



Research Report

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Situation Analysis

Salt Strong Alliance is a non-profit corporation whose members consist of anglers and community members, who are committed to positively impacting and protecting natural resources and fisheries. Salt Strong Alliance's goals consist of preserving fisheries, connecting families to nature, teaching environmental stewardship, and clean water initiatives.

Problem Statement

The Salt Strong Alliance faces the issue of plastic pollution in lakes, rivers, fisheries and our oceans. Single-use plastics, discarded fishing gear, and microplastics accumulate, harming aquatic ecosystems, marine life, and even our lives. Salt Strong needs help addressing this issue among community members and other anglers who know there is a plastic pollution problem and actively getting them engaged in cleaning up.

Goal Statement

Working with the Salt Strong Alliance and their existing initiatives to combat plastic pollution, our campaign aims to build more awareness not only for Salt Strong Alliance but also for the issue of Plastic Pollution. Our goal is to inform and get the community engaged about the important work Salt Strong Alliance is doing to keep our fisheries clean.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of our research is to discover how aware and active members of Pinellas county are of plastic pollution. This will help us get a better idea on how the community views plastic pollution and if any of them are actively doing anything to help.

Data Collection

We will record these interviews with a video camera to ensure accurate transcription of what is being said. We will have someone there for back-up who is handwriting and transcribing what is being said for accuracy. The moderator will start and guide the discussion of the focus group by asking questions and offering prompts when needed. At the end of the focus group, participants will be expected to complete a short profile questionnaire.

Methodology

Quantitative Research

For our quantitative research, we will be conducting an online survey focused on awareness of issues of plastic pollution in our waterways. With this survey, we will learn how many Pinellas county residents are aware that plastic pollution is an ongoing issue in their community. The survey will be sent out via email to as many residents of Pinellas County as possible so we can get an idea of what the main focus of our campaign should be.

Qualitative Research

In order to gather data to better understand the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of Suncoast community members and activist students regarding water pollution and the Salt Strong Alliance organization, a series of in-depth interviews were conducted. This section provides a review of the procedures, sampling, instrumentation, and data analysis strategies used to conduct the research. We want to figure out how much of a problem plastic pollution affects anglers in this community so we can tailor our campaign to specifically target anglers and create something that will make them take more action or grab their attention.

Data Analysis

We evaluated our results by viewing and listening to the in person interviews we conducted and transcribed them. After we transcribed the audio we fragmented the recordings into different parts and collected information we thought was most valuable to our research. We also identified the similarities we found with each participant. For our data analysis we utilized a website called Dovetail. This website allowed us to put in our video and audio recordings and the website transcribed everything for us in a nice and simple way.

Findings / Insight

We attended a Salt Strong Alliance picnic event and interviewed local members on plastic pollution issues. Participants acknowledged the widespread plastic problem, especially visible during fishing outings. While some felt plastic pollution was a significant issue, others emphasized individual responsibility. Plastic's impact on fishing experiences varies, but overall, anglers should contribute to keeping plastic out of the ocean. Personal efforts included using reusable water bottles and advocating for better recycling practices. Marine education and grassroots clean-up initiatives were also highlighted. However, participants recognized the need for more effective methods to combat plastic waste and prevent it from reaching waterways. These interviews shed light on diverse perspectives and actions taken by individuals within the Salt Strong Alliance and USF club to address plastic pollution and promote environmental awareness.

Speaker 2 in Audio 1, an avid angler, acknowledges the plastic pollution problem, stating that “you see plastic all over the place, so try to do your part and collect whatever you can see.” While plastic debris doesn't significantly affect their fishing experience, they encounter plastic waste. Their stance emphasizes individual responsibility, urging everyone to contribute to keeping plastic out of oceans. Recycling rules remain strict, and Speaker 2 advocates for better recycling methods.

Their personal actions include using a reusable water bottle and minimizing plastic consumption during recreational activities. They recognize the necessity of plastic during emergencies (like hurricanes) but hope for improved recycling and transformation into useful products.

Speaker 2 in audio 3, involved in marine education, emphasizes awareness and action. The transcriptions read that “there's still a lot of work that could be done to find better, more effective ways to clean up trash, that reduce harm to wildlife. And then there's methods that we don't know for keeping plastic from reaching our waterways in the first place.” Others advocate for reusable bags and discourage reliance on disposable plastic bags. Additionally, they promote alternatives to bottled water, such as water filters or Brita pitchers. Their work at the marine center involves educating students about plastic pollution's impact on waterways.

However, they also struggle with the limitations of individual efforts. They participate in grassroots clean-up initiatives but recognize the need for broader solutions. Fishing gear, a significant plastic pollutant, requires systemic changes beyond local efforts.

Speaker 2 in audio 4, volunteers at Clam Bayou, participating in creek cleanup and sediment removal. They highlight the effectiveness of a sales tax on plastic bags. Additionally, they mention promising research involving proteins and enzymes that can digest plastic, saying that “one of the researchers that I work with Dr. Woodcock, he's doing some interesting work with looking at proteins and enzymes that can go and digest plastic. So I'm optimistic in the future.”

Their personal commitment involves reusing bags and minimizing plastic usage. However, they acknowledge the complexity of the issue and the need for innovative solutions beyond individual actions. “I think it's a complex question. I think we could be doing more like right now.”

Plastic pollution demands collective action. While individual efforts matter, systemic changes are essential. Governments, researchers, and communities must collaborate to reduce plastic production, improve recycling, and develop innovative solutions. The fight against plastic pollution requires a multifaceted approach, combining awareness, policy changes, and technological advancements. In summary, these perspectives underscore the urgency of addressing plastic pollution. Whether through individual choices, educational initiatives, or scientific research, everyone plays a role in safeguarding our planet from the plastic deluge.

SWOT Analysis / Action Plan

- 
- **Members and Volunteers**
 - **Professional Website**
 - **Social Media Presence**

- **People reusing water bottles, filters, and grocery bags**
- **Students looking for Service Hours for Honors College or Rotaract induction**
- **Collaboration with other groups like Keep Pinellas Beautiful**
- **Talking about Plastic Pollution at Public Events**
- **Collaborations with environmental science professors**

- **Lack of comprehension from younger demographics**
- **Large amounts of work to be done on a larger scale**
- **Lack of Marine Education among the public**

- **Frequent Hurricanes move plastic to unexpected locations**
- **Some people don't care**
- **Lack of large-scale change**

Appendix A

Survey Questionnaire

Salt Strong Alliance Community Survey

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements according to the scale below.

- 1- Strongly disagree
- 2- Somewhat disagree
- 3- Slightly disagree
- 4- Undecided
- 5- Slightly agree
- 6- Somewhat agree
- 7- Strongly agree

PROBLEM RECOGNITION:

- ___ 1. I believe that plastic pollution is a problem in my local community.
- ___ 2. I believe that something needs to be done to improve the problem of plastic pollution.
- ___ 3. I do not believe that plastic pollution is a serious problem.

CONSTRAINT RECOGNITION:

- ___ 4. I do not believe that I, personally, can make a difference in the way this problem is resolved.
- ___ 5. I believe that my opinions about plastic pollution matter to my local community.
- ___ 6. I believe that I have the ability to influence the outcome of plastic pollution.

INVOLVEMENT RECOGNITION:

- ___ 7. I believe plastic pollution affects my life.
- ___ 8. I have strong opinions about plastic pollution.
- ___ 9. I believe that plastic pollution involves me personally.

GOAL COMPATIBILITY:

- ___ 10. I agree with the Salt Strong Alliance's position on plastic pollution.
- ___ 11. My goals are compatible with the goals of the Salt Strong Alliance regarding plastic pollution.

___ 12. Regarding this problem, I want the same thing that the Salt Strong Alliance wants.

MESSAGE STRATEGY EFFECTIVENESS:

___ 13. The strategy the Salt Strong Alliance is using to deal with the problem of plastic pollution will probably work.

___ 14. The Salt Strong Alliance message is effective.

___ 15. The message I read makes me want to do something to help end plastic pollution.

REFERENT CRITERION:

___ 16. I already know a lot about the problem of plastic pollution.

___ 17. I am familiar with the problem of plastic pollution.

___ 18. My past experiences help me understand the problem of plastic pollution.

SITUATIONAL MOTIVATION IN PROBLEM-SOLVING:

___ 19. I frequently think about the problem of plastic pollution.

___ 20. I would like to understand the problem of plastic pollution better.

___ 21. I often think about ways that I can help solve the problem of plastic pollution.

COMMUNICATIVE ACTION/ BEHAVIOR:

INFORMATION FOREFENDING

___ 22. I have invested enough time and energy to understand the problem of plastic pollution.

___ 23. I have learned enough about plastic pollution to judge the value of information I receive.

INFORMATION PERMITTING

___ 24. I am open to diverse opinions about plastic pollution.

___ 25. I listen to views about plastic pollution that are different from my own.

INFORMATION FORWARDING

___ 26. When possible, I take time to explain plastic pollution to others.

___ 27. I look for chances to share my knowledge and opinions about plastic pollution.

INFORMATION SHARING

___ 28. I am someone who my friends and others come to learn more about plastic pollution.

___ 29. I am likely to share information about plastic pollution with others.

INFORMATION SEEKING

___ 30. I regularly check to see if there is new information about plastic pollution in the media.

___ 31. I actively seek information about climate change.

___ 32. I regularly visit Web sites about plastic pollution.

INFORMATION ATTENDING

___ 33. I pay attention to what others say about plastic pollution.

___ 34. If I hear someone talking about plastic pollution, I am likely to listen.

SUBJECTIVE NORM (toward behavior)

___ 35. Generally, I do what people who are important to me think I should do.

___ 36. Most people I care about think that I should do my part to help stop plastic pollution.

___ 37. My friends think that I should engage in activism to end plastic pollution.

BEHAVIORAL INTENTION (to engage in behavior)

___ 38. I will engage in plastic pollution activism in the future.

___ 39. I intend to take action to stop plastic pollution.

___ 40. I am likely to get involved in the Salt Strong Alliance.

___ 41. I would sign a petition urging my community to invest in decreasing plastic pollution.

ATTITUDES:

42. My attitude toward the message I read is:

Negative ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Positive

Bad ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Good

Unfavorable ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Favorable

43. My attitude toward the Salt Strong Alliance is:

Negative ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ Positive

Bad ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ Good

Unfavorable ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ Favorable

44. My attitude toward engaging in plastic pollution activism is:

Negative ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ Positive

Bad ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ Good

Unfavorable ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ Favorable

DEMOGRAPHICS:

INSTRUCTIONS: Listed below are a few demographic questions about you that will help us to understand your answers. Please write or select the appropriate response.

45. What is your age? _____

46. What is your highest level of education?

47. What is your sex? (Male/ Female)

48. What is your ethnicity?

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS:

1. How concerned are you about plastic pollution?

2. In what ways do you think plastic pollution impacts human health?

3. Can you share any personal experiences or observations you have had when it comes to plastic pollution?

4. What steps (if any) are you currently taking to reduce plastic pollution?

5. Why is the reduction of plastic pollution important to you?

6. What do you think your community/ local government can do better to reduce plastic pollution?

7. How aware do you feel your community is about the issue of plastic pollution?

Appendix B

Salt Strong Alliance Member Interviews

Objective

Get Salt Strong Alliance members opinions on plastic pollution and find out if any of them are taking steps to help clean up plastic pollution.

Recruiting

We're using Salt Strong Alliance members and USF Rotaract Club members.

Scheduling

The interviews will be held during the Salt Strong Alliance picnic on March 2nd and during the Clam Bayou cleanup on March 3rd.

Data Collection

We will be recording the interviews via camera provided by USF, phone interviews for audio, and written responses by some members.

Appendix C:

Audio 1 (Member Picnic)

Speaker 1

So we are students at University of South Florida conducting research on behalf of Salt Strong and we want to better understand your views on local plastic pollution issues. Um, What do you know about plastic pollution?

Speaker 2

I know there's a lot of it. You can certainly see, you know, you go out fishing, you see plastic all over the place, so try to do your part and collect whatever you can see.

Speaker 1

It's just crazy.

Speaker 1

Do you know, do you think that plastic pollution is a problem in your community?

Speaker 2

I would say overall it is, but to the extent. It's hard to tell you. There are a lot of humans on this earth and some care and some don't. And it's the ones that don't care that with anything, whether it's smoking or plastic or they don't care, they just passing by as opposed to being good stewards of the land.

Speaker 1

Does plastic in the ocean affect your fishing experience?

Speaker 2

Oh, not much. But you certainly see it. You know, there's certainly a lot of puffers eating all my plastic bait. But as far as like snagging plastic all the time, I don't really see that.

Speaker 1

Do you mainly fish in the oceans or lakes? or more inland.

Speaker 2

you know, around this park or in the Tampa Bay area.

Speaker 1

do you think that anglers should be responsible for keeping plastic out of the ocean?

Speaker 2

I think everybody should do their part to keep plastic out of the ocean, but we make a lot of waste. So even keeping it out of landfills would be a good thing. So you see pretty strict rules on even recycling. So I'm here, I live here in Manatee County. Are we still in Manatee County? But I live in Manatee County only 20 miles south of here. And, you know, plastic is somewhat corrupted by something. They don't want it in your recycling. Well, I would think there would be a better way to recycle whether it's metal or plastic.

Speaker 1

And then the last question, what actions do you take to reduce the plastic.

Speaker 2

Well, I have, I have my own water bottle. I play cornhole five nights a week and I take that water bottle with me five nights a week. Uh, a lot of people that I play with drink a lot of beer. So they're consuming a lot of plastic and glass. But, uh, so you, you do your part?

Speaker 1

I must admit I have plastic water bottles as well at home because it's hard plastics everywhere.

Speaker 2

So Florida is known to have a hurricane once in a while.

I live through Ian in Cape Coral, which is where the eye went over and you better have a good supply of water and plastic bottles. So, you know, I've got plastic, you try to recycle it, you hope that it turns into a park bench or something else, but who knows where it will eventually end.

Appendix D:

Audio 2 (USF Rotaract 1)

Speaker 1

Hello, I am here with Sophia. Hello, Sophia. So, can you tell me what is USF Rotaract doing out in Clam Bayou?

Speaker 2

So, this morning we're just out really cleaning, like invasive species that have accumulated, on top of really important, cat tails that are in the area. So we've just been using rakes, pitchforks shovels to really maneuver that out so that we can make space for new plants to grow.

Speaker 1

All right. And what is your current stance on the actions being taken to help stop plastic waste?

Speaker 2

I believe that is really important to do. I haven't really read up on it so I wouldn't be able to give a definite opinion on how that's going about. But, yeah, I'm not too knowledgeable on the subject.

Speaker 1

That's all right. And I just want to ask, what are you doing in your life to help combat plastic waste or water pollution?

Speaker 2

I think one of the things that I've done my whole life because that's what I was taught to do, is like, always bring your own bag to the grocery store. Like, not rely, don't rely on the plastic bags that they give out because that's just waste that is unneeded. And additionally, not using bottled waters at home. I think buying like packs of bottled waters to take home is a waste when you could just have like your own like water filter or just like a lot of students like to use. Brita and stuff. But yeah.

Speaker 1

All right. Thank you. Thank you.

Appendix E:

Audio 3 (USF Rotaract 2)

Speaker 1

All right. Hello. I'm here with Ella Hasty. Ella Hasty. Hello. And could you tell me what USF Rotaract was doing today?

Speaker 2

USF Rotaract came out to the Clan Bayou Marine Education Outpost. It's a USF-run education center that takes in middle school, high school groups, or elementary school groups and teaches them all about marine science. And on the way, we've got a beach area, we've got outdoors, we've got microscope rooms. And what Rotaract came out here to do was clean up the area. We did some beautification of the outside. We helped manage the water way outside and we also got rid of some marine debris that was out in the water area to just make the center nicer for the upcoming season and prepare it for a summer of learning.

Speaker 1

Wonderful. Now, I do wanna ask, what are your current stance on the methods that are being taken to combat plastic waste and water pollution?

Speaker 2

Right. Can I ask, is this on a personal level or on a like governmental level?

Speaker 1

It can be on any level that you feel would provide the best answer.

Speaker 2

OK. I'm very involved in like on a maybe I would call a grassroots maybe movement. So Rotaract itself goes out to do manual labor of picking up as much trash as we can as often as we can. I see a lot of other groups like Keep Pinellas beautiful, like the groups that come out here when they come out to learn out at the clam. Those groups also participate in trash clean ups. And several other organizations that are just working on a small scale level. And I think at a certain to a certain degree, that kind of network of people who are dedicated to removing trash is a, is a really great stop gap, but it's not a overall permanent or effective method with the amount of plastic production that's being put into the oceans. We also don't have great numbers about how much

plastic is being put into the ocean and a lot of the plastic pollution is, has to do with fishing gear, which is a level that we aren't capable of doing on a grassroots level. So on a wider scale, there's certain methods like water, goats and open water net, trash collecting that are effective but limited in the resources they have to do that. So I think it's, we have the some of the knowledge for how to go about cleaning it up. But there's still a lot of work that could be done to find better, more effective ways to clean up trash, that reduce harm to wildlife. And then there's methods that we don't know for keeping plastic from reaching our waterways in the first place.

Speaker 1

All right. And the last question I just wanna ask outside of maybe USF Rotaract. What do you do yourself to combat plastic waste and water pollution?

Speaker 2

Right. I try to reduce recycle as much as I can but it's hard in a world where plastic is in everything, including us microplastics. I think marine education is really important. A lot of people aren't aware of how their trash ends up in waterways. So I think doing that is important. That's why I'm a part of marine education. I work at the clam here in the summers, a part of that. And public education, talking at events about how plastic pollution ends up in our waterways in the ways that we can try to prevent that. Other than that, personally, I think sometimes I'm at a loss for exactly what I can personally do to fight it besides becoming involved in larger scale movements, which is where I think real change happens.

Speaker 1

That's OK. All right. Thank you. Thank you for the questions. The interview.

Appendix F:

Audio 4 (USF Rotaract 3)

Speaker 1

Hello. I'm here with Michael Powell. All right. And what is USF Rotaract doing on this day today.

Speaker 2

So today we're volunteering with the Clan Bayou and essentially what we're doing is coming out here and helping them, clean up the area a bit. Like there was a little creek that was essentially not going to the right area and it was carrying a lot of sediment and there was also a lot of debris that we had to go and remove. So we just kind of came out and helped with that.

Speaker 1

All right. Great. And I wanted to ask, what are your thoughts on how plastic waste and water pollution is being combated right now?

Speaker 2

I think it's a complex question. I think we could be doing more like right now, I think one of the more promising programs is that could be done nationally is just a sale, like a little bit of sales tax on each plastic bag you use, especially when you're going grocery shopping. I've heard that they're very effective. But in the research department, my, one of the researchers that I work with Dr. Woodcock, he's doing some interesting work with looking at proteins and enzymes that can go and digest plastic. So I'm optimistic in the future.

Speaker 1

Great, great. And I want to ask outside of maybe USF or Rotaract or any of those, what are some initiatives that you're taking to combat plastic waste and water pollution?

Speaker 2

The main thing I would say is essentially I try to go and reuse bags as much as I can or just go and reduce, you know what they, it's that old, I reduce reuse, recycle. But yeah, essentially it's mainly just trying to go and limit the amount of bags I get it and minimize general old plastic usage.

Speaker 1

Wonderful. Thank you.