

Motor City Cruise Growth Strategy

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Executive Summary



The Motor City Cruise, the Detroit Pistons' NBA G-League affiliate, is playing their inaugural season during the 2021-22 G-League season. We were responsible for identifying a target market for the Cruise to focus on as well as recommending strategies for the Cruise to market to and monetize this target market. This report will identify a specific opportunity within the organization as well as provide our actionable recommendations on how to capitalize on this opportunity.

Our internal and external analysis revealed that the Cruise have many assets both within and surrounding their organization. Within the organization, the Cruise have an incredible resource in the resources, brand, and man-power of the Pistons. Outside the organization, the Cruise have the perfect opportunity to capitalize on the inner-city market that is often neglected by the city's four major league teams.

Metro Detroit's demographics are very different than the demographics of the city itself. While the population of Metro Detroit trends older with a higher income, Detroit as a city trends younger with a lower income. This is representative of the abundance of higher education institutions located in the city, which comprise the target market for our strategic growth plan.

The highlight of our growth plan is the implementation of a College Competition Night. This competition will attract local college students to games held on typically lower-attendance days of the week for the entirety of the season. It is also an avenue for new and increased partnership with businesses in the community.

Our recommendations will also include monetization efforts in collaboration with other local businesses and universities as well as a heightened social media experience. By focusing on the large number of college students in the area through the implementation of these recommendations, we believe that the Cruise can produce a competitive product within the Metro Detroit sport space.

External Analysis



Metro Detroit

The Cruise have a prime location being in Metro Detroit and they need to use that to their advantage. There are numerous colleges located in the Detroit Metro area and that's exactly who the Cruise should focus on in order to create a firm fanbase. Since the Cruise are trying to develop a team in an already saturated sports market, it is imperative that they do what the other teams in the area do not do well; and that is target a young market who can afford to attend their events. The Cruise can also use Oakland University's basketball team as a model for ways to activate and engage the audience. Oakland utilizes the digital space to communicate and engage with their audience as well as having numerous promotions tailored to the student section.

There are several reasons why the Cruise can successfully target this group of individuals such as:

- The large number of students enrolled in Detroit colleges/universities
- Detroit having 13 educational institutions in the city and numerous others in the Metro area
- The Cruise have numerous games on weekdays, which is perfect for college crowds as they often seek affordable entertainment during the week

Education Institutes in Detroit

Total Number of Educational Institutes	13
Total Enrollment in all institutes	50,288
Number of Public Educational Institutes	2
Number of Private For-Profit Institutes	3
Number of Private Non-Profit Institutes	8
Graduation Rate	24.13%
Total Graduates With Bachelors Degree	1,509

**In Detroit alone,
there are over 50k
students enrolled
in a
college/university**

Internal Analysis

Leveraging the Cruise

Being located in the same city as the Cruise's NBA affiliate can prove to be quite a benefit for the team. Utilizing what the Pistons have to offer while still differentiating themselves from the Pistons is going to be crucial.

Highlighting the Cruise as being the developers of players who will soon make an impact on the Pistons can be an excellent tactic to allow fans to feel like scouts and see what the future of the Pistons may hold.

The Cruise currently have plenty of talent and the accessibility to showcase that. The Cruise's greatest marketing assets are Luka Garza, Saben Lee, and Isaiah Livers (see appendix A).

There are several reasons using the internal forces of the Pistons can help leverage the Cruise:

- A possible reward for colleges competition night could be a dinner with some of the Pistons stars
- Roles can be interchangeable by using the knowledgeable staff from the Pistons
- The Cruise could play a few games in Little Caesar's Arena to increase interest and allow fans to still get that large arena feel



Opportunity Statement

The Cruise are lucky to be starting fresh as they have the opportunity to write their own story and be the kind of organization they want to be. Although using the Pistons' assets to leverage the Cruise is key, it is vital that the Cruise prove they are their own team, not just some minor league team that no one cares about. The Cruise have the perfect opportunity to tap into a fanbase that is young, accessible, and willing to pay the price for new entertainment. In order to engage this group, the Cruise should pride themselves on being unique, tied to the Detroit roots, and willing to take risks to prove they can survive in the saturated Detroit sports market.

Building the Fanbase

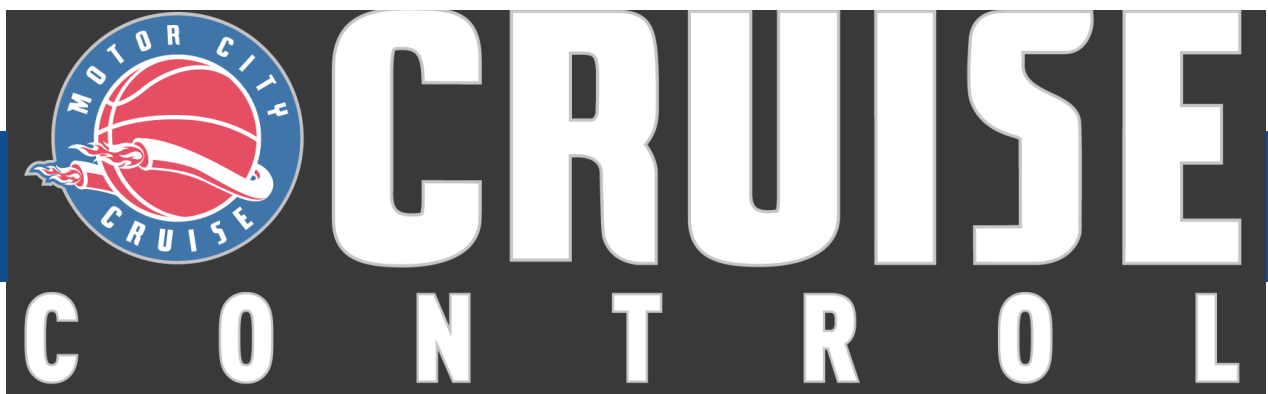
A core competency for any sport franchise is the strength and loyalty of its fanbase, and that emphasis on a strong fanbase is even more pronounced in the minor leagues. Our target market for the Motor City Cruise is the college age demographic, leveraging the Universities in downtown Detroit and surrounding counties. This market segment creates a symbiotic relationship between the MCC and the fans who attend games because the Motor City Cruise provide entertainment that is cheaper than a major league sporting event that showcases the stars of tomorrow, while the students provide energy in the crowd.

College students often have multiple social and entertainment options available to them, as well as a limited disposable income to satisfy their social desires. In order to combat these issues, and make the MCC the premier entertainment option for college students is by implementing a college competition night and college student discount program..

Monetization

Building a brand presence and creating value in a market saturated with entertainment options is challenging. However, the Motor City Cruise has all of the assets and capital to drive their value proposition as a fun and affordable entertainment option.

They can achieve this through the monetization of our previous plan to grow the fan base among the local college demographic. With college students playing such a prevalent role in the social culture of metro Detroit, the Motor City Cruise can capitalize on untapped demand for affordable, college-gearred entertainment. The challenges of increasing discretionary spending for college students exist. However, our plan will be a great investment for the Cruise to monetize their different assets because ultimately, partners want to target the young, educated population, and the Cruise are the conduit for these partners to do so.





College Competition Nights

Our main recommendation in the first three years is centered around the college competition nights which are intended to attract college students to MCC games by having colleges represent their schools against one another. We hope to target Detroit schools (WSU, UDM, CCS, WCC) to begin and then move to the greater Metro-Detroit area, including UofM and OU. These college competition nights will include various different activities for students, with points being allocated for how successfully each activity is completed.

These competitions can be monetized by being held multiple times over the course of the season, making college students more inclined to come back to games. We believe that the grand prize should be a dinner with Cruise/Pistons players. As these events increase in popularity, we believe that there should be a charitable component added in some capacity. The best time for this activation is likely a week day game, as there will be fewer families in attendance, and college students have fewer entertainment choices on weekdays.

Additional Recommendations

- Discount Program for students
- A fan bus to ease mitigate transportation issues among college students

Year One

To monetize this event, the Cruise should make this a recurring competition throughout the season. During the first year, the Cruise should select three to four local colleges, like Wayne State, Detroit Mercy, the College for Creative Studies, and Wayne County Community College District, to compete in this competition. With targeted marketing, like tables in student unions, the Cruise can fill select sections with students from these universities.

These competitions should be held monthly on Wednesday or Thursday evenings, days when families are not looking to take their children out but nights when college students are looking for entertainment. By making these competitions a monthly occurrence, culminating in the awarding of a grand prize, monetization will be successful with filling seats at less popular games.

As mentioned, this competition will have to result in a reward in order for college students to continue to attend. This grand prize should be in the form of a meet-and-greet with select Pistons players before a game. This plays on the resources provided by the Pistons to give the Cruise a cost-free method of providing a desirable prize.

Recommendations cont.

Year Two

In order to grow the competition, the Cruise should begin to target additional metro Detroit area schools such as Rochester, Oakland, Madonna, and U-M at the beginning of Year Two. Now that the competition has been established, pushing the boundaries outside of the immediate Detroit-area will allow the Cruise to reach a larger audience and bring in more students. If there was a significant turnout from all three or four schools during the first year, the Cruise should add an additional competition night to accommodate the addition of these schools. During this year, these competition nights should be held monthly on both a Tuesday and Wednesday night. All rules and rewards will remain the same for both nights this year as they were during the first year. This additional competition night will further monetize the Cruise by filling seats at an additional weeknight game where other demographics are not as present.

Sponsors Meijer

Meijer is the perfect partner for the College Competition Nights. During the first year, sponsorship should come in the form of a sponsored halftime competition and a presenting sponsor for the grand prize at the end of the season.

Because this is a recurring competition and the grand prize is in partnership with the Pistons, we believe that the Cruise should extend upon Meijer's partnership with the Pistons. Meijer was selected because it is a large enough company to sponsor a recurring competition and it is also very present in the student space. During this first year, halftime competitions sponsored by Meijer also have the opportunity to incorporate the company into the competition, such as which team can stack the tallest structure of cans.

During years two and three, Meijer will have the opportunity to extend upon their partnership to sponsor the entire competition, meaning the competitions will be "College Competition Night presented by Meijer." All competitions will be sponsored by Meijer and college competition shirts can also be Meijer-branded. At the end of year three, Meijer will have the opportunity to be the presenting sponsor of the charity event as well.

Year Three

The final stage of growth for this competition will be the addition of a charity aspect. The competition nights should remain two nights per month with six to eight schools, but the reward should be slightly altered. During this year, each school will have the opportunity to select a charity which they would like to compete for. At the end, instead of a meet-and-greet with Pistons players like during the past two years, students from the winning school will have the opportunity to partner with the Cruise to complete a charitable project for their charity of choice. This will continue to bring college students to the games but will also provide an added benefit for the Cruise in the form of a community service aspect. This project can be sponsored by Meijer, as discussed on the previous page.

Motor City Brewing Works

The Cruise should enter into a partnership with the Motor City Brewing Works because they are located within walking distance, a mile from the arena; they are open until midnight on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, so fans can grab a late night snack after the game; and their prices are affordable for a student budget: pizzas range from \$9.00-13.50 and brews range from \$5.50-6.50.

Activation during this first year should come in the form of a dunk sponsorship, meaning every time a player successfully dunks, the host announces, "This dunk is sponsored by the Motor City Brewing Works," and a graphic is shown on the scoreboard. The Motor City Brewing Works and the Cruise should also implement a "When we win, you win" concept with postgame coupons handed out to all fans in attendance as they exit the arena if the Cruise wins. This will be a coupon for the Motor City Brewing Works, and this promotion should run on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights so it encourages people to go to the restaurant after the game.

If this partnership is successful during the first year, they should look to expand upon the partnership during the second and third years. This could come in the sponsorship of a bigger game event- like made three-point shots, free throws, or even the halftime performance- or tangible sponsorship space like arena signage or branded giveaways.

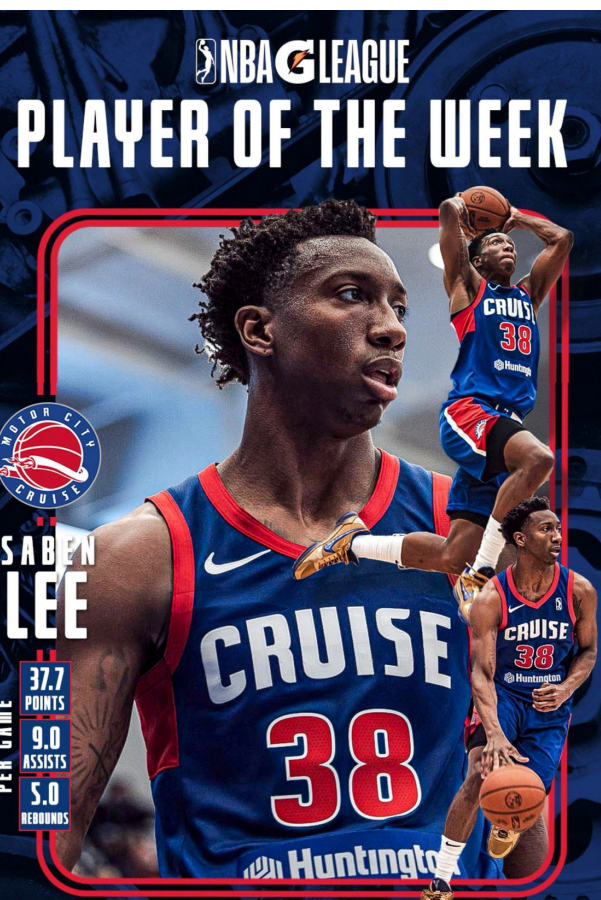


Social Media

Having an active social media team that produces content beyond just the standard highlights and game recaps will be crucial to having a successful social media campaign and presence. Our generation largely enjoys getting to know players' personalities better, as well as a social media team that participates in playful banter with other teams, players, and businesses.

Once a strong social media presence has been established, incorporating more sponsored posts is one way to monetize the social media element. Another way this can be done is by advertising specific sales/flash sales only on social media, forcing fans to follow the organization on social media in order to access these sales.

Furthermore, by hosting contests and competitions on social media, the Motor City Cruise can increase engagement on their posts and get fans truly interacting with the content being created. The increased engagement will drive valuation prices for sponsorships and thus help to propel monetization efforts of the Cruise.



Merchandise

For the Cruise to properly encompass what the city of Detroit has to offer, they should do a merchandising collaboration with the students at the College of Creative Studies. Not only are these students young and have ideas that are more likely to appeal with the key demographic, but much of the student body comes from the Detroit metropolitan area as well, so these students have a deeper understanding of the culture and how to best implement it with the Motor City Cruise. These designs will have great potential to increase merchandise sales.

Another initiative pertaining to merchandise would be allowing different art programs at universities across Michigan to compete with different designs of a special edition jersey that the Motor City Cruise wear. The Grand Rapids Griffins have a similar contest where they invite the general public to design a jersey. These jerseys are then voted-on on social media and the winning jersey design is produced to be worn and sold for a few games that season. A similar idea can be implemented for the Motor City Cruise but rather than have one winner, produce each jersey that is designed by the University students, and the game with the highest attendance and votes on social media wins.



PROJECT EVALUATION

How is our plan successful?

As the Cruise utilize these different tactics in order to grow the fanbase and monetize the team, it is imperative that the Cruise are constantly evaluating the success of each of these. In terms of the College Night plan, the Cruise should be constantly comparing the month-to-month attendance of students from each of the different colleges competing for the prize. Additionally, the Cruise should have a check-in system or some type of way to monitor the number of interactions that occur at each of the different tables in the student unions. This should also remain consistent throughout year two as the Cruise start to target some of the other colleges further out. It should be noted that these numbers from year to year will become crucial to analyze, especially as the prize of the competition shifts to be more charitable based. If this is something that proves to be inefficient, the Cruise should consider going back to the ideas of year one and two.

In terms of social media, the Cruise can easily track this through analytics based on engagement. The Cruise should encourage participants to tag the Cruise in their multiple different social channels in order to make the data collection process even easier. The Cruise should also pay attention to see what types of events and other things end up having the most engagement with the different social channels.

From the partnerships aspect, the best way to monitor success will be through visits. For example, with the partnership with Motor City Brewing Works, the Cruise should work with the restaurant to identify how many people come in and make purchases with coupons that would be administered post-game. Something can be done similarly with the Meijer partnership as well.

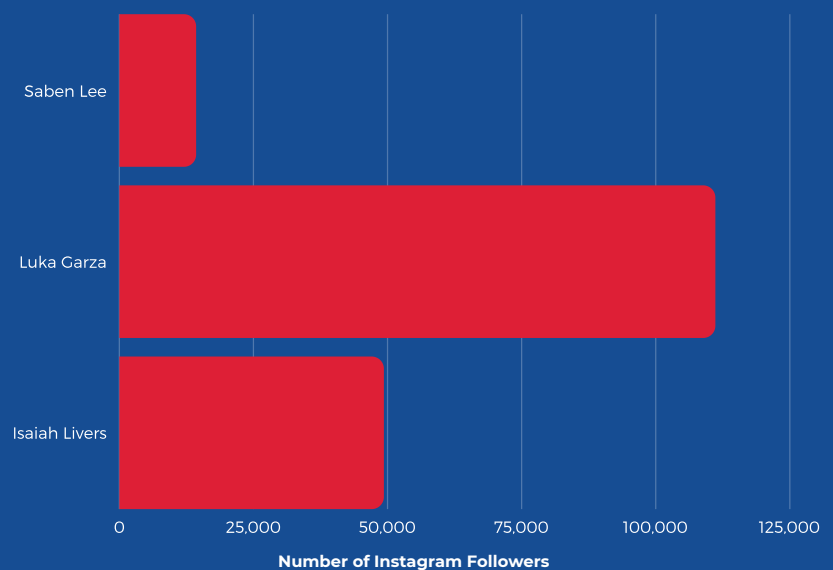
Lastly, for the merchandise collaboration, success can be measured by seeing how many submissions are made for the jersey design contest as well as how much merchandise created by CCS gets sold. This is an important partnership because it helps the Cruise become rooted in the community, but it is crucial to make sure that these jersey and other merchandise competitions are bringing the Cruise increased revenue rather than costing them.

APPENDIX A

	Detroit	Metro Detroit
Median Age	34.7	39.9
Median Income	\$31k	\$63k

(<https://www.michigan-demographics.com/detroit-demographics>)
(<https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US19820-detroit-warren-dearborn-mi-metro-area/>)

APPENDIX B



This graph demonstrates the Cruise players with the largest number of followers on Instagram currently.

([instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com))

APPENDIX C

Projects in the sport space across Michigan sponsored by Meijer:

- U-M Athletics
- Big Ten Athletic Conference
- Little Caesars Arena
- Willie Horton Field of Dreams
- Meijer Sports Complex
- Meijer LPGA Classic for *Simply Give*

(<http://meijercommunity.com/sports-partnerships>)



THANK YOU!

GO CRUISE!

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