

Hunter Farms Pumpkin Patch

Marketing Plan Proposal



**California
Atwater FFA**

CA0344

2016



Surge Marketing

Introduction

Families in the Merced, California area are just starting to learn about Hunter Farms Pumpkin Patch. Founded in 2013, the family owned and operated pumpkin patch is nestled on 12 acres within the Hunter Farms almond orchard. It is located in Atwater, California in Merced County with a population of 255,793 with 30% of the population under age 18.¹ Neighboring Madera County has a population of 150,865 with 27% of the population under age 18.² As a newer pumpkin patch, Surge was hired to strengthen Hunter Farm's position in the niche market of family-oriented agri-tourism to increase market share and profits.



Surge Marketing presents **"Harvest Memories."** This plan outlines marketing strategies and new attractions to increase market penetration and net income. The goal is to generate rich experiences that families share every year.



Market Analysis

Current Status in Market

Hunter Farms is one of four agri-tourism facilities open in October in Merced County. In 2015, the third year of operation, Hunter Farms estimated about 6,000 visitors with a profit of \$15,000. Guests enjoy paid attractions including the Time Traveling Tractor, Corn Maze, Hayride, and Gold Panning; and a large variety of pumpkins priced from \$1 to \$50. Packaged food and drinks are priced with a 50% mark-up or more to flat dollar amount. Complimentary attractions include the Dino Dig, Hay Pyramid, Critter Corral (petting zoo), Trike Track and Photo Spots. Hunter Farms has chosen to differentiate by focusing on the family atmosphere. Current marketing efforts include signage, a website and a Facebook page.



Industry Trends

Americans are spending more of their disposable income on entertainment.³
Halloween has become one of the most popular and profitable holidays.

Average spending on Halloween has increased 54.7% since 2005⁴ to more than \$6.9 billion annually.⁶

More than 157 million Americans spend an average of \$74.34 per buyer on Halloween.⁵

Since 2007, the amount of money from agri-tourism rose by 24 %.⁷

Buyer Profile and Behavior

Families or an adult with at least one child age 2 to 12 years old are the primary buyers of attractions, pumpkins and food at Hunter Farm's Pumpkin Patch. The average American family spends 4% of their income on entertainment for an average of \$2,500 per year.⁸ Entertainment purchase decisions are made by the adult; however children's input influences the decision making process.



- 51% of children influence an adult's decision on out-of-home entertainment.
- 50% of children ages 6-17 research products and services before they purchase.
- 64%percent of children do more research as they get older.⁹

1. 2014 United States Census Bureau

2. 2014 United States Census Bureau

3. Mintel, "Americans Cash in on Recession savings in pursuit of experiential activities: entertainment markets thrive, while clothing and household markets take a hit." *Mintel 2016 American Lifestyles Report*. <http://www.mintel.com/press-centre/social-and-lifestyle/americans-cash-in-on-recession-savings-in-pursuit-of-experiential-activities-entertainment-markets-thrive-while-clothing-and-household-markets-take-a-hit>

4. (2014. June. Vol. XIV, No.5). "Entertainment spending forecast to increase." *Leisure eNews*.

5. Reynolds, T. (2015, September 23). "157 Million Americans will celebrate Halloween." *www.nrf.com*.

6. Reynolds, T. (2015, September 23). "157 Million Americans will celebrate Halloween." *www.nrf.com*. (2014. June. Vol. XIV, No.5). "

7. Runyon, Luke. "Agritourism a growing opportunity on the farm." June 12, 2014. *Harvest Public Media*. <http://harvestpublicmedia.org/article/agritourism-growing-opportunity-farm>

8. (2014. June. Vol. XIV, No.5). "Entertainment spending forecast to increase." *Leisure eNews*.

9. Gannon, A (2015, June 11). "Children Have Refined Pester Power and Make Savvy Shoppers." *YouGovUS*

Competitors SWOT Analysis

Four other Halloween facilities are within an hour's drive of Hunter Farms Pumpkin Patch. Two are indirect competitors: Merced College Pumpkin Patch only offers u-pick pumpkins, no attractions and is only open two weekends. Frightmare Farms only operates a scary hayride with no pumpkin sales. Two direct competitors include Vista Ranch and Cellars and R.A.M Farms.



	Vista Ranch and Cellars 30 Minutes	R.A.M Farms Pumpkin Patch 30 Minutes
S Strengths	• Prime location Highway 140 to Yosemite • Wine tasting (Entertainment centers that serve alcohol enjoy much higher sales and profits per square foot than centers that do not¹⁰) • Open Year-around	• Offers a scary component • Pumpkin scratching to personalize • Movies under the stars • Recognized in community as strong community supporter
W Weaknesses	• Limited attractions • More adult focused • No hay ride	• Limited attractions • Higher fees • No package deals • Difficult to advertise road side
O Opportunities	• Increase marketing to Yosemite visitors in local hotels/motels as Yosemite is experiencing an increase of visitors by auto of 21.8% compared to July 2015¹¹	• More involvement in community philanthropy¹³ • Add similar activities like pumpkin scratching and movies
T Threats	• Vista could add more attractions • Vista is open year-around which provides the opportunity to develop return customers. Repeat customers are profitable.	• RAM could add more family attractions • RAM could decrease prices

	Hunter Farm's Pumpkin Patch
Strengths	• Prime location visible from Highway 99 • Diversity of attractions • 27 varieties of pumpkins, squash and gourds
Weaknesses	• Confusing pricing • Lack of signage within the pumpkin patch • Multiple locations in the U.S. with the name "Hunter Farms" making it confusing
Opportunities	• Specialize in the wholesome family experience • Improve signage • Add new attractions to increase guest visit length and spending
Threats	• Change in the economy that results in less disposable income • Unfavorable weather conditions that impacts attendance

10 "Does Alcohol Belong in Family Entertainment Centers?" 2012. *White Hutchinson Leisure and Learning Group*. <https://www.whitehutchinson.com/leisure/articles/AlcoholFEC.shtml>
 11 "July 2016 Visitors to Yosemite National Park Continues Double Digit Gains Over 2015." August 15, 2016. *Sierra Sun Times*. <http://goldrushcam.com/sierrasuntimes/index.php/news/local-news/7553-july-2016-visitors-to-yosemite-national-park-continues-double-digit-gains-over-2015>.

12 McEachern, Alex. "Repeat Customers are profitable! Here are the stats to prove it." April 22, 2015. <https://www.sweettoothrewards.com/blog/repeat-customers-profitable-stats-to-prove/>
 13 Tonello, Mateo. "Making the Business Case for Corporate Philanthropy." August 20, 2011. <https://corpgov.law.harvard.edu/2011/08/20/making-the-business-case-for-corporate-philanthropy/>

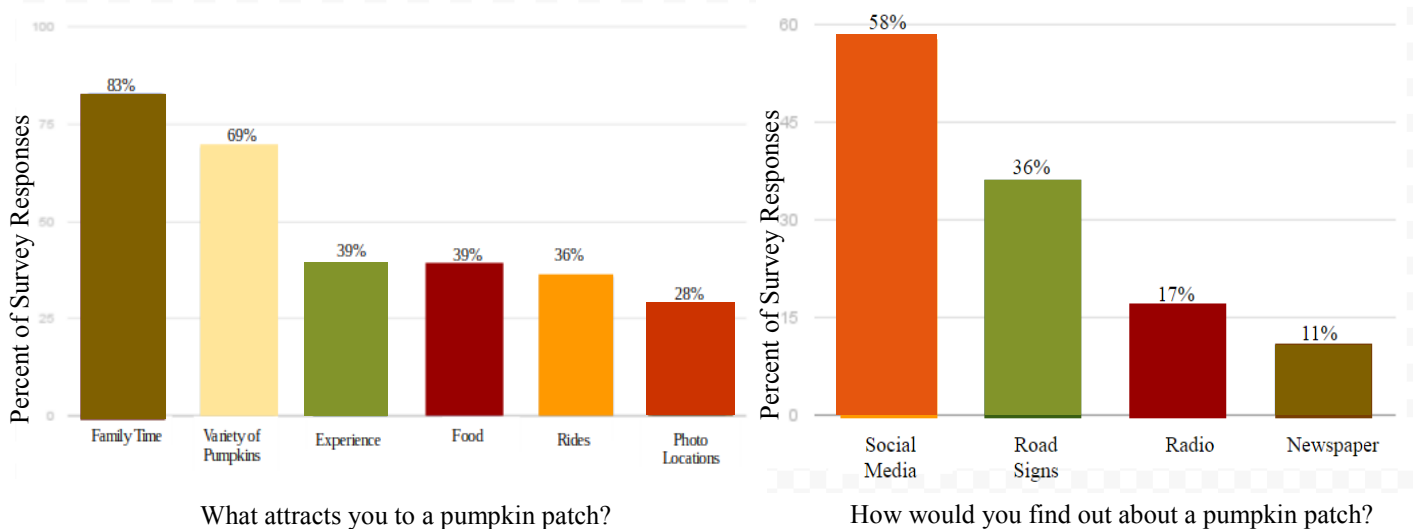
Primary Research Results

Parent Interview Survey

400 Parents Merced County Fair June 10, 2016

Qualifying questions: "Are you a parent?" and "Have you ever visited a pumpkin patch?"

361 Qualified respondents



Focus Group

7 Moms to understand why they visit a pumpkin patch

- "Spend time as a family, fun activities like a corn maze, safe, fun atmosphere, kids activities, fun of visiting a farm, want to create a memory, a large variety of pumpkins, and unique pumpkins."
- Favorite comment, "It's the new Christmas."
- Other comments included learning about pumpkin patches from family and friends (word of mouth) and from their child's school. All interviewees mentioned social media and radio as ways they learn about activities.



Elementary Age Survey

722 Student Surveys

A student survey was conducted because of the influence children have on entertainment purchasing decisions.

Qualifying question, "What grade are you in?"
Responses from children who were not in 4th-6th grades were disregarded.

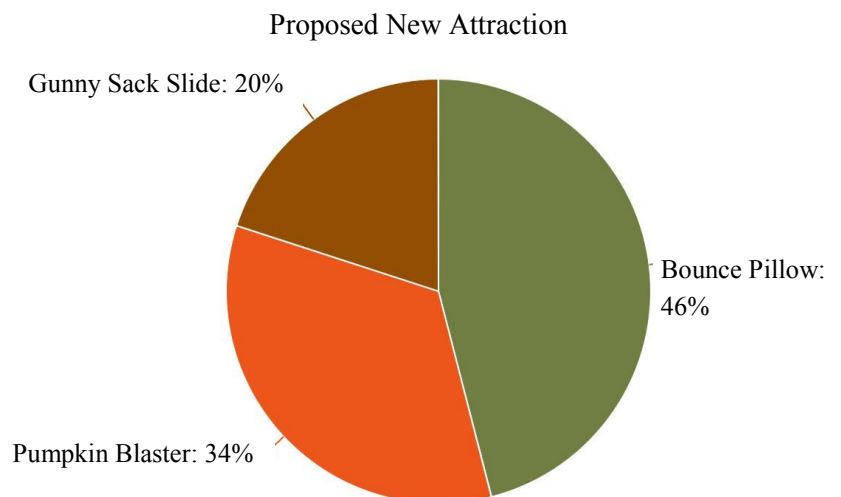
581 Qualified respondents

4th grade: 174

5th grade: 180

6th grade: 227

Surge proposes adding value with new attractions. Thus, the question identified what attraction is most popular.





Business Proposal

Mission Statement



Key Planning Assumptions

Based on research and survey data, Surge Marketing assumes the following:

- Families will continue to spend money on quality entertainment.¹⁴
- Additional attractions will increase number of guests, per guest spending on attractions and food.¹⁵
- Pumpkin purchases per person will remain stable; however, pumpkin demand will correlate with the increased number of visitors.
- Hunter Farms Pumpkin Patch will be the first in the area to add a costumed character.

Short and Long-term Goals

Short Term Goals	Year one - 2017	Year two - 2018	Year three - 2019
Social Media Engagement	1%	1.5%	1.5%
Market Penetration	10,000 customers	14,000 customers	18,000 customers
Financial	Net Income \$39,080	Net Income \$94,259	Net Income \$154,731

Long Term Goal: By 2020, obtain a profit of \$175,000

Target Market

The target market is moms of children ages 2 – 12 years old. Parents hold the purchasing power in the household and those with younger children are more likely to be involved in their child's life.¹⁶ Within our identified target populations this market is nondenominational, earning an income of \$40,000 or higher, and half are Hispanic families who primarily speak English.¹⁷



Strategies and Action Plan

Our goal is to create a memorable family experience that connects Hunter Farms Pumpkin Patch to fond emotions and feelings with results in additional entertainment spending and repeat customers.

Product

Family focused pumpkin patch experience with the following activities: Time Traveling Tractor, Corn Maze, Hayride, and Gold Panning, Dino Dig, Hay Pyramid, Critter Corral (petting zoo), Trike Track, Photo Spots, Food and Pumpkins.



Surge recommends adding a new attraction each year to encourage return annual visits, increase visit length and drive spending on attractions, pumpkins and food sales.

2017 New Attraction

2018 New Attraction

2019 New Attraction

Bounce Pillow and Sound System
\$30,000

Pumpkin Blaster and the Rubber Ducky Races
\$35,000

Gunny Sack Slide
\$40,000

¹⁴ Garcia, J. (2015, May 16). "Disney Parks Visitor Spending Is Growing Faster Than Attendance. *Orlando Sentinel*

¹⁵ Van Ost, R. (2009, January 20). "The Impact of New Attractions on Theme Park Attendance."

¹⁶ "Parental Involvement in the Child's Well-being." FamilyFacts.org. <http://familyfacts.org/briefs/40/parental-involvement-and-childrens-wellbeing>

¹⁷ Child Trends. (2013). Parental involvement in schools. Available at: <http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=parental-involvement-in-schools>

Price Structure

Surge recommends bundling attractions with two levels of wristbands and to offer individual attraction pricing.

	Hay Ride	Corn Maze	Time Traveling Tractor	Gold Panning	2017: Bounce Pillow	2018: Pumpkin Blaster	2018: Ducky Races	2019: Gunny Sack Slide
Farmer Bundle \$15	X	X	X	1 pan	1 session	New attractions can be added to bundle plans in the future		
Scarecrow Bundle \$8	X	X	X					
Individual prices	\$1	\$5	\$5	\$5	\$3 for 15 minutes	\$5 for 10 blasts	\$3 per duck	\$3 for 5 slides

Complimentary attractions: Dino Dig, Hay Pyramid, Critter Corral (petting zoo), Trike Track and Photo Spots.

Place

Hunter Farms Pumpkin Patch is visible and accessible from Highway 99, one of the major north-south freeways in California with a total population of more than 400,000 within a one hour drive.

Promotion

The promotion and marketing strategies center around the theme “Harvest Memories.” The Surge marketing fee includes coordinating all promotional strategies, promotions and managing social media August- October.

Promotional Strategies Before Season (August-September)

Digital Marketing

Logo and brand specifically for the pumpkin patch



Mobile compatible website with virtual tour
Update social media accounts to reflect new brand



Brand Endearment

Mascot/Costumed Character – personifies the brand, fosters goodwill, creates memorable experiences and increases social media posts.¹⁸

- Year one is “Jack” the pumpkin
- Year two is “Corny” the corn stalk
- Year three is “Ina Field” the scarecrow

Used at promotional events and during season



“Jack”

Print Promotion

- Postcard: with \$1 off Farmer wristband Monday-Thursday to increase sales during slower weekdays
Distribution to students on school tours each year and year 2 and 3 customers who signed up on website or made a credit card purchase (the credit card system captures customer information)
- Posters: Stores, restaurants, hardware and grocery stores
- Business Card Sized Coupons: one free hayride
Distribution at promotional events and as customers leave of the referral program with a date stamp day, not valid same day



¹⁸ Caufield, Kristopher. “Analyzing the effects of brand mascots on social media: Johnson City Power Board case study. May 2012. East Tennessee State University.

Atmosphere Transformation - “Harvest Memories”

Sound and public address system will play theme music to add to the ambiance and increase visitor spending. Also, the ability to make announcements will help promote attractions.¹⁹

Costumed character photo times will foster family fun and photo opportunities. Additional information signs will assist guests to understand pricing to fully enjoy the attractions.



Promotional Events

August - Merced Downtown Farmers Market

September - Livingston Harvest Festival

September - Madera County Fair

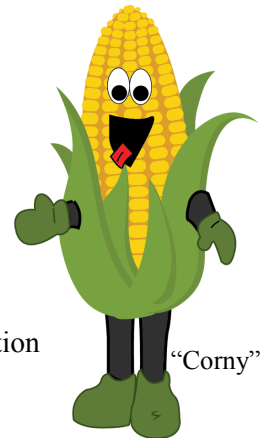
Booth will have pop-up banners (new one added each year to feature new attractions) and mascots

Roadside Advertising

Directional Signs: New directional signs will be ordered and placed on the roads with arrows pointing the path to Hunter Farms Pumpkin Patch.

Community Public Relations

Donate “Harvest Memories” Package for school and community fundraisers. Donation for promotion includes 4 Farmer Wristbands, \$20 voucher for pumpkins, \$20 voucher food (\$100 value)



Season Kick-Off October 1st

Public Relations Event

Local children with special needs. Each participant will get a free pumpkin. We will invite all local media outlets to generate news and video.

During Season October 2nd - 31st

Social Marketing

- Daily social media posts to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest
- Develop and monitor review sites: Yelp and Trip Advisor
- Social media Facebook advertising based on geographic location to increase the reach
- Snap Chat Geo Filter to encourage immediate social postings
- To expand the follower base, Surge will host the “pic of the day contest”



Awarding a Farmer wristband to the customer who uploaded a picture to their personal social media account with the hashtag “#harvestmemories” with the most amount of likes

Shopping Cart Advertisements

- 8”x 6” Full color ad on shopping carts in SaveMart Grocery Store for 31 days in October

Referral Program

- Postcards with the coupon provided to the 5,000 students on school tours featuring new attraction
- Bring a friend back with business card free hay ride coupon provided to customers as they exit with date stamp

Position

Currently, Hunter Farms is the only Central Valley pumpkin patch to offer this unique combination of attractions (including farm animals), goods and services solely focused on the family experience. The atmosphere and services includes wagons for kids and pumpkins along with shaded areas and benches for parents to watch their children participate in activities. Colorful and fun backdrops encourage family photos throughout the facility.

¹⁹ Lubin, Gus. “8 Amazing Effects that Background Music has on sales.” July 21, 2011. Business Insider.



Budget



Evaluation

Marketing Activity	2017	2018	2019
Before Season			
Updated Branding Package - Logo	\$ 2,000	\$ -	\$ -
Responsive Website Design	\$ 2,000	\$ -	\$ -
Postcards	\$ 350	\$ 600	\$ 1,200
Direct Mail Postcard to Previous Customers	\$ -	\$ 2,000	\$ 4,000
Posters	\$ 100	\$ 200	\$ 300
Business Card Coupons	\$ 150	\$ 300	\$ 400
Promotional Banners	\$ 500	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000
Costume Characters	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,620	\$ 2,740
Booth Space - Merced Downtown Farmers Market	\$ 250	\$ 250	\$ 250
Booth Space - Livingston Harvest Festival	\$ 150	\$ 150	\$ 150
Booth Space - Madera County Fair	\$ 150	\$ 150	\$ 150
Community Public Relations Donations	\$ 400	\$ 1,000	\$ 2,000
During Season			
Media Kick-Off Day	\$ 300	\$ 400	\$ 500
Directional Signs to Pumpin Patch	\$ 800	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,200
Signage at the Facility	\$ 500	\$ 1,000	\$ 2,000
Radio Ads	\$ 1,200	\$ 1,800	\$ 2,500
Shopping Cart Advertising	\$ 750	\$ 750	\$ 750
SnapChat Geofilter	\$ 150	\$ 150	\$ 300
Social Media Marketing Facebook	\$ 775	\$ 1,550	\$ 1,550
Social Post Daily Wristband Prize	\$ 465	\$ 465	\$ 465
Surge Marketing Management and Social Media Fee	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000
Marketing Activity Total	\$ 19,490	\$ 21,385	\$ 27,455

Sales Projections



Estimated 2016	1.5 hours	6,000	\$8	\$6	\$1
Year One	2 hours	10,000	\$10	\$6	\$2
Year Two	2.5 hours	14,000	\$11	\$6	\$2
Year Three	3 hours	18,000	\$12	\$6	\$3

Because of the short season, Surge will hold weekly evaluations during October.

- Social Engagement (likes, shares, comments) tracked in Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest. Google Analytics used to measure web traffic. Google alerts used to monitor media.
- Market Penetration measured by visitor count with a clicker as guests exit.
- Financial Sales tracked in sales system. Expenses monitored weekly to ensure they stay within the projected budget. Coupon/postcard redemption will also be tracked.

Weekly October Goals	1	2	3	4
Social Media Engagement	.5%	1%	1.5%	2%
Market Penetration Customers	10%	20%	30%	40%
Financial Sales	10%	20%	30%	40%

Contingency Plan

- Increase social media postings to include more short videos
- Attend promotional events in October
- Relocate directional signs to generate new interest.
- Adjust operating expenses

Recommendations for Future Actions

- Increase attraction pricing and bundling options
- Advertise in movie theaters during the upcoming previews
- Consider additional media event such as a 5K benefit run in the pumpkin patch in September



Harvest Memories

Value added attractions
Before and during season
marketing strategies
Creative brand, promotions
and public relations

Hunter Farms Pumpkin Patch Pro-Forma Income Statement			
GROSS SALES	2017- Year One	2018-Year Two	2019-Year Three
Attraction Sales	\$100,000	\$154,000	\$216,000
Pumpkin Sales	\$60,000	\$84,000	\$108,000
Food Revenue	\$20,000	\$28,000	\$36,000
School Tours	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
TOTAL SALES	\$195,000	\$281,000	\$375,000
Less Coupons Received	\$2,000	\$3,000	\$4,000
NET SALES	\$193,000	\$278,000	\$371,000
OPERATING EXPENSES			
Website Hosting	\$240	\$240	\$240
Attraction Operational Costs	\$6,000	\$8,000	\$10,000
Cost of Goods Growing Pumpkins	\$6,000	\$7,000	\$8,000
Cost of Goods Food	\$6,000	\$8,400	\$10,800
Cost of Growing Corn Maze	\$11,500	\$12,000	\$12,500
Credit Card Processing Fee	\$4,680	\$7,080	\$9,000
Insurance, Permits and Fees	\$2,000	\$2,500	\$3,000
Uniforms and Supplies	\$1,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Portable Restroom Rental	\$2,000	\$2,200	\$2,400
Salary Wages & Employee Taxes	\$30,000	\$35,000	\$40,000
Hourly Wages & Employee Taxes	\$35,010	\$41,937	\$49,874
Attraction Investment	\$30,000	\$35,000	\$40,000
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	\$134,430	\$162,357	\$188,814
Marketing Expenses	\$19,490	\$21,385	\$27,455
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$153,920	\$183,742	\$216,269
NET INCOME Before Taxes	\$39,080	\$94,258	\$154,731
Marketing Return on Investment	101%	341%	464%
Marketing Return Ratio	\$2.01	\$4.41	\$5.64