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**Airbnb Media Plan Recommendation**

Airbnb is a successful company that helps travelers find lodging options that differ from hotels as the website and app work to connect rooms for rent in cities worldwide with those looking for affordable, unique travel opportunities. Started back in 2008, Airbnb is now used in 65,000 cities across 195 countries and has helped house 260 million guests, bringing extra income to those that put their homes up on the site to attract visitors and host friends, couples, and families alike, while at the same time allowing those travelers to be able to see somewhere new. Renters can live in hotels, hostels, private homes, vacation rentals, tents, caravans and campers. While Airbnb has been wildly popular through social media with over two million Instagram followers, word-of-mouth through earned media in comments & photos shared with friends online, and actual return on investment that the company has seen, there is always room for improvement.

Some competitors have popped up causing user and the corporate side to wonder, “what makes Airbnb different?”, and the answer is that Airbnb is the original way to book home-away-from-home lodging in someone’s actual home, and consumers trust what they know their inner circles have tried and deemed awesome. Airbnb has built a reputation of being honest, excellent, and loved by most who use it- therefore in all respect, awesome. The world simply has to be reminded of how epic Airbnb is, and using modern paid media supported by owned media we can make Airbnb top of mind through the campaign running in 2019.

While researching Airbnb it was exciting to discover that their strengths greatly outweigh their weaknesses, and that there are many opportunities to increase Airbnb’s usership and awareness to those who aren’t already familiar with it. Some of Airbnb’s strengths include that it’s easy to use; this is undoubtedly the best part of Airbnb- it takes the stress out of having to find an affordable, trustworthy hotel and puts all of the consumers options within their location and price range into one website. The booking process is simple; the consumer selects the dates they are looking to travel and then after a brief conversation with the host, expectations and clear arrival-day instructions from the host are communicated efficiently. Airbnb has a wide yet specific target audience, with their highest user demographic being young females in their twenties who are college-educated and have a desire to travel. Up to this date, Airbnb has faced no major scandals in the media or public eye, which is impressive given the service provided.

Although Airbnb has faced wide success there are some weaknesses. One weakness is that Airbnb’s business model can be clearly copied and manipulated to offer the same thing but look a little bit differently, a hidden market we looked further into when researching the recent competitor market. Similar services such as Homeaway, VRBO, and Tripadvisor have gotten their feet on the ground but still trail far behind Airbnb in terms of popularity. Another weakness with Airbnb is that the more it grows, the higher the costs become in terms of taxes, rental prices possibly going up in the area due to people renting bigger, nicer places with the intention of renting out rooms consistently, and making sure all laws and regulations are being followed, etc..

One opportunity within Airbnb’s business model is that it’s better than a hotel due to the personalized nature of the renting process, where the consumer is in total control of who they’re staying with, what type of property it is, how private they want it to be, etc. It’s not a hotel, and that’s where another opportunity lies- there are increasing numbers of unique celebrity homes being put up on the website so that consumers can choose to stay in a celebrity’s property and have a total “experience” out of it. This is driving more traffic to Airbnb’s website and can also be a selling point for the Airbnb app, so consumers will be intrigued by looking up what celebrity has what property for rent and then instantly a new future customer has been born through awareness. One last opportunity Airbnb has is focusing on natural disaster relief funding and assistance so that there is good press in times of natural disasters, but also so they can maintain their identity has a people-first business. They’ve received excellent press in times of disaster relief previously for providing help, and this is something that can be followed through repeatedly.

Unfortunately there are some threats that can cause Airbnb to lose credibility, such as unpleasant host experiences that can lead to lawsuits and fines. While nothing incredibly news-breaking has come about about bad host/renting experiences, hosts want to make sure their reviews stay very positive and renters want to continue feeling as safe as possible trusting a stranger to provide them with a clean and secure home to live in for the length of their stay. Airbnb also needs to watch their employment rate, as with 600 people already employed it can drive costs to run the website up to keep up with the employee paychecks. While it’s excellent that Airbnb is so successful, the success needs to be closely monitored.

Airbnb clearly has a lot to offer, therefore there’s room to increase awareness and grow the consumer base. Our goal for the Fiscal Year of 2019 is to increase Airbnb’s revenue by 10%, and to increase awareness by reaching 2.5 million consumers in our target audience, and hit them with our campaign a minimum of three times each. Given our budget, we aimed high to make sure our message was reaching the largest amount of target consumers enough times that there is no question they will at least explore using Airbnb before their next big trip. This is how we came to our conclusive target audience of women in their late twenties to early thirties who are college educated and who have the desire to travel near and far with a significant other or a group of their girlfriends.

In our research we discovered 400 adult women have stayed in an Airbnb compared to 395 adult males who have stayed in an Airbnb, and 50.20% of those who stayed in an Airbnb are adult women while 49.80% of those who have stayed in an Airbnb are adult males. While the numbers are close, we discovered in a focus group that females are more likely to book Airbnbs while traveling while males are more likely to book hotels. Furthermore, when booking trips and vacations it is usually the female booking everything and the male significant other will go along with whatever she chooses. We discovered females hold the power in this domain and therefore we need to target females as our decision-making demographic.

**Media Strategies**  
 To best reach our target audience, we’ll use a mix of media strategies using paid, earned and owned advertising to divide our $20 million budget. Each strategy was considered after research of some of the best practices to reach our target audience of young women that are social media savvy, educated and watch a mix of streaming devices and cable TV with a love for travel.   
 **Paid**  
 According to Pew Research Center, about six in ten young adults primarily use streaming services to watch TV. Airbnb stands out among its competitors by promoting cultural experiences through the travel site, so we’ve decided that our first plan to reach our audience will be through a Hulu interactive advertising. With this ad, allows viewers to choose between three different Airbnb ad experiences in exchange for limited to no commercials throughout the show. Through the advertisement, viewers can virtually experience watching the fireworks during Diwali in India, or partying on Bourbon Street during Mardi Gras or dancing at Crop Over in the West Indies. This will show Airbnb not only as a global resource for living accommodations, but as a way for consumers to enjoy once in-a-lifetime experiences with our services. AdAge reports that Hulu charges $35,000 for one million impressions for standard run-of-site in-stream video ads. We think ten million impressions for $350,000 will produce a great amount of awareness to the brand. In a recent Hulu case study on an analysis of 53 previous campaigns, advertising on Hulu “increases likelihood to buy (+3%) and strengthens the brand-message connection (+6%) and opinion of the brand (+3%).” This means that advertising on Hulu will make our brand message stronger while increasing sales at the same time.   
 According to an article by Indie Wire, one of the most watched shows on Hulu is The Handmaid’s Tale, a show with a predominantly female cast. The second season of this show will air late April to June, and because this target audience is similar to ours, we believe this show is ideal for our interactive ad.   
 In addition to Hulu, we will produce traditional primetime advertisements during NBC’s hit show, This is Us , which airs from September through March. This timeframe falls right in line with the holidays when people are preparing to book tickets for holiday travel, and the beginning of March is right before travelers book tickets for spring break. This is Us airs 18 shows a season and will cost $394,428 per episode for a grand total of $7,099,704 for the whole season. In addition to this NBC show, we’ve decided to advertise during the fall lineup of the hit ABC show, Grey’s Anatomy. A 30 second advertisement during Grey’s will cost $213,576 per ad according to an article in AdAge. We plan to air the ad once per each episode in the season, which on average includes 24 episodes a season. That would make a total of $5,124,624 for the year.   
 In addition to primetime television and Hulu, MTV is a network that can help us tap into our target audience. Comcast revealed that MTV’s target audience are people ages 18-34, and women tune into the show about 10 percent more frequently than men. Since MTV Cribs was once one of the most popular shows on MTV in the early 2000’s around the time our target audience was growing up, we will air a MTV Cribs inspired commercial that will give viewers a tour of an Airbnb rental house. The nostalgia alone and creativeness of the commercial will generate shares throughout social media generating more owned media. One commercial will cost about $150,000 per commercial, and we plan to air it at least once during one of the network’s highest rated shows, Teen Mom. The show airs almost year-round and last season had 27 episodes. This commercial ad will cost us $4,050,000.   
 **Owned**  
 Our owned media strategy will be driven by social media influencers who have past experiences and success with increasing awareness and sales for other brands. A Collective Bias study reveals that consumers are 30 percent more likely to buy a product or use a service if recommended by a non-celebrity blogger because consumers relate more to these influencers, and value their opinions more. This same survey concludes that YouTube is the second most influential social media platform for purchases and that 18 percent of consumers are influenced by YouTube regarding their purchases. Because Airbnb is already successful at driving brand awareness, only the top YouTube influencers will be able to further increase our awareness, and top tier influencers charge top tier prices. YouTubers with seven million subscribers or more can charge up to $300,000 for a video partnership. Ideally, we’ll pitch partnerships to travel bloggers by paying for all their travel accommodations in exchange for a video about their stay in an Airbnb with a link on their video for consumers to book with Airbnb, which will include a promotion code. Typically, vloggers will post a teaser of their vlog on their other social media channels, so we’ve created a hashtag #HowDoYouAirbnb. They can use this hashtag to help us generate earned media from their reviews and comments and the responses of their followers. If we use five influencers at $300,000, we’ll spend $1.5 million. By seeing first-hand how well their favorite vloggers enjoy their stay at Airbnb, YouTube subscribers will book a stay with us over our competitors. Since the YouTube videos aren’t as time sensitive as our primetime network and Hulu ads, we’ll plan to air these videos once every other month starting in the summer months.   
 Influencer marketing will be used to dispel the myth that cooking while traveling is a hassle and not worth the time. We propose to partner with Buzzfeed’s food brand Tasty for a video that will show consumers how cooking at an Airbnb doesn’t have to end with a sink full of dishes, nor will cooking on your vacation halt vacationers from enjoying themselves. With a three-minute “One Pot Tomato and Basil Pasta” video, viewers will watch step-by-step instructions on a 20 to 30-minute meal with as few dishes as possible while traveling around the world with us. In September 2016, one Tasty video produced 1.8 billion views, with 1.6 billion coming solely from Facebook. For that amount of views, the video would only cost us $2,000, a very small amount for such a huge impact. We will air one of these videos right before spring break in February or March, and again in the summer from July to August when people are traveling with friends for a total of four Tasty video with a grand total of $8,000.   
 **Earned**  
 As stated earlier, lot of the earned media will be generated in response to some of our paid and owned media. Our hashtag #HowDoYouAirbnb will showcase how people enjoy a stay with Airbnb all over the world. Our YouTube influencers will use this hashtag as they vlog about their stay with our paid accommodations, and consumers will be able to do the same. Taking the same cultural approach from our Hulu interactive ad, no matter if you’re in Caribana in Toronto, Madi Gras in New Orleans or even visiting Chicago at the last minute to celebrate the Cubs winning the World Series, this hashtag will promote Airbnb as a hospitality service that consumers can use to facilitate memories of life-long experiences. This relationships with Airbnb can create positive word of mouth marketing for the company, which can increase sales, awareness and loyalty.