision Statements (Goals and Objectives)

Though the owner does not have any documented goals and objectives, insights

from the need's assessment revealed that there are plans of opening a second events

center garden. She also desires to keep the business small but profitable. Even though she

would like her business to be profitable and desires to take full advantage of her

resources and potential, she would also prefer that she ran her business as a sole

proprietor in order to enjoy the associated benefits such as freedom to manage the

business as she chooses and ease in making decisions.

1.2.2 Core Activities and Services

The owner of Graceful Gardens wishes to serve the general public, specifically

individuals living in Tema who are looking for a garden space to host events. Currently,

the garden space has limited service offerings and is only used for events. These events

include a wide range of parties, weddings, wedding receptions, engagements,

photoshoots, amongst others. The owner has stated that the garden is meant for

recreational activities and therefore does not host funeral events at her garden. Security

personnel and mobile washrooms are included as part of the services as well as cleaners

on duty to manage the washrooms during events. The owner has a booking and

cancellation policy where down payments are made upon booking and penalties of a

certain percentage of the booking fee are paid, depending on the date of cancellation and

its proximity to the booked date. The garden owner, being an expert in landscape and

gardening, purchases most of the plants and flowers in her garden and oversees the manicuring and tendering of the garden, with the help of two workers.

1.3 Motivation and Relevance of Project

Initial conversations with the business owner showed that one of her main concerns was the constant cancellation of bookings made by clients after subsequent booking requests for the same date had been declined. This meant that she lost out on revenue that she could have made from other booking requests. Her solution to this was to demand initial deposits and place a cancellation fee on them to avoid losses. From this problem, however, it was realized that the owner was concentrating solely on leasing out her garden space as a means of income from her garden where there could be several, considering her skillset and resources. Apart from this, the garden did not have as much exposure as it should have and had a smaller client base than the owner desired.

Furthermore, some other infrastructural problems and operational processes that caused potential clients to decline the use of the venue such as the use of mobile washrooms and the restriction on the time that events could exceed were identified. After these problems were discussed, the proposed solution was to identify solutions on how the owner could effectively combine all available resources to develop her space and optimize its use to generate multiple sources of income as well as create and maintain a healthy client base.

Graceful Gardens has a lot of potential to become one of the top events centers in Tema, provided it applies the right tools and techniques to its existing resources. Having a beautiful space only has proven to not be the best way to guarantee attracting customers. Working on this project then presents the opportunity to apply marketing and

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research skills to help a small business owner improve her business significantly by leveraging on simple and inexpensive marketing models and tools. There is a lot more potential for the business to grow and generate more revenue as is desired by the business owner.

The project also serves as an opportunity for the researcher to use the experience as a means of exploring the hospitality industry with hopes of using the information gathered and lessons learned to improve business for the Graceful Gardens owner as well as impact the industry as a whole while also entering into it as an entrepreneur. Another motivating factor behind working on the project is the opportunity it gives to effectively combine three different career interests, marketing, operations management, and events management, by building on and applying skills and knowledge already gathered in the fields in order to gain some expertise. The project also presents the opportunity to develop problem-solving, research, analytical, and critical thinking skills which are essential in a career that involves management or marketing.

1.4 External and Internal Analysis

To perform an internal and external analysis of Graceful Gardens events center, the SWOT analysis, PESTEL analysis, and Porter's Five Forces models were adopted. The purpose of conducting these assessments using these tools is to effectively determine all the factors that impact and affect the company, the industry and the country in which the business operates.

1.4.1 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis model is an analytical framework and business planning tool used by organizations and companies to examine their strengths, weaknesses,

opportunities, and threats in order to identify relevant factors that affect the company for

strategic management and planning (Pickton & Wright, 1998). Thus, it will be used in

this chapter to examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that

significantly affect Graceful Gardens Events Center.

Strengths

Ambiance

- The garden is spacious and possesses good aesthetic ambiance since there are

  many plants and flowers. This makes it easier to decorate than indoor venues

  since it is already decorated with flowers and will reduce decoration costs. This

  feature also makes the ambiance great for pictures and floral events, which makes

  it desired for clients that may look out for such factors.

Location

- The location of the center is convenient and easy to locate as it is close to well-

  known landmarks in its community and is located beside a major street in the

  community.

Capacity

- The garden can currently take a maximum of 300 guests which is ideal for a

  garden events center and for most clients.

Weaknesses

Facilities

- The garden currently has no washrooms, and as a result, the owner hires portable

  washrooms for guests during events. This may not be an attractive feature to

  many clients as such washrooms are considered uncomfortable and inconvenient.

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Weather conditions

- The garden only provides an outdoors option thus exposing it to harsh weather conditions like extreme heat and sunlight or rainfall. Therefore, in the event of unforeseen circumstances such as rain, events may be ruined, and clients may not consider the center for future events.

<div align="center">Opportunities</div>

Proximity to clientele

- The garden is situated in a city that holds opportunities for many events because of proximity to a large client base. Tema is one of Ghana's urban cities where all types of events are hosted often and therefore creates a large market for events centers.

- The launch of the campaigns such as the 2019 Year of Return campaign by the Ghanaian president serve as opportunities for Graceful Gardens to capture both local and foreign clients as there will be several events being hosted throughout the year, especially during the Christmas season.

- Recently, there has been a trend for events out of homes as this gives them more privacy, and this serves as an opportunity for Graceful Gardens to attract such clients.

Means of advertisement

- Currently, social media is one of the most effective tools to advertise events centers. This is a great opportunity because social media is a cheaper alternative to many other forms of marketing.

- Events centers are also made known by word of mouth and experience.

  Considering the large number of guests that one event would have, it is a great

  and inexpensive way to attract new clients.

Flexibility and room for change

- The nature of the business allows flexibility and room for change. The business

  owner can decide to expand her space and make modifications and improvements

  to it gradually as well as include more services to her current offering.

Threats

Competition

- Tema is the other major city to the capital of Ghana where events are hosted

  often, and as a result, many entrepreneurs have used the opportunity to set up

  events centers thus creating huge competition. There are also several hotels

  available as alternatives to events centers. This increases competition for Graceful

  Gardens because of the absence of the option for an indoor facility and giving

  events companies that have indoor facilities an added advantage.

Decreasing standards of living

- The decreasing standards of living make holding events, especially outside of

  one's home difficult or undesirable. As a result of this, Graceful Gardens may

  lose out on clients who may have been willing to host any events.

Uncertainty of events

- The hosting of events is highly dependent on several socio-economic factors. As

  national or international crises occur, fewer people would be willing to patronize

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an events center. Demand for events centers is low only on occasions and seasons

that are favorable and conducive.

Table 1

Summary of SWOT Analysis

Strengths	*Weaknesses*
• The garden's flowers and plants give the venue a good ambiance. • Easy to locate because of proximity to major landmarks.	• Lack of washroom facilities. • The absence of an indoor facility exposes clients to harsh weather conditions and other unfavorable factors.
Opportunities	*Threats*
• Proximity to clientele. • The year of return campaign increases business opportunities for Graceful Gardens.	• Proximity to competition. • Decreasing standards of living lowering the ability of individuals to host events.

1.4.2 Porters Five Forces Model

This model is used in analyzing competitive factors and how their actions affect a

business. It identifies potential threats to a business and the extent to which these threats

influence business success (Martin, 2018). The model comprises five different categories,

which will be used to analyze the competitive forces affecting the operations and success

of Graceful Gardens Events Center.

Threat of New Entrants

The potential entrants into the hospitality industry are many, ranging from

sprouting hotels to the use of convenient spaces owned by individuals (Spacey, 2019).

Some of these threats may offer additional services or facilities such as indoor facilities

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or full events management and catering packages from the hotels. Businesses or freelancers that are into events management also have the potential of scaling up and including the option of an events center to their services. Again, because this is a garden center, anyone looking to raise revenue with an available garden space or lawn could also easily rent it out for events and potentially turn it into a business. Because of the few existing barriers to entry, the business needs to constantly work at attracting and maintaining customers to prevent its market share from depleting rapidly as a response to the entry of new centers and to prevent its profits from being competed away by new businesses entering the market.

Bargaining Power of Customers (Buyers)

As Graceful Gardens exists in a competitive market, clients hold great bargaining power, which means that measures need to be implemented to win clients over. The bargaining power of Graceful Gardens' clients influences its pricing strategies and sees that its service is attractively and fairly priced to attract a large client base in a competitive market. Potential clients for an events center would be anyone looking to host an event, which covers a wide range of people and events.

Competitive Rivalry

Competitive rivals to Graceful Gardens include other garden events centers in Tema or Accra that may have similar pricing strategies and features. Events companies that provide added services such as logistics, décor, and catering also have a great advantage and therefore become competitive rivals. Identifying these rivals would enable Graceful gardens to plan out ways to significantly differentiate itself in ways that cannot be emulated in order to maintain and increase its customer base. One such competitor is

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Unique Floral Gardens, also located in Tema, which has a bigger space, an indoor facility, and provides additional services including décor and thus becomes one of Graceful Gardens' biggest competitors (Ahenpon, 2016).

Bargaining Power of Suppliers

Graceful Gardens requires minimal logistics and therefore has few contracted suppliers. Its only suppliers are plants and garden equipment suppliers, agencies that provide security personnel as well as the suppliers of mobile washrooms for events. The garden equipment and plants are, however, not frequently purchased until cases of damages arise or the business owner decides to make major modifications to the garden. If the availability of these suppliers is low, they are given high bargaining power, which means that if they raise prices or reduce the quality of their supplies, the business will have to suffer those consequences. Because the business currently relies on a few contracted suppliers, these suppliers have some power with regards to their delivery and quality. However, there are several other reliable suppliers on the market, leaving these contracted suppliers with no price control at all.

Threat of Substitutes

One of Graceful Gardens' greatest threat of substitutes is events centers with both indoor and outdoor facilities. This is because, for many reasons, clients would go with the option of an indoor facility. Some may prefer to be able to escape the sun and regulate the temperature with indoor cooling systems such as air conditions or escape bugs and insects that are found in gardens. Other substitutes include hotels, guest houses, and clients' own homes where they may find most convenient if they have the necessary space required. Hotels are great substitutes because they give convenience by including

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logistics and catering in their services, reducing the number of vendors a client would

have to deal with.

1.4.3 External Industry Overview and Analysis - PESTEL Analysis

The PESTEL analysis is a strategic tool used to evaluate the effect of political,

economic, socio-cultural, technological, environmental, and legal factors that can

potentially influence a business or project (Rastogi & Trivedi, 2016). The purpose of

conducting a PESTEL analysis for Graceful Gardens is to identify and analyze the

various factors that can affect the business' operations or its performance.

Political Analysis

Ghana is considered a politically stable and generally peaceful country. This

creates a safe and preferable avenue for business to occur and run smoothly with no

political crises interfering (GIPC, 2019). In a stable political environment, there are more

likely to exist business-friendly decisions made by the government to promote local

businesses and attract foreign investment (Williams, 2016). Thus, political stability is

necessary for Graceful Gardens to be able to attract both local and foreign markets as

well as thrive in an environment where it can maintain stable relationships with both

clients and suppliers to support the business. However, in the event of governmental

feuds, the safety of most communities in the country might be compromised, thus for

safety reasons, fewer people will be inclined to organize events during such a period.

Consequently, this will cause a negative impact on the industry as there will be a decline

in people to organize or hold events that would directly affect Graceful Gardens. Tax

policies in the country can also affect Value Added Tax (VAT) on the purchase of goods

as well as prices of fuel for lawnmowers, for example, and therefore affect how Graceful

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Gardens would potentially price the use of its space in order to make maximum profits.

As taxes increase, the increase in costs will need to be supplemented with a reasonable

increase in prices and fees to ensure that the business maintains a stable profit margin

(Williams, 2019).

Economic Analysis

Ghana's economy grew by 6.9% in 2019, and inflation rates reduced from 9.84%

in 2018 to 7.21% in 2019 indicating improvement (Trading Economics, 2020). Economic

factors such as the inflation rate and economic growth rate of a country are likely to

affect a business's costs and prices (Bush, 2016). For an events center like Graceful

Gardens, where the major costs incurred are the maintenance of the garden and the wages

given to security and maintenance personnel, increased inflation affects prices of these

cost factors, which then influences the price structure of the center. Again, depending on

the state of a country's economy, hosting events becomes a luxury due to the decrease in

disposable income. Likewise, if there is a generally good performance of the economy,

the likelihood that more people would be able to host events would be higher. Focus

Economics (2019) projects economic growth in Ghana in the year 2020 by 6.1% and

forecasts healthy consumption as inflation is predicted to be stable in the coming year.

This forecast is an advantage to Graceful Gardens since it implies that costs will be

relatively stable, and consumers will have the capacity to patronize the garden's services.

Socio-cultural Analysis

Ghana's rich culture, with its different ethnic groups, often celebrates traditional

ceremonies in grand style. As a result of this, there are usually several events hosted,

especially on the weekends, because most Ghanaians work on weekdays, which means

that Ghana creates opportunities for good business for events centers like Graceful

Gardens (Easy Track Ghana, 2019). Ghana's culture is also changing such that fewer

people prefer to hold events at their homes but rather use external venues. There is also a

growing trend of having events like weddings outside of churches and at external

locations like gardens (Tannor, 2019). Ghana's growing population (NPC, 2018) and an

average birth rate of 30.5 births per 1000 women (Index Mundi, 2018) increase the

likelihood of events such as baby showers, outdooring's and children's parties. Ghana

also has a considerable percentage (34.14%) of its population being between the ages of

25 and 54 (Index Mundi, 2018), which could also imply a higher occurrence of traditional

engagements, weddings, and wedding parties. The celebration of Christian holidays such

as Christmas and Easter may also support the business since these are periods where

many events are hosted, families living outside return to their families and foreigners also

visit the country (Melnick, 2018). For the year 2019, Ghana launched the Year of Return

campaign, which may be used as an advantage by Graceful gardens to capture both local

and foreign clients since it has been stated to potentially boost Ghana's tourism and

hospitality industries, which Graceful Gardens falls under (Busari & Siaw, 2019).

National and international crises such as the Coronavirus pandemic also cause a

big blow to businesses like Graceful Gardens and many other businesses. Events centers

are luxury goods and demand for them is high when the environment is conducive for

events to be hosted. In a worldwide pandemic crisis like that of 2020, the interest in

hosting events not only becomes low but also becomes very dangerous. The Covid-19

disease created cause for social distancing and minimal human contact which are difficult

to achieve during an enjoyable event. There were also restrictions on public movement

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and the general panic caused by the virus made several individuals cancel their events

and for many others, hosting events were far from a priority. The occurrence of this

pandemic shows how easily the hospitality and events industries are affected by crises.

Technological Analysis

In the event of one of the frequent power outages in Ghana, events may be ruined

if contingencies are not provided. This means that the business owner may need to either

own a power reserve or include it to clients' billing for a rental to be placed on hold,

which may affect the cost for clients and the reputation of the business (Opare, 2016).

Gardens need constant maintenance, and the owner constantly looks for new flowers and

plants for the garden. Technology makes the process of locating, finding and ordering

new equipment and plants easier with the internet and new e-payment services such as

mobile money in Ghana (Ozyurt, 2019). The use of mowers and other advanced garden

technology has allowed the business to save costs on human labor as well as ensure easy

and fast garden maintenance.

The use of technological tools like the internet can serve as a potential means for

the business to market its venue. One of the cheapest and easiest ways to do this will be

through pictures that clients may post online, which will give the venue some exposure.

Again, various social media platforms are used to market businesses in Ghana which is

an opportunity that Graceful Gardens can use to attract clients (Opoku, 2016).

Technology in Ghana has also made communication such as receiving and taking

orders as well as sending information with both suppliers and clients easier and faster.

Additionally, the internet is a good source of information on research and development

skills that will be beneficial to the business as well as monitoring the developments in the

country and industry and what the implications for those changes mean for Graceful

Gardens (Sharma, 2016).

Environmental Analysis

Environmental factors like climate and weather conditions can greatly affect the

number of clients that Graceful Gardens attracts. Ghana has a rainy and dry season. Since

the center lacks an indoor facility, in the rainy season, many clients might not opt for a

garden for their events. In the case that some clients do, the occurrence of rain may ruin

events, leaving a bad experience for these clients and then cause them to opt for indoor

centers subsequently (Breen, 2014). During the dry season, the harmattan experienced in

Ghana may be a deterring factor for the choice of a garden venue. Again, the business has

an advantage with regard to environmental protection. Its processes and structure

contribute little to pollution, and the abundance of flowers and vegetation also supports

environmental preservation.

Legal Analysis

Graceful Gardens is located in a residential area, which makes it subject to the

laws on noisemaking in such areas. As a result of this, events held at the center do not go

beyond 8 pm. This comes as a disadvantage to potential clients who may want to host

events late at night as well as to Graceful Gardens as they may lose on some orders

leading to loss of revenue. Again, to own and set up any structure, one must be licensed

to hold the property as per the laws governing that municipality. Therefore, Graceful

Gardens needs all necessary documents from the Tema Metropolitan Assembly as well as

the Tema District Corporation because they operate in the Tema Metropolitan area.

CHAPTER 2: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2.1 Chapter Overview and Definition

This chapter investigated and assessed the needs of Graceful Gardens Events Center thoroughly. In this chapter, useful information was gathered to identify the problem and all details related to the problem, identify and establish stakeholders of the business as well as establish their connection to the problem. The procedures used to collect the data for this assessment as well as the data analysis are included in this chapter. A needs assessment, according to Burton & Merrill (1991), is the process of measuring needs and establishing priorities for action. It aids in identifying problems and actual needs of organizations, rather than what the organization thinks its needs or problems ought to be (Burton & Merrill, 1991). The purpose of conducting a needs assessment for Graceful Gardens is to validate or identify the problem that has been stated by the client and discover the exact needs of the business with regards to the problem identified. The needs assessment will also help determine the appropriate and most effective ways in which these needs can be addressed to satisfy the client, meet all objectives and solve the problem. The chapter includes all relevant findings from the research conducted.

2.1.2 Research Objectives

1. Validate or identify the problem(s) that Graceful Gardens faces and identify its exact needs.
2. Obtain user experience feedback on Graceful Gardens.
3. Determine whether the proposed solutions are appropriate to solve the problem.
4. Gather information to design the most effective solution to solve the identified problem.

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<div align="center">2.2 Research Design and Approach</div>

<div align="center">*2.2.1 Methodology*</div>

The research involved the collection of both primary and secondary data and adopted a qualitative research method. The data collection instrument for primary data is unstructured interviews with key stakeholders, such as the owner of the business, clients, potential clients, employees, and competitors who formed the sources of primary data. Clients of Graceful Gardens were selected via convenience sampling as per their willingness and availability to participate in the research. For potential clients and competitors who were unknown, purposive sampling was used. Competitors were selected based on their proximity or similarity to Graceful Gardens. Internet research was used in obtaining secondary data for the research. The sources of data from the internet consisted mainly of observation of competitors and potential clients on social media to gather publicly available information on behavior and preferences. This will be supplemented with reviews and articles on the hospitality industry, with a focus on events centers.

<div align="center">*2.2.2 Unstructured Interviews*</div>

The main participants for the interviews are the business owner, potential clients, competitors, clients, and employees. The interviews conducted were unstructured and informal in order to collect exhaustive information as it allows for freedom in answering questions and allows asking new questions as new insights and questions arise. It also allows probing and natural flow between the interviewer and interviewee. The interviews were conducted through phone calls and face-to-face meetings based on what was more convenient for the interviewees. Since the stakeholders involved were each involved with

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the business differently, an interview guide, as provided in appendix 3, was used to

loosely inform the questions that were asked initially and then allowed the conversation

to flow subsequently. These open-ended questions for each stakeholder were derived

from how they impact and interact with the business in order to identify any gaps that

these stakeholders themselves may have directly or indirectly encountered or witnessed.

The nature of these interviews also revealed some useful information that stakeholders

held of competitors or forces in the industry that benefited the research and the project.

The unstructured interviews were preferred over structured interviews because they

generate more in-depth and insightful answers as well as allow for clarification and a

deeper understanding of the situation (McLeod, 2014).

2.2.3 Internet Research/Social Media Observation

The chosen source of secondary data is the internet using news articles and social

media. For the hospitality industry, particularly the events' venue and management

industry, there is a substantial amount of information available on social media such as

Instagram and many events organizers have made information available on their social

media platforms, which was useful in collecting data about the industry, how it runs, and,

most importantly, information on competitors. Conducting this internet research was

useful in determining ways in which Graceful Gardens may effectively advertise itself on

the internet and gathering information such as the kind of client base available to the

business on the internet (Sharma, 2016).

2.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis has been defined by Sridhar (2018) as "the process of evaluating data

using analytical and statistical tools to discover useful information and aid in business

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decision making." For this research, data analysis is conducted by analyzing the

information that has been gathered to validate or identify the initial problem that was

stated by the client as well as determine the most appropriate solutions. A useful tool for

data analysis in this project is concept mapping, which is used to group major insights in

sections to identify the major themes that run through majority of the responses to derive

key findings. The purpose of this is to aid in validating or identifying the exact problem

and need of Graceful Gardens Events Center (Daley, 2004). This was done by connecting

information and patterns that aid in identifying the problem and informing the possible

solutions to the problem using a concept map.

2.3.1 The Service Marketing Mix as a Guide for Concept Mapping

The 7 P's of the service marketing mix is a marketing framework that is used to

provide a basic structure for a marketing plan for businesses in the service industry. The

information gathered was categorized under each of 7 p's as themes to discover concepts

that led to key findings. This is because it is a useful framework in reviewing and

defining key issues in a service provider's method of marketing its services (Hanlon,

2019). The service marketing mix is also adopted in categorizing the data in this project

because it will be used as one of the frameworks to develop a solution for Graceful

Gardens.

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The 7 Ps of Services Marketing

Figure 1. The 7 P's of Marketing

2.3.1.1 Insights from Data Collection

Product

Product considers the type, quality and features of the product and service offerings of a business. Upon conducting the needs assessment, it was found that aside events, Graceful Gardens is also desired for photoshoots and corporate meetings at different costs. This suggests that the owner offers different services to clients for the type of occasion.

Again, the owner has a list of vendors with whom she has personal relationships and whose services she offers to her clients for free. Some of these services include rentals of logistics, catering services, photography and music services as well as drinks services, some of which her competitors offer as additional product offerings. Most of the other centers had additional services including logistics rentals, hotel services, catering services

and more facilities than Graceful Garden including up and running washrooms, pantries

and changing rooms. There were discounts available as incentives for clients that

patronized additional product packages. Some clients of Graceful Gardens mentioned the

owner's willingness to assist with procuring vendors at no cost as well as her presence at

some events to ensure order and manage employees. This comes as a disadvantage to

Graceful Gardens since this serves as a loss of a possible source of income for her. Again,

since one of the major insights derived from clients and potential clients was the desire

for events centers to have additional product packages such as planning services or

logistics and rentals for a one-stop experience and for convenience, this also makes

Graceful Gardens undesirable for such clients.

Gardens are desired for a wide range of events based on capacity and convenience.

The major desired uses ranged from small event gatherings like BBQ's to large events

such as wedding or birthday parties as well as business or promotional events like

product launches. The most common alternative for clients and potential clients was

using individuals' own home gardens. The reasons for choosing one option over the other

were based on space and convenience in terms of cleaning and timing. For Graceful

Gardens, events cannot go beyond 7 pm and this was considered unfavorable for clients

who would have liked to have evening events or who would be unable to ask guests to

leave as that would be inappropriate. Regarding cleaning, some clients would prefer

events out of their homes to get the cleaning benefits that come with hiring events

centers. There are venue management services that handle promotional events, manage

those events and devise ways of generating revenue for clients from such events (Spectra,

2020).

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Price

For Graceful Gardens and its competitors, the base price for garden events centers ranges from GHS 2,000 – GHS 2,500. A few competitors charged beyond this price at GHS 5000 with one of these using only artificial lawns and flowers and confirmed that their indoor facilitates were more preferred to their outdoor gardens. The second center that charged at this price had a smaller capacity than Graceful Gardens (150 people) and also confirmed that their indoor facility was more preferred as it took a larger number of people. If the owner of Graceful Gardens were to charge above this base price with no significant additional product offerings, competitors might succeed in stealing away clients with lower prices.

One of the major competitors was identified by proximity to Graceful Gardens' location and price. It is important to note this competitor because of the number of similarities it has to Graceful gardens and the demonstration of price sensitivity by some clients. Both gardens currently lack signboards and thus, some clients tend to use this center instead. Though their rival charges lower prices and have a larger space, they are however also short of facilities such as washrooms and pantries and have few decorative plants and flowers. Despite this, some clients that discover both gardens use the competitor center on the basis of the lower price being highly marketed and used as an advantage by the owner of the center.

People

The owner of Graceful Gardens has years of experience in landscaping which fueled the start of Graceful Gardens. She has four employees; two gardeners and two

caretakers who also double as standby washroom cleaners during events as well as cleaners after events are over.

The owner stated that she would like to continue running her business as a sole proprietorship and preferably as a family business as her daughter helps occasionally. She would be willing to contract other helping hands as the need arises but would like to keep her number of employees at a minimum.

Place

The owner stated plans of expanding the business with a new venue similar to Graceful gardens. In terms of ease of access, many players in the hospitality industry are contacted on the internet or through social media and events are greatly marketed on social media applications like Instagram. Graceful Gardens has a contact number put up on the garden premises, but no signboards. They are unavailable on social media and do not own a website. However, they are available on Google maps and via Google search.

One of the biggest and most successful competitors in Tema was discovered to have multiple event centers at different venues in Greater Accra, as well as a wide range of product offerings and services. Though expensive, they had the easiest modes of contact and access and had attractive customer-oriented packages.

Some venues and events centers have websites where product offerings are listed. Most of them thrive on having a structure, a corporate and business strategy to manage the business which aids in attracting more clients because of the standard mode of operations and the corporate aspect that is added (Venuworks, 2020).

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In the events management and planning sector, clients and vendors list vendors for events on video and picture posts made and potential or interested clients make enquiries based on this.

Physical Evidence

Graceful Gardens does not have permanent washrooms yet and therefore uses mobile washrooms and dispensers as a replacement for sinks. This is one of the major reasons potential clients turn down use of the garden. Another factor was the restriction on the time for which events could run. Since Graceful Gardens is located in a residential area, events held at Graceful Gardens cannot go beyond 7 pm and this has been communicated as undesirable by potential clients. Because of the lack of changing rooms and indoor housing options, some clients opt for hotels nearby. The extra cost of booking the hotels is a problem for only a select few. Even though clients and potentials expressed distaste for the use of mobile washrooms they however admitted to agreeing to use them on condition that they were properly maintained during their events.

Some event centers have both indoor and outdoor facilities. In such cases, indoor facilities are more desired because of space, setup for décor and uncertainty regarding weather conditions. Clients prefer natural grass and plants to artificial lawns and in such cases would weigh their options between indoor facilities and outdoor facilities with natural lawns. If the events center in question has both facilities, the clients usually opt for the indoor facility.

Some of the other factors that caused clients to opt for other event centers are limited parking spaces, the policies on refundable deposits and cancellation fees as well as price differences as compared to value being received. (Price-performance ratio).

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Promotion

The current method of attracting clients is through referrals and word of mouth which comes from guests of clients hosting events at Graceful Gardens. The use of social media sites has been considered, but not yet implemented as a result of an experience where a client's wedding video attracted about fifteen clients for the center.

For clients and potentials, means of finding an events center are through referrals, social media apps and the internet and by sight if they pass them by. Some competitors stated that though they have social media presence, their most successful means of advertisement is referrals. Upon observation of these sites however, the researcher discovered that their presence was very dormant. For the most highly patronized event center in Tema, social media presence was high and a strong relationship with customers was observed.

Many events managers and individuals use social media especially Instagram to advertise events and this is a major source of advertisement for vendors in the hospitality and events industry including events centers.

Graceful gardens and some existing competitors have little social media presence with some competitors not having any presence at all. One of the biggest competitors in Tema, with different branches and several product offerings had a strong social media presence.

Process

The structure of the business and the current number of product offerings allows for easy processes in carrying out activities. The resources used are minimal and the

MARKETING PLAN FOR GRACEFUL GARDENS

processes are non-complex to understand. Most activities including administrative work

and management are mostly run by the owner.

<center>2.4 A Concept Map of Key Findings</center>

Keys:

- Boxes colored deep blue are the main themes used to derive sub-themes.

- Boxes labelled with alphabets represent the sub-themes documented above.

- Boxes colored black are the key findings.

<center>*Sub-Themes*</center>

Product: A

- Graceful Gardens has a limited number of product offerings.

- The owner has strong event vendor relationships.

- Most competitors have additional hospitality services.

- Additional product offerings are incentives for potential clients to patronize an
  events center.

Price: B

- Without any additional services or facilities, the owner must not charge above the
  price range.

People: C

- The owner desires to maintain her status as sole proprietor.

- She has insufficient employees to accommodate any new developments.

Place: D

- Events centers make their venues known through the internet and social media by
  providing essential information to clients.

- Graceful Gardens is present via Google search and Google maps with contact
  information available but with little information on product offerings and other
  relevant information.

Physical Evidence: E

- Graceful Gardens lacks washrooms and indoor facilities such as multipurpose
  rooms and changing rooms which most clients dislike.

- There is a 7pm time restriction on all events.

- Some events centers have both indoor and outdoor facilities that come as an
  advantage to them in terms of capacity.

- Most clients looking for outdoor centers prefer gardens with natural plants rather
  than artificial plants.

Promotion: F

- Graceful Gardens currently relies on referrals to advertise its business.

- Social media is a powerful promotional tool for both the hospitality and event
  industries.

Process: G

- Few resources are used in carrying out activities.

- The process for carrying out business activities is simple and straightforward as
  there are minimal product offerings.

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2.4.1 Key Findings

1. Additional desired product offerings are essential for success in the event industry.

2. Prices can be adjusted provided consumers' needs are satisfied.

3. A well-defined process needs to be drafted to accommodate any additional product offerings.

4. Social media use needs to be taken advantage of using promotional strategies relevant to the event industry.

5. Graceful Gardens needs strategies to increase its presence and brand awareness to attract more clients.

6. For any changes to occur within the business, there is a need to contract additional labor to ensure quality.

7. Graceful Gardens requires interim solutions to promote its services to combat shortcomings with facilities.

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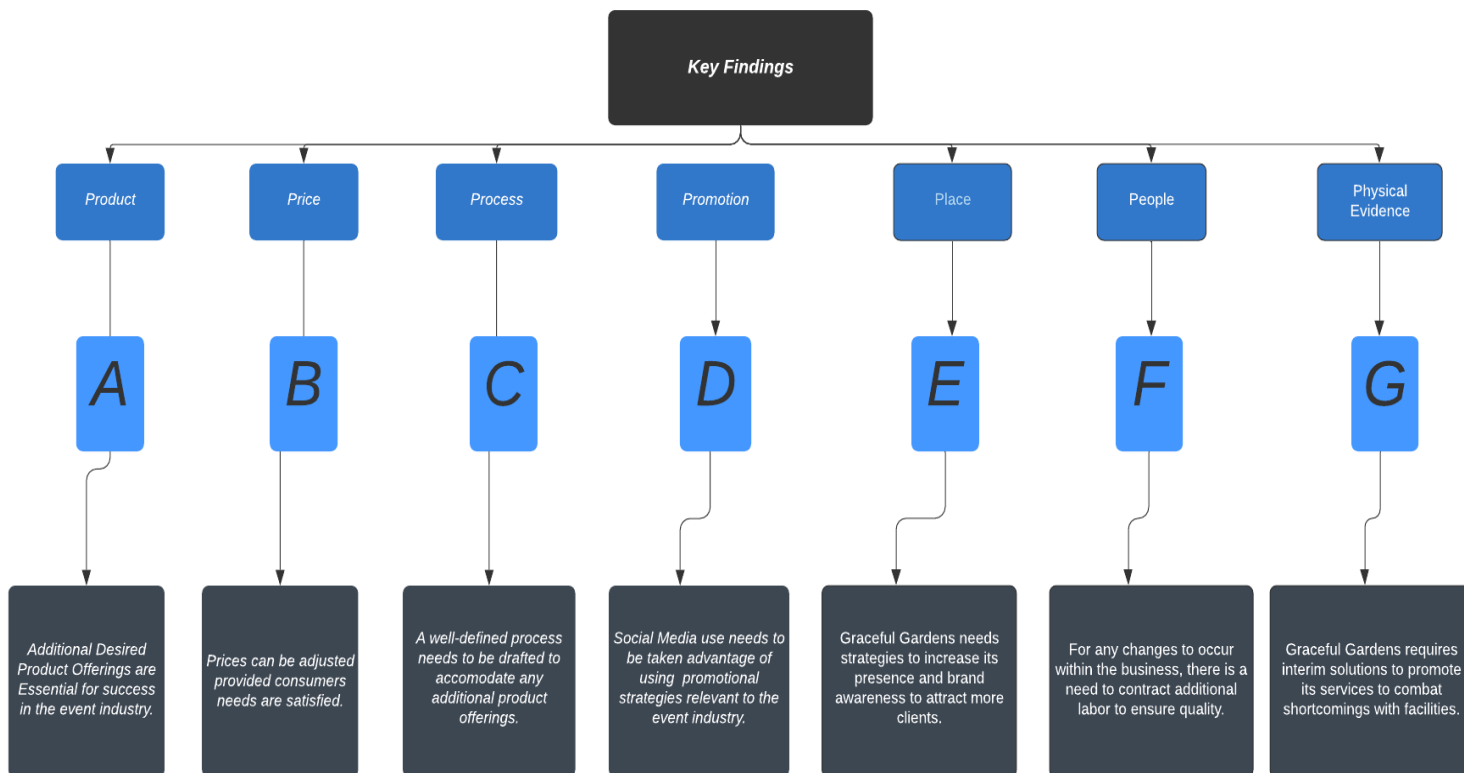
Figure 2. A Concept Map of Key Findings

2.5 Problems Identified

1. Graceful Gardens lacks adequate exposure. The business has little social media presence and has few marketing and advertisement plans and strategies necessary for growth.

2. The owner of the Garden is not making as much revenue as she could potentially make from her garden space. The resources and skills available to the owner are not being fully optimized.

3. Graceful Gardens lacks certain desired facilities such as washrooms, changing rooms, pantries or multipurpose rooms.

2.6 Justification for Selection

The information gathered from the collected data suggests that the initial problem stated by the client where multiple sources of revenue from the garden was desired, is validated. Some further problems were discovered during the needs assessment process which indicate that the identified problems are intertwined and have the same root cause. Each of these problems stem from the absence of a business mind and strategy on the owner's part. An appropriate marketing framework that would include solutions to each of the identified problems should be instrumental in solving these problems as well as be beneficial in outlining long-term competitive and operational strategies that would help solve these problems in line with the owner's goals and objectives. Considering that there are certain facilities that the center lacks that clients desire, choosing the selected problem to work on would ensure that Graceful gardens would have a plan that would determine the best ways to take advantage of its winning facilities to attract clients. Again, designing a long-term plan would help the owner have some organization and structure to enable better management of the business's activities.

2.7 Problem Statement

The owner of Graceful Gardens Events Center is not optimizing her skill and resources to generate enough revenue and attract the desired client base from her event center and therefore requires a long-term plan that would serve as a strategy to help achieve the desired profitability, improve overall business performance as well as attract the desired client base.

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2.8 Conclusion

The owner of Graceful Gardens needs a plan that would contain unified strategies to address each of the identified problems efficiently and effectively. The results showed that Graceful Gardens lacks certain product offerings that are desired by clients and has few advertising strategies. The next chapter focuses on existing literature that would explore possible frameworks and models that can be used to address the needs of Graceful Gardens that have been revealed after conducting the needs assessment.

CHAPTER 3: MASTERY OF SUBJECT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a summary of the hospitality industry and documents existing literature on the industry, marketing frameworks and useful operations management concepts that are available to use in the hospitality and event industries. The purpose of this is to probe further into these topics to identify the best frameworks and models available to solve the problems faced by Graceful Gardens.

3.2 The Event Industry

The growing hospitality industry in Ghana serves as a source of profit and revenue for entrepreneurs and businesses. There are several opportunities in these industries for businesses to grow and expand (Adusei, 2013). Bowdin, McPherson & Flinn (2006) define the events industry as consisting of event organizers, venue providers, exhibitors, event suppliers and temporary structures.

There are specific features that clients looking to host events would be looking for in an events center, depending on factors such as the type of event and their budget. It includes factors such as a convenient location for both the hosts of the event and one for their guests. The location of the center would determine safety conditions as well as ambiance. A good venue location that guarantees little traffic and is easy to locate for guests is well desired by most clients. Again, hosts or events planners that would be seeking convenience for their guests would want to make parking options as easy as possible. Some clients make transportation decisions based on the location of the venue and the availability of parking space (Whova, 2018).

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Another highly important factor for most clients is the capacity the center can hold. Potential clients looking to choose an events center would decide based on how many guests they expect. This also affects the kind of atmosphere they are looking for and the type of event. For outdoor events like BBQs, individuals would prefer a less spacious place for easy socialization. On the other hand, at a wedding reception, one would mostly consider comfort and a spacious environment. According to Whova (2018), it is important for events centers to be laid out in a way that makes room for adjustments to meet their client's needs.

Whova (2018) says that services and amenities are of great importance to clients when searching for events centers. These include facilities such as logistics made up of tables, chairs and marquees, a set up and cleanup crew, technological facilities and other facilities like kitchens or pantries. Layout and ambiance are also two important factors for clients. Clients desire a venue that would have a good floor plan for easy planning of décor and seating arrangements. An already existing good ambiance makes decoration easier and less expensive since the venue would already have some style.

3.2.1 The Success Factors in the Hospitality Industry

Here, we explore the factors that cause businesses in the hospitality industry to thrive as well as determine the broad strategies that are used by firms in the industry to succeed. According to Soegjobs (2020), some of the key success factors in the hospitality industry include thoroughly assessing and considering customer insights to improve satisfaction. Consumers are a key contributor to the success of a business and their satisfaction is paramount for any profit-making entity. Therefore, it is important for businesses in the hospitality industry, including hotels, events managers, events centers

and events vendors to design their product offerings based on consumer insights. This involves constantly checking to ensure that the product offerings and services can be tailored to suit each client in the industry considering the dynamism of the hospitality industry. Every client would expect their events to be unique and considering consumer insights frequently would help achieve this. Furthermore, businesses in the industry need to leverage the use of technology and the internet especially mobile devices and apps. There needs to be constant innovation in the hospitality industry to match the changing needs of consumers (Soegjobs, 2020).

Again, the hospitality industry is heavily reliant on a versatile and multi-talented workforce that would ensure exceptional service. Since most of the goods offered are services and not products, clients would be dealing more with individuals. It is then important for there to be a standard of not only professionalism but a great level of expertise and creativity that will enable them to cater to different needs based on the client's needs and the type of service. Consumers in the hospitality industry require this of these service providers and therefore personnel hired by firms or businesses in the industry need to uphold these standards and undergo occasional training when necessary (Peerspace, 2018).

3.3 Marketing Frameworks

Chernev (2015), defines marketing as "a business discipline about markets; consequently, its focus on the exchange of good, services and ideas- the defining activity of a market". According to him, the increasing complexities of a business's activities calls for the need for a framework that would allow the use of a systematic and strategic approach to marketing one's business. Each business's target is to create value for its

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consumers in a profitable way and this target serves as a key guiding principle for all

marketing-related activities. In this section, we examine various marketing frameworks

that can be used by businesses in the event and hospitality industry for growth.

3.3.1 Target Customers- The 5-C framework

Service providers have used the customer-centric 5-C framework in determining the

market in which a company should operate in. It is helpful in analyzing the factors

closely linked to the company in order to provide insights on key drivers of success in the

industry (Chernev, 2015). The five C's stand for *customers*, whose needs would be

catered to and for whom value will be created, the company managing the offering,

collaborators (stakeholders) working with the company, competitors with similar

offerings and physical *context* in which the company operates (Chernev, 2015).

The 5-C framework is a great tool for analyzing the key findings of a company based

on the 5-C's and using this analysis to make informed marketing decisions. It is great for

checking the health and positioning of a business and developing customer-centric

solutions for one's business (Kinnison, 2019). The framework, however, lacks the

elements required to fully assess and design solutions for a service. It is usually used in

conjunction with the 4 P marketing mix to achieve customer satisfaction and the 4-P

marketing mix is an inappropriate tool to use for services (Alson, 2020).

Customers are essentially the potential buyers that are defined by their needs which

the company aims to fulfill. They can either be consumers or businesses.

Company is made up of the organization managing the offering for customers. In

cases that companies offer multiple product offerings, the company refers to a specific

business unit in the said organization. The company's ability to succeed in a competitive

market and fulfill customer needs is defined by its resources, core competencies and

strategic assets.

Collaborators are those that work closely with the company to create value for target

customers. They are the stakeholders consisting of but not limited to suppliers,

manufacturers, service providers and advertising agencies.

Competitors are entities with similar product offerings as the company and are

targeting the same customers. Competition is not limited to the industry in which the

company operates (rivals) but also includes all entities that aim to fulfill the same need,

such as substitutes.

Context or *Climate* is similar to the PESTEL analysis and involves aspects of the

environment being operated in. There are six relevant factors related to the value-creation

process to consider under context which are: economic factors, business factors,

technological factors, sociocultural factors, regulatory factors and physical factors.
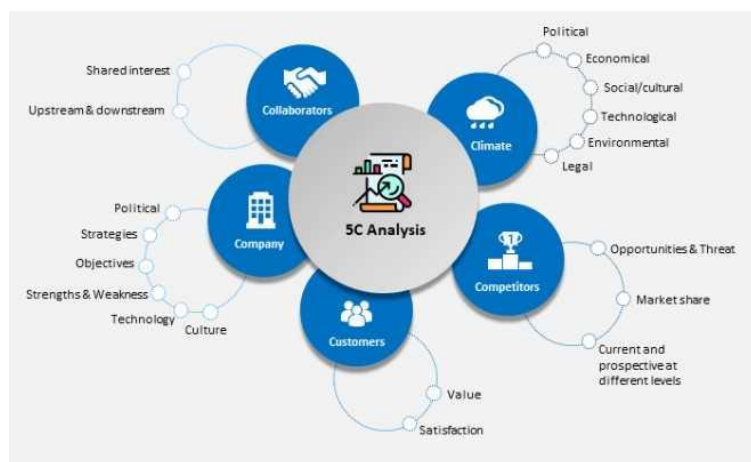

Figure 3. A Detailed Visual Representation of the 5-C's

3.3.2 The Service Marketing Mix - The 7 P's.

As a result of the differences between services and products, Bernard H. Booms

and Mary J. Bitner further developed the 4 P's of the marketing mix were extended to

accommodate the differences between products and services as well as the nature of the

service process, and the simultaneity of the production and consumption (Van Vliet,

2011). The extension of the 4 P's of marketing to the 7 P's allows for a more thorough

analysis of the marketing elements necessary for successful services marketing including

services in the hospitality industry (Salman, Tawfik, Samy & Artal-Tur, 2017).

Product under the service marketing mix refers to the intangible product which is

a service provided. Services are designed and customized as per clients varying needs,

however, too much customization can compromise the quality and standard of the service

(Lumen, 2020).

Pricing services is tougher than pricing products because factors like overhead

costs and labor costs need to be substantiated in order to find appropriate pricing

methods. Service providers are tasked with determining whether prices are constant

across all channels and develop the criteria upon which their services would be priced

based on the value they and their consumers uphold to the services they provide

particularly if there are multiple product or service offerings.

Promotions are essential in helping businesses to differentiate their services since

services can be easily replicated (Lumen, 2020). One of the most common ways of doing

this is by investing in creative advertising and PR to position one's business differently in

the minds of consumers, despite the similarities the service may have with other services

in the market. The manner and channels by which information is delivered to customers

play a huge role in how customers perceive and patronize a service.

Place in the service industry refers to the location of the business or where clients

can have access to the service. For most businesses in this industry, a convenient location

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for their target market is extremely important to the patronage of its services considering that services can be easily replicated and thus competitors with easier contact with clients are likely to steal them away. Not only should proximity to clientele be considered, but easy access to contacting and reaching the service providers should assume high importance (Kar, 2010).

People refer to the staff and employees involved in providing services to customers with a strong focus on employees who have direct contact with clients while providing these services. The skillset and training given to employees in the service industry is very crucial to the success of the business since production and consumption are inseparable and these employees become the face of the business. It is then important for service marketers and managers to understand the benefits of investing into their personnel's overall performance and development (Van Vliet, 2011)

Physical Evidence includes all tangibles that are presented to customers, to supplement and enhance the services being provided. They work together to create the entire customer experience for clients. This includes for instance, the design and quality of facilities made available at a restaurant or a hotel that contribute to the value that customers attach to the service being given by personnel. To further elaborate, Van Vilet (2011), breaks physical evidence into three physical dimensions namely;

- Environmental conditions such as temperature, sound and smell,
- space and functions such as map, equipment and decoration and
- signs, symbols and artefacts such as signature, decoration style and personal touch.

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Process of the service marketing mix represents "the activities, procedures, protocols and more by which the service is delivered to the customer" (Van Vilet, 2011). Services are a result of direct actions and interactions with or for customers and therefore processes are involved to achieve eventual delivery of those services. The process of service delivery is essential since it ensures a fixed standard delivery of services with the use of operational tools such as a service blueprint. Delivering standard service is important to ensure consistency of work, dependability and ensure customer satisfaction (Lumen, 2020).

Unlike the 5-C framework, the 7-P marketing mix stands on its own and does not have to be used in conjunction with another model. It is also designed specifically for services and comprises the right elements to wholly assess a service and develop solutions based on the assessments made. Other advantages the service marketing mix has over the 5-C framework include the fact that the 7-P marketing mix is simpler and easy to use and manage and thus, can be periodically re-evaluated easily to help businesses achieve maximum profit.

3.3.3 The G-STIC Framework for Marketing Management

The process by which marketing managers and businesses create value for their key participants, the company, collaborators and target customers are defined by five key activities. These are setting a *goal,* developing a *strategy,* designing the *tactics*, defining an *implementation* plan and identifying a set of *control* metrics to measure success of the proposed action (Chernev, 2015). These make up the G-STIC framework which outlines the specific activities by which value will be created.

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The *goal* is the supreme criteria for a business's success. Setting a goal consists of two decisions; focus and benchmarks. The goal should be focused and detailed, with a series of objectives and their overall outcomes to be achieved with respect to the large goal. These objectives should be designed with respect to four of the five C's; customer, collaborators, company, and competitors. Some of the areas of focus for some companies include net income, profit margins, sales revenue and market share. Benchmarks are the quantitative or temporal measures of achieving the goal. They are more specific and outline milestones to be achieved and the time frame for achieving a particular benchmark (Chernev, 2015).

Strategy under this framework defines a company's value-creation model. It involves identifying the target market and developing a value proposition. Identification of the target market involves identifying the five C's in the Five-C model (Chernev, 2015). The value proposition however outlines the value that a product or service offering seeks to create for the relevant participants in the market (the company the customers and the collaborators). The value proposition should also develop a positioning for the company that would create a distinct image of the product or service in customers' minds.

The *tactics* outline the steps and activities to execute a strategy. The tactics use aspects of the marketing mix; product, service, brand, price, incentives, communication and distribution to execute a strategy and create an optimal value proposition for consumers (Chernev, 2015).

The *implementation* plan outlines the steps for executing the strategy and tactics. It has three main aspects;

- The business infrastructure which defines the organizational structures involved in developing and managing the product offering,

- The business processes which involve the specific activities for designing and managing the product or service offering and

- The implementation schedule which identifies the time frame in which tasks will be performed to ensure cost-effectiveness and cost-efficiency in executing projects related to achieving the goal (Chernev, 2015).

The *control* metrics also define the standards for evaluating progress of the goal. It involves two key processes;

- Performance evaluation which is monitoring the company's progress and ensuring the action plan is adjusted when necessary to ensure the company is on the right path to achieving its objectives and goal.

- Environmental analysis involves monitoring the environment to ensure that the company's plan is in line with the occurrences in the environment in which it operates. This is to ensure that a company can take advantage of opportunities or shield itself from unfavorable conditions that would impede progress. These include changes in competition, changes in consumer demand or favorable or unfavorable government policies (Chernev, 2015).

The G-STIC Framework is suitable for solving marketing related problems for services. However, it does not make provision for conducting an analysis of the business or industry before addressing the problem. It also, like the 5-C framework, has to be used in conjunction with other frameworks, making it less easy to work with (Gregory, 2018).

Figure 4. The G-STIC Framework for Marketing Management

3.4 Process Analysis and Design Tools

Process analysis tools help to understand processes. They aid in determining

whether a particular process being adopted will achieve maximum efficiency. They also

serve as visuals for users to understand a process and find the best way of carrying out a

process (Tallyfy, 2014). Process analysis and design tools are relevant to this project

because most services carry out several activities and processes to ensure their success.

For the hospitality industry, processes need to be designed to guide businesses on how to

carry out activities that would adequately satisfy customer needs (Carew, 2015).

3.3.1 Flow Chart

According to Heizer, Render and Munson (2016) flowcharts are helpful tools in

illustrating the movement of a product, people or material with the aim of helping to

understand analyze and communicate a process. It presents the steps of a process in

sequential order and can be used for many purposes. Flowcharts may either be detailed or

simple and can be used by businesses to communicate how their processes are done and

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develop an understanding of the process. They may also serve as a guide where multiple

processes are involved, on what each process involves (ASQ, 2020). Businesses in the

hospitality industry use flowcharts to visualize the relationships between each process

and inform the resources that are required at each level for speed, quality and efficiency

(Saunders & Graham, 1992).

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CHAPTER 4: SOLUTION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses on developing a solution for Graceful Gardens based on the identified problems while considering the owners interests, goals and objectives. It would also include an implementation plan that would guide the business owner on how to use and understand the proposed solution.

4.1.1 Objectives for Proposed Solution

The main objectives for the proposed solution are as follows:

1. To help the owner of Graceful Gardens generate additional income from her garden center.

2. Be simple enough such that the owner can maintain her position as a sole proprietor.

3. Serve as a guideline on how to properly market and advertise her garden events center to attract more clients.

4. Provide guidelines on how to make changes to product offerings and pricing strategies as well as have a structured means of operations.

5. Help Graceful Gardens differentiate itself from its competitors.

4.1.2 Proposed Solution

The service marketing mix is chosen as the proposed solution because of its simplicity and the fact that it aptly encompasses all the aspects of the business that need to be focused on. The needs assessment was conducted with the aid of the 7-P's of the

service marketing mix, which made it easier to categorize problems and solutions based on identified themes.

4.2 A Service Marketing Mix for Graceful Gardens Event Center

4.2.1 Product

Currently, the only product offering available to Graceful gardens clients is to rent the venue for a day for large events or to rent it for a fixed period of time for alternate purposes. In order to achieve the goal of generating more revenue, the product offerings for Graceful Gardens need to be tailored to suit client and potential client needs profitably. As per the need's assessment, the Graceful Gardens owner possesses certain skills and resources that will enable her to be able to grow her business using any of the four strategies on the Ansoff Matrix (Meldrum and McDonald, 1995).

According to CFI (2020), product development is most successful when firms or entrepreneurs understand an existing market and develop products or services to cater to that market's needs. The Graceful Gardens owner is capable of managing events and has been offering free vendor procurement services and event management services to clients. She has a great network with several vendors in the hospitality and event industry as well as years of experience in landscaping. With these skills and resources at her disposal, she can grow her business by increasing her product offerings in the area of consultancy and skills training to attract various customer segments. She already has an existing market as potential clients also stated during the research that additional services from events centers would be ideal for them as they desired a one-stop experience and thus would be willing to pay more for such services.

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Additionally, market penetration strategies can be used to grow her existing

market. It can be achieved through promotional efforts such as increased advertising and

price promotions. Graceful Gardens currently does not employ many promotional

strategies for its business and thus market penetration would be instrumental in

generating more revenue from an existing market. The proposed promotional strategies

for Graceful Gardens will be discussed in section 4.2.5.
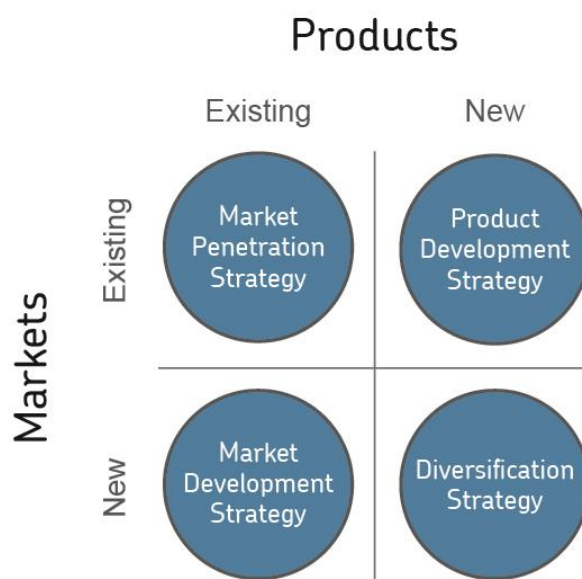
Figure 5. The Ansoff Matrix

Proposed Product Offerings

Per the short analysis above, product development and market penetration strategies

are the best options for growth at Graceful Gardens. It is essential for Graceful Gardens

to have a variety of product packages that would be available to clients to choose from.

According to information gathered from the need's assessment, clients would love

additional services including events management services. Thus, Graceful Gardens may

alter their product offerings based on the following:

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1. A service offering that allows clients to rent Graceful Gardens for the day for events. This includes two security men, two portable washrooms as well as two caretakers. This is a service package that is currently available at Graceful Gardens.

2. A new service offering could be developed to rent the center for the day for events and hire event management services. This would include two security men, two portable washrooms as well as two caretakers. Additionally, Graceful Gardens would be responsible for the management of events based on client specifications. Here, the owner must specify the terms and conditions clearly. These should include the kinds of events and the exact aspects of the events that she would manage. In order to uniquely deliver these services to clients, it is highly recommended that each of these packages be branded with unique names. They must also have detailed information on what each offer entails and its associated cost that includes prices that would be incurred from event vendors. The owner can go further to design packages in unison with vendors, where for events management packages, readily documented events themes are available for clients to choose from. That is, with the help of visual aids in catalogues for instance, clients would get a glimpse of exactly what they would receive from these packages.

3. There is currently a service package available at Graceful gardens where clients rent the venue for alternative purposes, usually shorter events such as photoshoots and picnics at lower prices and for shorter periods. In such cases, it would be advisable to have a proper pricing method, where pricing can be done per hour.

4. For clients that may not require events management services but require assistance with logistics, Graceful gardens could manage the provision of logistics (chairs, tables, marquees) through a third-party vendor.

5. An additional package could also be designed for corporate meetings, retreats or events where Graceful Gardens could be marketed as a suitable and satisfactory venue for such events to be held at. Here, the owner can make extra revenue from managing the logistics and catering for such events.

6. The owner has years of experience in landscaping and garden designs. She may use this to her advantage and provide natural garden decorations as part of her product offerings. These may also come with readily available options to choose from or can be tailored to client preferences.

7. Graceful Gardens could also take advantage of the boom seasons in Ghana and design seasonal events packages or promotion packages during seasons such as Christmas and Easter when social gatherings and events are at their peak.

Based on client feedback and global trends, these services must be reviewed and revised annually or biennially so that clients' needs, and preferences are constantly satisfied.

4.2.2 Price

After revising the service offerings for Graceful Gardens, pricing strategies need to be altered to accommodate these changes. The pricing needs to be structured such that consumer behavior will not be affected negatively. For basic garden events center rentals in Tema, the base price was GHS 2000 meaning that without any additional benefits or value, customers would find no reason to pay more than this. However, most clients

confirmed that they were willing to pay more for certain additional services offered at events centers.

The needs assessment showed that event management and procurement services were being offered to clients for free while most competitors offered them at a price or did not offer them at all. Since customers would be willing to pay for such services, the owner can begin to charge for these services. Thus, in addition to charging for renting the garden, a fixed fee pricing method will be the most reasonable form of pricing for each of the product offerings listed. This would be a service charge and thus exclusive of the costs due the event vendors themselves. A fixed rate is desirable in the hospitality industry because most of the services come with several packages that may or may not be used. Again, because there are a variety of service options that can be chosen from, this serves as the best pricing method.

These costs should however be based on administrative and operating expenses that will be incurred while working. After making estimates on how much each service package would cost, a cost-plus pricing method may be adopted to obtain a fixed price. The cost-plus pricing method according to Chand (2020) involves calculating a fixed percentage of cost in order to obtain a certain profit target. This should be done in close conjunction with going-rate pricing, where benchmark prices set by competitors are monitored. To achieve this and be close to the standard service prices set by proximate centers, maintaining low administrative and operating costs would be ideal. Keeping costs low would also help achieve higher profits.

To accommodate the new product packages, invoices would be the most appropriate form of billing clients. The payments to be made to vendors, the service

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charges and the cost of hiring the center need to be included with all government-

imposed taxes.

Below is a table that will guide the owner on areas to consider when placing flat

fees on the various product offerings.

Table 2

A pricing guide for Graceful Gardens.

Category	Cost Item
Venue Costs	Venue rental
Venue Costs	Security Deposit
Venue Costs	Refundable deposits for damages
Venue Costs	Washroom costs
Planning and Organization	Event Planner fees
Planning and Organization	Communication costs
Planning and Organization	Temporary Employees
Planning and Organization	Administrative expenses
Planning and Organization	Travel Expenses
Planning and Organization	Labor costs for Set-up/cleanup
Décor	Flowers and Garden Décor Items
Décor	Decoration fees

4.2.3. Process

As a result of altering the product offerings available at Graceful Gardens, it is

necessary to throw emphasis on and better elaborate the processes involved with these

new products. This will help keep track of and identify the tangible, intangible and

human resources necessary for carrying out activities. For Graceful Gardens, a process

analysis diagram would be helpful. A flowchart is the best process analysis diagram

because of its simplicity and its ability to accurately capture each activity relating to the

services in a non-complex manner. The flowchart would serve as a guide to Graceful

Gardens employees on each essential step to be taken while carrying out activities for

clients.

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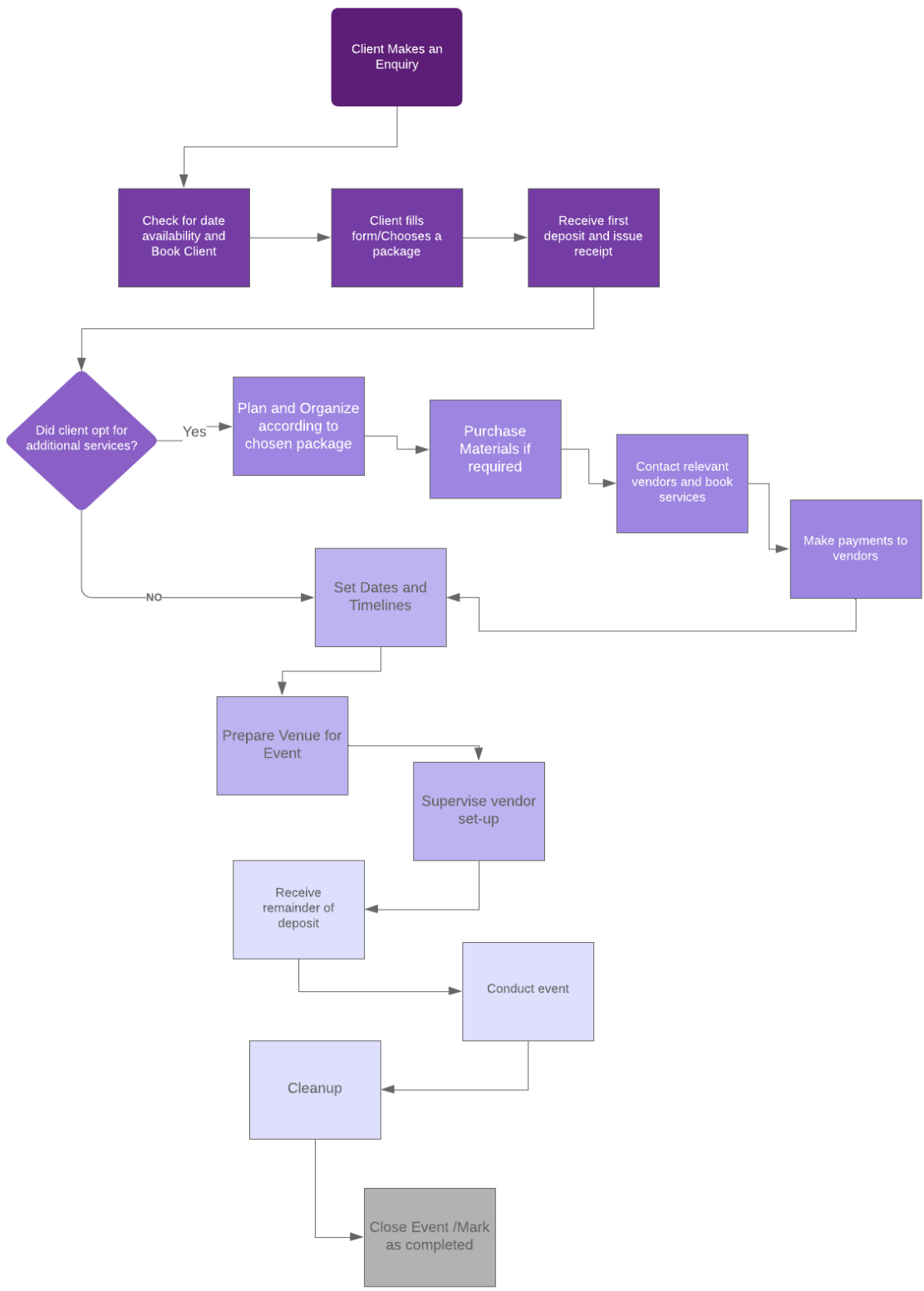
Figure 6. Flowchart for Graceful Gardens Events Center

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4.2.4 Place

One of the problems identified during the need's assessment was that Graceful

Gardens did not have the kind of presence necessary for attaining the consistent flow of

revenue that was desired. Most players in the events industry thrive on social media and

word of mouth. Events hosted at Graceful gardens are the main source of attracting

customers along with the owners own network of friends, family and acquaintances.

However, there are many other platforms available to events centers to market their space

and services. Additionally, research has shown that a strong brand and presence is likely

to increase customer base. This can be achieved by making all relevant information about

the center readily and easily accessible to clients.

As such, the following steps can be considered to improve upon ease locating,

contacting and reaching Graceful Gardens. In order to get clients to appreciate Graceful

Garden's brand better, recognize their professionalism as well as make them their first

point of contact, the owner must also ensure that they are easy to contact at all times by

clients with specified working hours and separating business contacts to personal ones.

Additionally, interactions with potential clients must make a good first impression.

Customer service is key in attracting and maintaining clients.

Again, directional signboards uniquely reflective of what Graceful Gardens offers, its

brand, services in brief and important contact information must be placed through

principal streets.

Ensuring that their services, a portfolio showing past works and events, clear

information of product offerings and contact information are displayed on all social

media sites and on the internet. Per the information gathered during the needs assessment,

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the best social media sites to achieve maximum results are Instagram and Facebook. A

website is also a key and very useful tool for businesses and should be included as one of

the main points of contact for Graceful Gardens.

4.2.5 Promotion

According to Stafford (2019), social media is one of the tools for marketing

venues and attracting clients in the events industry. Graceful Gardens can achieve this by

using popular social media sites like Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook to market the

center. They can also focus on creating a strategy and striving to build a network

consisting of players in the event industry and being consistent with media posts to

showcase events. One notable trend within the events industry is the network that vendors

create for themselves. Most vendors would list co-vendors for a specific event which

helps to increase the posts reach. Posting frequently and building a social media network

with vendors and other players in the hospitality and events industry in Tema specifically,

is one step towards achieving reach and frequency with which potential clients come

across Graceful Gardens. It is important that these platforms are easily accessible and

contain relevant information such as contact details and detailed information about the

center's product offerings, staff composition, location and many more as a way to market

and promote the venue (Stafford, 2019).

The manner in which information is conveyed to clients can easily persuade or

discourage them from choosing Graceful Gardens as their event venue. Thus, when

communicating the downsides of Graceful Gardens such as the portable washrooms or

the early closing times, the information can be made to look positive. For instance,

security reasons and night insects can be used as reasons for limiting time of events. The

mobile washrooms can be portrayed positively by highlighting the fact that cleaners are provided at events to ensure that washrooms are constantly well-kept. Focusing on the positive aspects when clients raise questions can persuade them more.

The nature of the hospitality industry, specifically events centers, does not always allow clients to patronize services as frequently as in other industries. This means that even loyal clients would not host events as frequently as they would purchase an item or patronize another service. Thus, though the need for strengthening the relationship with existing clients is necessary, the need for attracting new ones is more beneficial. This includes effective advertising and customer service strategies that would appeal to clients and grow their interest in patronizing Graceful Gardens events center over other events centers. After these clients are convinced and given a great customer experience, client retention strategies may be employed to ensure that Graceful Gardens becomes the first point of contact when those clients are in need of an events center to host their events.

Mei, Dean & White (1999) suggest that for businesses to be able to achieve competitive advantage and efficiency, as well as combat intensifying competition there is a need to seek profitable ways to differentiate themselves by demonstrating how they deliver high service quality. Many potential clients would be searching for specific characteristics, factors or qualities when searching for an events center for a specific event. It is therefore important that as part of Graceful Gardens' marketing strategies, they leverage on their unique and differentiated features of the garden to attract clients. The kind of content on these sites should be reflective of the brand that Graceful gardens aims to communicate to its clients. Doing this properly can also create a desirable image of gardens for events in the minds of potential clients. It can also be used to promote

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afternoon Garden Events to attract clients and combat the problem of early closing times at Graceful Gardens.

Solaris (2018) interviewed several businesspersons in the events industry who highlighted the importance of knowing one's audience and client base particularly to aid in focusing marketing and sales efforts towards that audience. Creative videos, images, and company news could be cleverly crafted to suit the brand. Content may be created based on the different customer segments and demographics of clients that the owner wishes to target. Content must also be created keeping in mind the different types of events that are usually celebrated.

The benefits of word of mouth and referral advertisements can be taken advantage of by putting exceptional effort towards the success of their clients' events in order that clients' guests would be more inclined to make enquiries and consider the center for their own events. Because of the many tools available to players in the event industry, information can easily be passed to buyers at low costs. The use of social media and word of mouth is inexpensive but extremely effective (Solaris, 2018).

Tracking social media influence and ROI will help inform which areas to pay attention to and how to improve upon promotion strategies. Comparing social media pages with competitors pages can help inform steps forward.

4.2.6 People

To support the changes in processes, product offerings and promotion efforts, additional staff may be needed at Graceful Gardens. There are several reasons why employing extra labor is important. Assuming for instance, that there are multiple successive events that require events management services, it would be unwise to manage

those events by herself. Balancing the business with her personal life as she expands and strives to improve upon it will become increasingly difficult as the business grows.

Therefore, outsourcing labor, especially with running social media accounts and doing administrative work would be very helpful. Delegating duties would take some burden off her shoulders to concentrate on the frontline activities. For instance, caretakers could be trained and empowered to be more responsible for cleaning and logistics supervision. If employees are treated like partners and made to feel as though their roles are essential to the service, they would be more committed and perform better. This model also facilitates easier and more frequent communication between management and employees which is a trait the owner desires.

The owner lacking adequate social media savvy would need to employ a part-time employee to handle social media accounts, coverage and administrative work. Since the management needs would have increased, she will need more employees, either part-time or full-time to ensure quality. Bos (2010) confirms that sole proprietors do desire to run their businesses with minimal assistance. However, as each business grows, delegation of duties becomes necessary to ensure quality of output or services. Attempting to grow the business while neglecting the need for more assistance could be detrimental to the owner's reputation and standard already set for the business.

Additionally, to ensure that the implementation of the new product offerings is successful, the owner needs value vendor relations. These stakeholders are extremely vital to the business' operations since she would rely on their cooperation to be able to carry out her duties and please her clients. For such vendors, a catalogue or database containing their information, areas of expertise, pricing methods and relevant details

would promote efficiency and make processes simpler and faster. For vendors that she may have good relationships with, she may strike deals that would ensure all parties, the vendors, herself and her clients benefit in terms of cost and value.

4.2.7 Physical Evidence

One of the objectives of this solution is to make Graceful Gardens modify its operations in order to differentiate itself from its competitors. Graceful Gardens is already at a slight disadvantage because it lacks certain desired facilities such as washrooms, changing rooms, pantries or multipurpose rooms. Thus, the promotional strategies are meant to ensure that Graceful Gardens successfully captures the interests of clients despite these shortcomings.

The garden requires assets that would differentiate it from its competitors and stand out uniquely to appeal to clients. For example, if she decides to start renting out her own logistics, having furniture and garden décor that promote garden events and appeal to clients that love garden events would be ideal. The environment and experience should fully mirror a garden ambiance and thus, there should consistency and creativity with the decorative assets, garden plants and flowers at the center. All these efforts must be client-focused and thus should appeal to clients that would potentially host garden events. Similarly, in order that the addition of new services may be successful, certain assets including technological tools and stationery such as computers and printers need to be invested in since record-keeping and documentation of client information is essential to professionalism, business management and assessing business growth.

The first impression guests have of the center is very important to its success. Thus, efforts must be made towards making the outward appearance of the garden

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appealing to potential clients. The use of captivating signboards and plant designs can

attract passersby. The overall experience that guests have during events also plays a vital

role and so must be given great attention. One way to achieve this is to have risk

management processes in place for disasters such as rain, for instance, where the efforts

of the venue manager towards providing assistance to guests would count as great

customer service.

<center>4.3 Implementation Plan</center>

The solution can be implemented in different phases. It would involve the following

major activities:

Table 3

Implementation Plan

Solution/Tool	Purpose of tool	Parties Responsible	When/How often should tool be used?	Method of tracking impact
Revising service offerings	Contribute to growth in sales and revenue and satisfy client needs.	The Graceful Gardens owner	Annually or biennially.	Monitor number of client bookings per month and Client feedback
Restructuring pricing strategy	To suit the changes made to services.	The Graceful Gardens owner	After any service offering review/revision is done.	Determine all costs are catered for using financial statements and track monthly revenue increases.
Procuring extra labor	To support changes and ensure quality of output.	The Graceful Gardens owner	As demand for services increase.	Track quality of output and growth in event bookings/Measure profit against cost of investment (Return on Investment).
Digital Marketing and content creation	To promote Graceful Gardens and increase its reach to customers.	Digital Marketer	Weekly and after every event.	Monitor increase in online enquiries and client bookings/Measure Return on Investment.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter summarizes the key insights gathered from the project and documents some suggested changes that Graceful Gardens needs to adopt to complement the solution provided.

5.2 Recommendations

For unforeseen incidences such as the Covid-19 pandemic that affected many industries worldwide, and other crises or government policies that cannot be escaped, a financial plan would be useful to help in such times. Investment options are available for individuals and sole proprietors. Thus, for business growth purposes and financial security, a percentage of profits may be invested in safe financial securities. These investment plans can also be helpful for purchasing assets in the future and expanding the business.

Since clients want a one-stop experience, and because the owner is seeking multiple sources of income, some of these future assets she could invest in should be garden event logistic rentals. This is a great source of income for players in the hospitality industry and have a great return on investment as they are part of the basic essentials of most events.

For a business that is striving to grow, setting and documenting clear cut goals and objectives will help develop better-informed decisions and strategies towards this growth. Setting goals and objectives will help give the owner a sense of direction and help her plan while obtaining the right resources along the lines to get to her destination.

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5.3 Limitations of the tool

The services marketing mix is a popular tool used by many businesses for improvement. However, it does not make any provisions for tracking its impact and does not factor financial positions and growth. Regarding conducting this project, the unavailability of set goals and objectives made tailoring the solution to suit the business difficult. Again, very few clients were willing to participate in the research and thus the desired amount of information could not be gathered.

5.4 Key insights gathered from project

The event industry in Ghana holds several opportunities for growth. With the right strategies and the right resources, event venue owners and events mangers can thrive profitably. The key to success is premium customer satisfaction through exceptional services which can be achieved economically. The service marketing mix can help several businesses improve their performance given an accurate analysis of the market in which the business operates is factored into decision making and problem-solving.

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APPENDIX

6.1 Dashboard for Client

GRACEFUL GARDENS EVENTS CENTER

A SERVICE MARKETING PLAN

By Naa Lamiley Mills

SUPERVISED BY DR. JOSEPHINE DJAN

Figure 7

Needs Assessment

- Graceful Gardens lacks adequate exposure. The business has little social media presence and has few marketing and advertisement plans and strategies necessary for growth.

- The owner of the Garden is not making as much revenue as she could potentially make from her garden space. The resources and skills available to the owner are not being fully optimized.

- Graceful Gardens lacks certain desired facilities such as washrooms, changing rooms, pantries or multipurpose rooms.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The owner of Graceful Gardens Events Center is not optimizing her skill and resources to generate enough revenue and attract the desired client base from her event center and therefore requires a long-term plan that would serve as a strategy to help achieve the desired profitability, improve overall business performance as well as attract the desired client base.

Figure 8

MARKETING PLAN FOR GRACEFUL GARDENS

SOLUTION IN BRIEF

Product
- Redesign product offerings

Price
- Restructure pricing strategies

Process
- Redesign processes to track resources

Promotion
- Employ social media and internet promotion strategies

Physical Evidence
- Invest in diferentiating assets

Place
- Increase brand awareness, reach and presence

People
- Employ additional labor to maintain quality

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

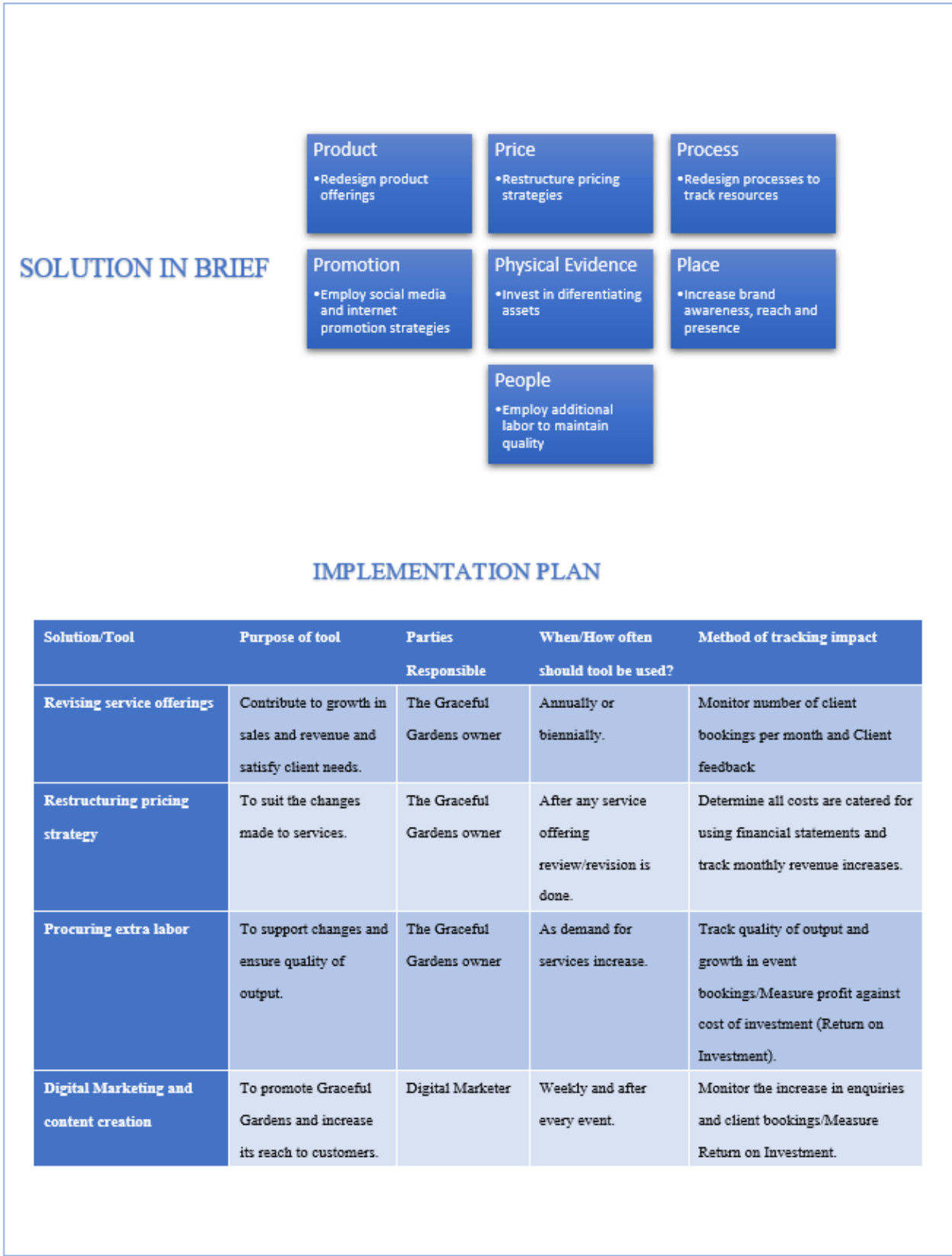| Solution/Tool	Purpose of tool	Parties Responsible	When/How often should tool be used?	Method of tracking impact
Revising service offerings	Contribute to growth in sales and revenue and satisfy client needs.	The Graceful Gardens owner	Annually or biennially.	Monitor number of client bookings per month and Client feedback
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Digital Marketing and content creation	To promote Graceful Gardens and increase its reach to customers.	Digital Marketer	Weekly and after every event.	Monitor the increase in enquiries and client bookings/Measure Return on Investment.

Figure 9

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6.2 Needs Assessment Plan

Table 4

Needs Assessment Schedule

Data Source	Participant/Source	Collection Period	Data Collection Tool	Data Analysis Tool
Primary (Set 1)	Business owner	14th to 16th December	Interviews	Concept mapping
Primary (Set 1)	Clients	14th to 21st December	Interviews	Concept mapping
Primary (Set 1)	Employees	16th December	Interviews	Concept mapping
Primary (Set 2)	Competitors	21st to 24th December	Interviews	Concept mapping
Primary (Set 2)	Potential Clients	27th Dec to 3rd January	Interviews	Concept mapping
Secondary	Social Media	3rd to 6th January	Internet research	Concept mapping
Secondary	Articles and reviews	7th to 10th January	Internet research	Concept mapping

Table 5

Data Analysis Schedule

Data Source	Data Collection Tool	Analysis Period
First Set of Primary Data	Interviews	11th & 12th January
Second Set of Primary Data	Interviews	13th & 14th January
Secondary Data	Internet Research	15th & 16th January

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<div align="center">6.3 Interview Guide</div>

The interview guide will serve as a guide that will loosely inform the interview with the participants.

For the Employee and Owner

1. As an employee/the owner, what are some of the problems you encounter with clients?
2. What are some of the strategies that you use to attract and maintain clients?
3. Have there been any complaints made by clients?
4. What are some of the upgrades if any, you have made to your center since its opening?

For Clients and Potential Clients

5. How did you discover/hear about the garden?
6. What are some of the things about the garden that led you to use it for your event(s)?
7. If you ever chose not to use the garden for your events, kindly state those reasons?
8. What was your alternative venue after deciding not to use the garden for your events?
9. What are your suggestions on making the garden more attractive to clients?

For Competitors

10. What are some of the characteristics that clients and potential clients seek from your center?
11. Is your center a garden center or an indoor center? Kindly describe what kind of facility it is?
12. What are some of the facilities and benefits you provide to your clients?
13. What are some of the upgrades if any, you have made to your center since its opening?