

Tourism Marketing and Advertising Grants

Tips and Tactics

Here are some pointers to help you get maximum results from your Tompkins Tourism Program Tourism Marketing and Advertising Grant.

Tourism Marketing is Experiential

In our parent's day, tourism was all about sightseeing—collecting snapshots of the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, the World's Largest Ball of Twine, etc. Today, travelers hit the road for experiences. So for maximum impact, craft your marketing message in terms of an experience rather than a sight, a thing or an event.

Do Your Homework

The most important part of your marketing plan is the brainpower you put into initial research. Put the following in writing. Just a sentence or two:

- Define what you're selling. What's the experience? Is it: entertainment, education, romance, adventure, fitness, relaxation? Go beyond the obvious.
- Define the appeal of what you're selling. Why should people be interested in buying or attending? What's the emotional driver? This will be the core of your marketing message.
- Define who's most interested in what you're selling. Identify gender, age, location, social affiliations.

Now Do the Fun Part

Once your product and audience are clearly/succinctly articulated, it's time for the fun, creative stuff. Use your research to create a message about your product that's compelling to your specific audience. Some pointers:

- In your messaging, use your research to guide everything you produce including: graphic design, copywriting, images, etc.
- You can have more than one audience & message, but you only have one budget. Prioritize your efforts. Discipline yourself to focus on your most important targets.
- Use great photos and images. They're worth more than 1,000 words. Seriously. Great art & imagery is a good investment. It could be the best money you spend.

Spread the Word

Once you've created a compelling message for your audience, your job is to repeat that message as many times as you can in places your audience will find it. Here are the top places to put your message, more or less in order:

- Your Website: It's by far your most important marketing tool. Keep it simple. Make it pretty. Keep it updated. Make it easy for users to find key info: what, where, when, how much. Make sure it works for smart phones, 50% of traffic will come from mobile devices. Definitely put a contact us/info bottom on every page to collect email/text addresses. Use Google Analytics to track performance.
- Your Facebook Page: Second only to your website in importance. Update it daily with fun, personal pictures & stories designed to appeal to your core audience. Use inexpensive promoted posts to reach friends of friends and increase your reach. Use Facebook Analytics to track performance.
- Social Affiliate Websites, Blogs & Newsletters: Send information and images to organizations aligned with your event or product. They'll promote your message for free.

- E-news/Email Marketing: Email newsletters are more effective and less expensive than direct mail. But only 30 percent ever get opened. That's why your email subject line is the most important text in email marketing.
- Print Brochures, Flyers, Signs, Rack Cards, Direct Mail: Print pieces can be effective IF YOU HAVE DISTRIBUTION FIGURED OUT IN ADVANCE. Do your distribution planning first and proceed with printing only if your plan makes sense.
- Instagram, Pinterest & Twitter: As of this date, these are the top social sites after Facebook. Instagram and Pinterest are especially useful if you have great images to promote. Twitter is best for reaching local/regional media to grab PR.
- Free Online Event Calendars: Take advantage of regional media outlets offering free online event calendars. Some are very well-trafficked and the price is right.
- Press Releases: Emailed to legacy media are increasingly ineffective. If you pursue old fashioned "PR," have a solid news angle and a great story to tell.
- Paid Advertising: Save this for last. More below.

Paid Advertising

Paid ads are just one component of your marketing plan. Explore paid advertising only after you've addressed the channels above. Paid advertising is expensive so use it judiciously.

- Use your research to guide your selection of geography and audience. Then choose a media outlet or outlets that reach both efficiently.
- Be sure to trade a media sponsorship for additional ad buying. Not-for-profits can often double their ad buy by doing this.
- There is no cookie cutter list of appropriate media outlets for your unique project. Contact the Visitors Bureau for suggestions.
- When creating your ad, focus on one image, one thought and one audience. For maximum impact, fight the temptation to be all things to all people.

Get Some Help

Appoint a marketing manager. It's incredibly difficult (and time consuming) to be a project manager and its chief marketer. This is especially true considering the added content demands of social media. Bring someone onboard to help. Your results will improve. And you'll sleep better.

Resources:

The local event organizer's handbook:
<http://tompkinsfestivals.com/resources/>

Friendly advice:

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