

LEON COUNTY HISPANIC HERITAGE FEST EVENT MARKETING PLAN

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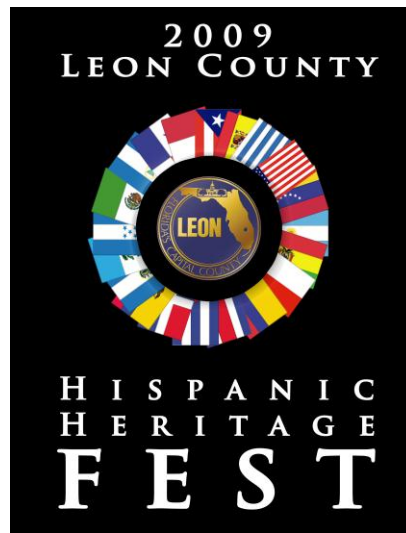


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EVENT BACKGROUND

In an effort to perform outreach to the local Hispanic community and educate the public about Hispanic culture, Leon County organized an annual festival to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. In 2009, the Leon County Board of County Commissioners and U.S. Census Bureau partnered with area agencies to host the first annual Hispanic Heritage Fest, both to honor Hispanic Heritage Month and as a way to raise awareness of the upcoming 2010 Census. These events also served as a platform for the County's 2010 Census promotion campaign to emphasize the importance of accurate completion of the 2010 Census questionnaire.

The five-day festival lasted from Tuesday, September 15, until Saturday, September 19, 2009. It began with an 11:30 a.m. "kick-off" press conference event on Tuesday, September 15. Later that evening, at the Mary Brogan Museum of Art and Science, the community gathered for "Art, Literature & Culture: An American Narrative," which featured poetry readings and a flamenco dance performance.

On Wednesday, September 16, Chef Erick Urra of Habana Boardwalk restaurant hosted a "Cultural Cooking Demo & Tastings". On Thursday, September 17, a Hispanic film festival showing took place at the All Saints Cinema. On Friday, September 18, The Azúcar Dance Company held beginning-level Latin Dance lessons. The final event was a downtown celebration held in Lewis and Bloxham parks on Saturday, September 19, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. There were various vendors that set up booths and a schedule of dance performances featuring Hispanics from different countries of origin.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- **Uniqueness of this event**
 - Based on staff research, no other government-sponsored events celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month in Leon County were found.
 - This provides a unique angle since it is the first festival of its kind in the area. As so, it will be beneficial for sponsors to get involved.

- **Takes place during Hispanic Heritage month**
 - Celebrating this festival for a few days during Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 to October 15) is an ideal time period.
 - Another advantage is that the weather is usually pleasant for out-door activities during this early fall season (not too hot or cold). The enjoyable temperature will hopefully result in higher numbers of attendance.

- **Supported by Leon County government and other vendors**
 - The Leon County government has many well-established methods of communicating with local citizens and media connections. They were crucial in quickly distributing information about the 2009 festival.
 - In its first year (2009), the Leon County government collaborated with the U.S. Census Bureau to support this event. For 2010, Leon County will continue assistance with marketing the Hispanic Heritage Fest to local communities. They will also seek more vendors and sponsors to participate and help with funds in order to continue this festival as a reoccurring event.

Weaknesses

- **Event lacks recognition**
 - As mentioned, 2009 was the first year when the Leon County Hispanic Heritage Fest was held in Tallahassee, Florida.
 - Unfortunately, the turnout could have been higher since not that many people in Leon County and surrounding areas may have known about this event. Also, organizers had a very short time frame in which to promote it.

- **Hispanics may have been wary towards 2009 sponsors**
 - Although the exact percentages were not tallied at the festival events, there tended to be only slightly more Hispanics than Caucasians who attended.
 - Some Hispanics do not believe the Census to be confidential and avoid providing information to the U.S. government. Because this was an event sponsored by both the local government and national Census, the combination may have deterred Hispanics from attending in large numbers.

- **Perception of being a 'Hispanics-only' event**
 - On the other side of the spectrum, while Hispanics may be the primary target audience of attendees, last year's festival also attracted non-Hispanics.
 - These publics should be included in marketing tactics for the following year's festival. They should not feel left out and perceive this event as being meant for 'Hispanics-only'. The more who can attend...the merrier!

Opportunities

- **National Multicultural Trends**
 - The evidence of multiculturalism in the United States is ever-increasing. From our President Obama to the rise in multicultural marketing, it is impossible not to take notice!
 - In current times, people are becoming prouder about their cultural backgrounds. Conversely, society is also more curious to explore the cultures of people from diverse nationalities.
 - The release of the upcoming 2010 U.S. Census with evidence of the further increased Hispanic numbers may continue to raise this momentum.

- **Large and growing Hispanic market in Tallahassee**
 - The 2000 U.S. Census shows there were about 8,500 Hispanic or Latino residents in Leon County, or 3.5% of the Leon County population. That number is estimated to have increased approximately 20% between 2000 and 2006, according to the American Community Survey (ACS).

- This offers ideal economic growth opportunities for area businesses to appeal to the rising local Hispanic demographic. As Hispanics are a growing sector, companies should make the effort to connect with them at events such as this fest and appeal to their purse strings (i.e. disposable income).
- **Tourism attraction**
 - In the coming years, the Hispanic Heritage Fest should be marketed as a fun tourism attraction to encourage attendance from around Florida.
 - People in Leon County and from surrounding counties should hear about this event so they look forward to participating in advance.

Threats

- **Economic Recession Impacts**
 - Since the recession has negatively impacted our economy, average disposable incomes have decreased so consumers are often holding on tighter to their wallets.
 - People may be skeptical to attend a festival that they have never heard of before. They could perceive it will end up costing them money and not attend in order to avoid the temptation of spending money.
- **Limited free time**
 - Many people have limited free time in increasingly busy lives.
 - This event needs to be positioned as being worth their time!
- **Negative stereotypical perceptions of Hispanics**
 - If people have never dealt with Hispanics before, they may only know what is shown in the media and there are often some inaccurate stereotypes.
 - If potential attendees are non-Hispanic, negative perceptions may make them hesitant to participate in this fun festival and find out what truly encompasses various aspects of Hispanic heritage (such as dance, food, art, films, etc.) as well as listen to examples of local Hispanic success stories.

5 W'S OF MARKETING

Why?

- **Create a stronger sense among the Leon County Hispanic community**
 - Encourage and unite Hispanic residents to celebrate their heritage
 - Promote Leon County functions to the Hispanic community
- **Learn the needs of the Hispanic community**
 - Reach out to this demographic that is often under-represented
 - Build relationships with locally-owned Hispanic businesses and associations

Who?

- **The primary target audience** is the local Hispanic community within Leon and neighboring counties. This is a festival that may particularly attract families with children and couples to attend. It is an opportunity for Hispanics to unite, celebrate their culture, and meet locals in their community!
- **The secondary target audiences** are non-Hispanics who are also encouraged to celebrate at this festival, while gaining Hispanic cultural awareness.

When?

- **Hispanic Heritage Month takes place annually from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15.**
 - Recognizes the contributions that Hispanics have made in the U.S.
 - The month begins on the 15th of September because that day marks the anniversary of independence for five Latin-American countries.
- **In 2009, the first annual Leon County Hispanic Heritage festival was held.**
 - Began with 11:30 a.m. press conference kick-off event on **Tuesday, Sept. 15.**
 - On **Wednesday, Sept. 16**, Chef Erick Urrea of Habana Boardwalk restaurant hosted a Cultural Cooking Demo & Tastings from 7:00 to 9 p.m.

- On **Thursday, Sept. 17**, All Saints Cinema, hosted the Circo de Cine film festival showing “Raising Victor Vargas” and “Amores Perros” at 6:00 and 7:30 p.m.
- On **Friday, Sept. 18**, The Azúcar Dance Company held beginning-level Latin dance lessons in *merengue*, *bachata* and *salsa* from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
- The festival culminated with a downtown celebration on **Saturday, Sept. 19**, from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.

Where?

- **The five-day event activities were held in several Tallahassee locations.**
- **They took place as follows:**
 - **Sept. 15 & 18-** LeRoy Collins Leon County Public Library, 200 West Park Avenue
 - **Sept. 16-** TCC Capitol Center downtown, 300 W. Pensacola Street
 - **Sept. 17-** All Saints Cinema, 918 1/2 Railroad Avenue
 - **Sept. 19-** Lewis and Bloxham parks, Downtown Tallassee

What?

In an effort to perform outreach to the local Hispanic community and educate the public about Hispanic culture, Leon County staff organized an annual five-day festival to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month.

The 2009 festival events also served as a platform for the County’s 2010 Census promotion campaign to raise awareness of the importance of completing the 2010 Census questionnaire. Because members of the Hispanic community have been historically undercounted, the U.S. Census Bureau joined forces with Leon County to educate, empower, and emphasize the safety and confidentiality of the Census count.

For upcoming event years, a goal is eventually to provide like a reverse trade show where Hispanic vendors and those trying to reach this market can set up booths to feature their products. By doing so, it will contribute to the success and sustainability of local businesses. At the same time, Hispanics can feel properly represented and proud of their heritage right here in Leon County.

GOALS

- To unite Hispanics in Leon County and from surrounding areas
- To educate the general public while growing cultural awareness
- To recognize the contributions of Hispanic residents

OBJECTIVES

- To spread the word and increase anticipation before the festival by doubling next year's promotional efforts over a three-month span
- To increase attendance at the 2010 events by approximately 30 to 50%
- To drive traffic and multiply the amount of visitors to the Hispanic Heritage Fest informational website (HispanicHeritageFest.com) three months prior to September

TARGET AUDIENCE DATA

Our primary target audience is the local Hispanic community within Leon and neighboring counties. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there were roughly 8,500 Hispanic or Latino residents in Leon County, or 3.5% of the Leon County population. That number is estimated to have increased approximately 20% between 2000 and 2006, according to the American Community Survey (ACS).

As of 2006, Florida had the third highest Hispanic population in the United States with 3,646,499 Hispanic residents. However, that number may be drastically undercounted because many non-citizens are not included in this total.

Despite the economic recession, which has caused many consumers to cut back, Hispanics are spending more so than other demographic groups and seem to be feeling good about it. Companies such as NAPA Auto Parts have realized that it is important to tap into this market and events are a particularly effective tool to connect with Hispanics.

"NAPA has found that using event and experiential marketing to reach our Hispanic target consumers is really effective for building brand awareness and creating a higher level of engagement than traditional broadcast advertising" says Mike Rearden director of sponsorships at NAPA (O'Loughlin, 2009).

5 P's

Product

The product is a five-day series of events celebrating Hispanic Heritage month and culminating in a festival, all which promotes Hispanic cultural awareness and positively recognizes the influence of this often under-represented community in Leon County.

Event History

The Second Annual Hispanic Heritage Fest can be portrayed as an “opportunity to get in on the ground floor of a “happening” that participants can infer will be an ongoing event, turning into a tradition and developing long-term loyalty” (Hoyle, p. 12, 2002).

Growing a loyal fan base from the start is crucial to maintain ongoing attendance at an annual event. “Even if there is no history, there is the opportunity to be historical. The greatest part of event marketing is the opportunity to create history, by attracting people into a synergistic activity that can define the organization and its goals” (Hoyle, p. 12, 2002).

Event Value

When marketing this event, the message must emphasize how the participants will benefit from attending. This includes that attendees will be able to increase their cultural awareness and knowledge of the Hispanic market in order to connect with this key demographic. There are also business-to-business opportunities for attendees and vendors.

Event Uniqueness

In addition, marketing messages should emphasize the special experiences and variety of events being offered at this five-day festival. These events are the first of their kind in the area; this should lure attendees and sponsors to participate for years to come.

Price

The 2009 Hispanic Heritage Fest events were free for attendees, but perhaps in 2010 some prices should be allotted to certain events, which could increase their perceived value. The money collected could be donated towards Hispanic student scholarships at FSU. If the event continues to be complementary, this attribute should be highlighted on promotional materials to attract those who want to enjoy themselves without spending money.

Place

The locations of the Hispanic Heritage Fest events were in central Tallahassee venues where parking was nearby and they were relatively easy for attendees to access. Most were places that many people who have lived in Leon County for some time should recognize and directions were available online.

Public Relations

The Leon County Hispanic Heritage Fest event organizers distributed press releases to local media outlets and received a good amount of positive publicity. This includes articles in the Tallahassee Democrat, FSU news, All Business.com, Hispanic Tips.com, and a local TV interview on WTXL ABC Channel 27. The kick-off event held on the first day of the 2009 festival, September 15, was a press conference to inform the media about the week's upcoming events and animate them to attend as well as pass on the information.

Positioning

The events' main purposes are to educate and entertain by showcasing various Hispanic cultural traditions (i.e. food, dance, film, etc.). With advance time to plan, even more promotional tactics can be implemented next year that can help the festival position itself as five days of worthwhile events for Hispanics and other Leon County residents to attend.

ADDITIONAL P'S

Presence

Being organized by the Leon County government, the event organizers were able to quickly and efficiently establish a presence throughout Tallahassee. They distributed flyers and displayed posters in prominent locations. An event listing was also created on Facebook to invite people to attend. Most importantly, the extensive local media coverage during September established this as a unique festival in the minds of Leon County citizens.

Partnerships

Leon County event organizers created partnerships with the U.S. Census and other establishments. These included the Tallahassee Film Society, Azúcar Dance Company, Cultura Latina Magazine, etc. They also reached out to students at FSU by aligning with the Hispanic/Latino Student Union and the Center for Hispanic Marketing Communication.

ADVERTISING METHODS

In 2009, the marketing efforts for the First Hispanic Heritage Fest included a website (HispanicHeritageFest.com), social media event listing created on Facebook, messages distributed through a mass Leon County government e-mail notification system, press releases sent to local media outlets, signage displayed at events, and distribution/posting of promotional materials in various locations. The specific advertising breakdown included:

- *Website*
- *Signage- Banner and Agenda Verticals*
- *Print Production- Flyers, Postcards, and Posters*

EVENT EVALUATION

Marketing Effectiveness

For only being its first year held, the 2009 Hispanic Heritage Fest can be considered a success and benchmark event for Leon County. Attendance was medium to high at all events. Approximate numbers ranged from twenty attendees at the Hispanic Film Festival to a few hundred at the final Saturday celebration in downtown Tallahassee.

The event organizers were not given County Board approval to fund the festival until a month before it was to take place. Considering the time constraints for their marketing efforts, the Hispanic Heritage Fest resulted in a positive turnout for five consecutive days.

Tracking Methods

The event website traffic numbers were tracked and compiled by the Leon County government. During the month of September, about 73,000 people visited the Hispanic Heritage Fest site with an average of 2,432 visitors per day.

At the actual events, no official counting methods were established. In order to gain attendance estimates, next year they could implement a raffle system where a number of flyers are passed out at each event. This will provide a better approximation of attendees.

Data-Gathering Methods

If possible, some focus groups should be conducted with Hispanics in Leon County to determine ways to improve the festival in future years. At the events, attendee information should be gathered so short surveys can be sent afterwards to gauge feedback and measure success. A survey can also be included on the event homepage for past attendees to fill out.

EVALUATION OF CURRENT MARKETING PLAN

In order for the Leon County Hispanic Heritage Fest to annually expand, event marketers must increase their promotional (particularly PR and social media) efforts so they can reach more people from surrounding counties. Media kits should include photos of past events, website link, and other important details. Marketing messages should highlight the unique experiences and variety of events being offered by the five-day festival.

This Hispanic Heritage Fest is the first of its kind in the area; it should lure attendees and sponsors to participate for years to come. Since many Hispanics are bilingual or only speak Spanish, it would be wise to create bilingual signage and promotional materials. If the festival events continues to be complementary for attendees, this attribute should be emphasized on their official website and all promotional materials to attract those who want to enjoy themselves without spending money.

Hispanic students from Florida State University should be recruited and engaged to volunteer with the upcoming events. In particular, this is also a great chance for local businesses and restaurants to appeal to local Hispanic communities. As Hispanics are such a fast-growing sector, companies should make the effort to connect with them at events such as this and appeal to their purse strings (i.e. disposable income).

Throughout future years of the Hispanic Heritage Fest, event organizers should early on work to attain more sponsors, vendors, and Hispanic participants/organizations. They should start promoting and acquiring sponsors about six months prior to mid-September. Their event sponsorship proposal should highlight the distinct nature of this five-day festival and how it is an ideal opportunity to connect with a growing demographic.

Eventually, a goal is for the festival to become like a reverse trade show where Hispanic vendors and those trying to reach this market can set up booths to feature their products on an annual basis. By doing so, it will contribute to the success and sustainability of local businesses. At the same time, Hispanics can feel like they are well represented in Leon County and event attendees can admire some of their greatest accomplishments.

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