

# Marketing and Communications

Just like the upgrades you make to a physical location or attraction, the money you spend on marketing is an investment in the future of your destination/region. All marketing initiatives should start with a strategic marketing plan.

Like any good investment, your marketing strategy should yield a measurable return calculated by clearly defined measurements of success determined before implementation.



## Planning Overview

Would you build a house without first consulting an architect? Of course not. How would your builder know what to build? A ranch? A Cape Cod? A mansion?

So why would you pay for marketing or public relations without first developing a plan?

Communications and marketing are expensive and can be time consuming. Countless marketing dollars and hours are wasted every year as companies and organizations rush to meet deadlines without considering any broader strategy. The temptation to get the “word out” or put out fires often comes at the expense of meeting long-term objectives with suboptimal returns and a glut of mixed messages.

## Discovery and Analysis

Before diving into any marketing activity, it’s crucial to have an understanding of your community’s current situation. At this point, you have evaluated and inventoried and you have determined internal and external influences that may affect your community. All prior work will help mold and build your marketing strategy.

Create a marketing plan by gathering the key stakeholders in your community. Allocate three hours for a discovery meeting where you clearly define your overall goals as well as a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats).

1. **Conducting a SWOT analysis** brings to light your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, allowing you to focus on maximizing opportunities and minimizing negative aspects.
2. **Conducting a competitive analysis** helps you understand how you measure up to your competitors. Through this, it's possible to identify what your competitors' communities offer to visitors that yours is missing, and what your community uniquely offers. Having this fleshed out will give your marketing plan the competitive edge it needs.
3. Any good marketing plan must be **research** based. While research studies can be costly for communities, the Maine Office of Tourism conducts statewide research throughout the year. The latest reports can be found at <https://motpartners.com/research/>.
4. **Identify the value you offer as a destination.** After assessing your current situation and considering your competitive landscape, the next step is clearly identifying the value you offer visitors as a destination. Look back at your inventory work and aspects of your community that make it a destination: the attractions, services, and necessary accommodations required.
5. **Determine your unique selling proposition.** Product positioning encapsulates defining who your audience is, their needs, and how your product – a great (you fill in the blank) destination – fulfills those needs. Taking a deep dive into who your visitors are, what they want, and how your attractions, services, and accommodations uniquely fulfill those desires will help you to articulate your positioning.
6. **Be honest.** Tell the truth about your destination. You are NOT all things to all people. You DON'T “have it all.”

**Once you understand your community's destination offerings, you must position those offerings in a way that makes them unique and superior to alternatives. What makes you special? What makes your destination like no other? To answer those questions, you need to have a clear understanding of your competitors' offerings. That's where the competitive analysis you did early in the process comes in to play.**

## Determine your Audience

Paint a picture of three or four of your audience personas. Give them a name and define their age, their income level, their occupation, and what media they consume.

Now flesh out a plan to target your personas and reach the stated goals. Establish strategies and tactics to better connect with them and engage them to build your brand. Pass the drafts around to get buy-in from your stakeholder group.



**Think: Mark is a 38-year-old investment banker living in Boston who loves spending time hiking and paddling with friends. He reads Outside magazine and gets his news online.**



## Set Objectives

Objectives should be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely). By having achievable and time-bound objectives, you are holding your plan tactics accountable for reaching these goals.

**Example: Increase your Facebook page “likes” by 20% in three months.** This is a clear, measurable goal using social media analytics, and has a timeframe tied to it to hold your marketing strategy accountable.

## Timeline, budget, and measures of success

Include a timeline, a budget, and ways to measure success. Ultimately, your goal is to increase visitation to your destination and to grow your brand. You will need to be aware of and aligned with the required costs it will take to market your destination. The budget will determine which goals you can pursue, based on the costs of the tactics.

Measuring success involves monitoring and evaluating your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). KPIs are data points that will give insight into the performance of your marketing. **(Example of a KPI: Increase the number of brochure requests by 15% the first year.)**

Having a goal like this allows you to make conclusions about marketing strategies’ effectiveness and budgets can be re-allocated as needed to ensure high-performing results.

It is the reason why the objectives you set should be measurable—you’ll want to see which strategies paid off, and which didn’t. These results help you to prioritize areas that are working well so you can maximize your return on investment. For instance, if you are using Facebook advertising to drive traffic to your site to order a guidebook and you have not met your goal, you know you should try another means of reaching your target audience.

It’s a lot of work to build the plan, but the more specific it is, the better you will be able to implement it for success.

**Before you spend money on advertising, a new sign or website, take the time to plan. This investment is sure to give you a stronger ROI.**

## Message mapping

In today's world, brands are constantly competing to spread their respective messages to millions of global consumers. Any brand hopes to distinguish itself from competitors, breaking through the noise and reaching those consumers with a message that resonates.

The ultimate goal is to persuade the customer to buy, buy, buy. In the case of destinations, it's to visit, visit, visit.

Today's consumers aren't always the easiest to persuade. According to the "2019 Edelman Trust Barometer," barely one-third of customers (34%) trust most of the brands that receive their hard-earned dollars. Edelman's survey found that brand trust is a deal-breaker for more than 80% of consumers when they're considering a purchase.

This sounds like common sense: Trust the brand, and you'll buy/visit. But it's not so straightforward to establish that trust.

Brand trust is also increasingly valuable currency, given the rising purchasing power of a millennial generation that wants new and unique travel experiences. Nearly 85% of millennials don't appreciate traditional advertising because they don't trust the messengers.

So how do you establish trust? It takes baby steps.

The first and most important step is to map out the key messages that you hope will resonate with your target audience—that is, the consumer you hope will become a visitor. Unless you map out the right messages, you have no chance of ever persuading that customer to visit, visit, visit.

Ask yourself: If I don't know the right thing to say, how can I possibly say it?

In fact, a "message map" is the foundation of all public relations. The way PR experts see it, the message map includes a key message at its center that is 21 words in length, surrounded by the ancillary messages that naturally flow from it.

Why 21 words? Because it takes seven seconds to say 21 words out loud. If you are familiar with broadcast news, you know that reporters and editors love seven-second sound bites. Short and sweet!

The key message—at the center of the map—is used for much more than just a cable news interview. Companies can use that message for website copy, email newsletters, paid ads and much more. Basically, you use it anywhere and everywhere you are talking about the brand – your destination.

As you structure your key message, which goes at the center of your map, it's important to think about your target audience. Who are you trying to serve? Which customers are you hoping to acquire? Only by orienting your message to your most important audience will you be able to reach peak resonance.

One way to structure the key message is to use an “XYZ” statement. Fill in the blanks: “We do X, for Y, so they can Z.”

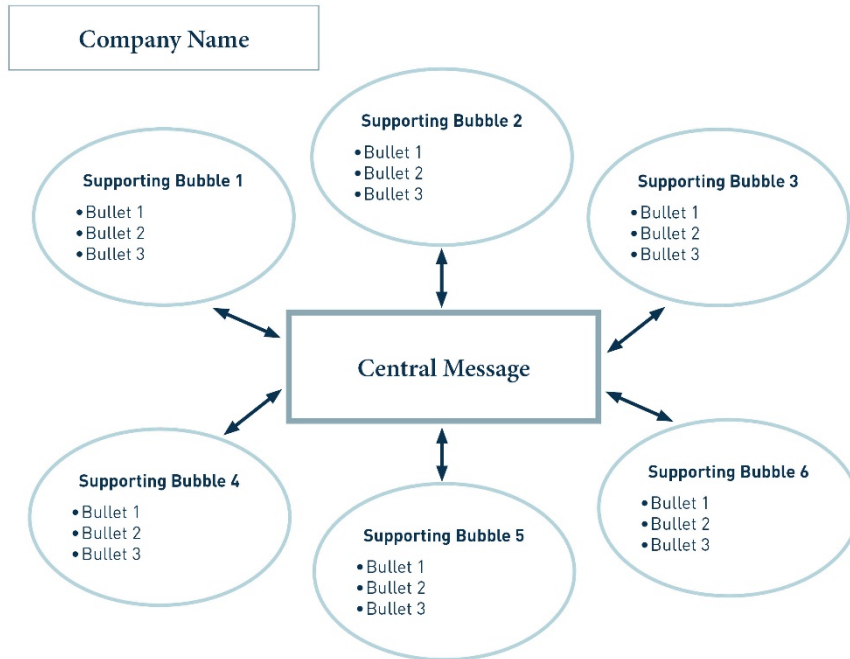
**A destination might say: Whoville provides vacation experiences (X) for outdoor adventurers (Y) so they can enjoy an abundance of recreation options (Z).**

The “XYZ” approach forces you to think about your key deliverables and differentiators, not to mention the consumers who will ultimately buy whatever you're selling.

Throughout the message mapping process, it's best to look at yourself as the strategic hero ready to swoop in and save the day for your customers. Think about what keeps them up at night and how you can help bring them peace of mind. For example, your potential visitors are concerned about having limited vacation time and making the best possible choice in a vacation destination that will meet their needs and desires for a memorable experience.

Now, imagine the New York Times calls and asks you to discuss your destination in five minutes or less. What would you say?

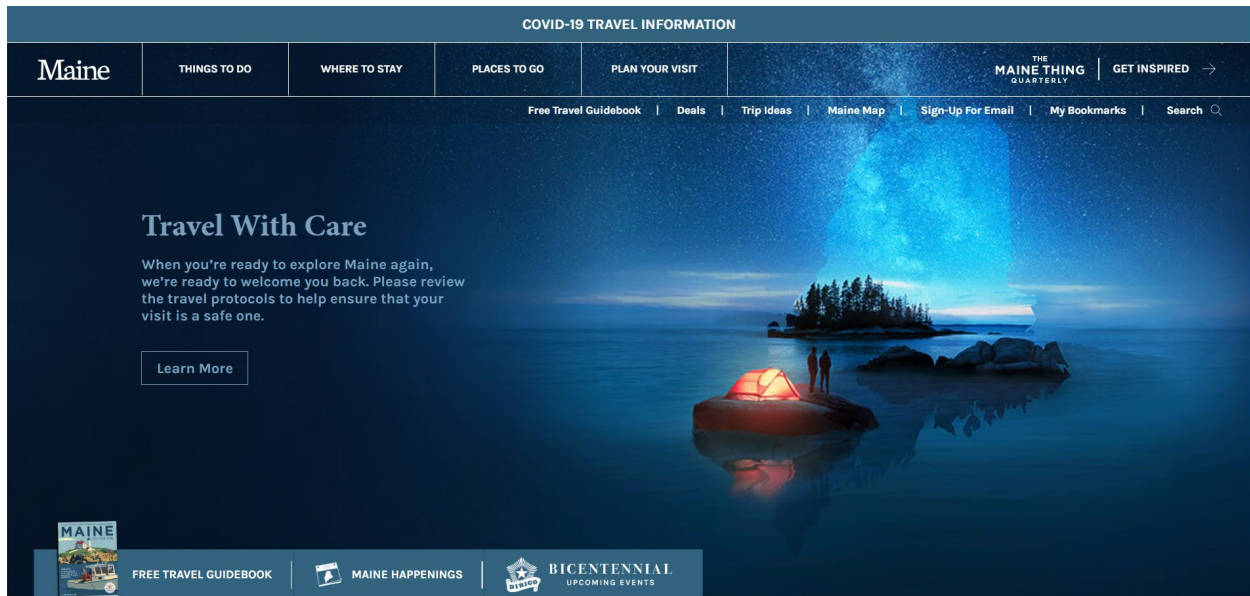
Map out your key message, and you're on the right path to a successful interview. Fail to map it out, and you'll have quite a difficult time establishing trust and a succinct message. The message map is your hero strategy!



## Website

A website is one of the most important assets an organization owns. It is often the first introduction your destination will have to a visitor.

Consumers are searching on their computers, and increasingly on their smartphones, for information of all kinds: a place nearby for lunch, the best economy lodging in an area, the dates an exhibit opens at a museum and on and on.



If your destination does not have a mobile compatible (responsive) website or it doesn't show up from simple Google searches you are missing a huge opportunity to present your destination in a positive light and tout the benefits it offers to its targeted audience.

The time and effort you put into building or improving your website so it is easily "findable" and relevant to the needs of your targeted audience is one of the most important activities in which you can engage. A website that offers valuable information and educates visitors about your destination will improve your credibility and reputation as a desirable destination.

## List building

The customer list is a business or organization's number one asset. Maintaining a customer list will enable you to market directly to those who already have a proven interest in your destination. It's your opportunity to develop a relationship with these potential visitors so that you stay top-of-mind with them. It's important to tend to your customer list as you would tend to a garden.

Enabling those who visit your site to sign up for an e-newsletter on your website Home Page or offering them exclusive resources and information in exchange for their contact information are some of the ways you can use your website to help grow your customer list.

Other online tools, including social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, can help you engage your customers further so they feel they are part of your business and feel a sense of trust in what you say and do. Always remember, though, that the spirit of the Internet is to provide value to your followers, not to hard sell your destination at every opportunity. What you post on your social media pages should be educational, informative and engaging, not overly promotional. We will outline more information on this in the social media section.

Your website and your customer list are closely tied together. Past, current and prospective visitors will refer to your website for useful information that will enable them to learn more about what you have to offer. Value-added resources you can provide for your customers on your website can include resource articles on the best local hikes and how-to videos for casting a line. The more useful information you provide to your target audience, the more likely they are to feel a connection with your destination and want to visit. Regularly posting new information and resources will give them a reason to return to your website again and again, helping to facilitate a long-term relationship.

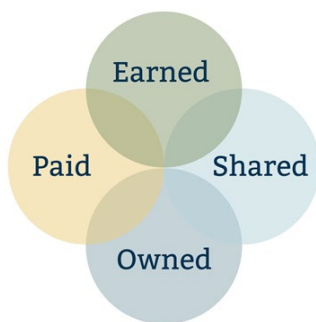
## Marketing, Advertising and Public Relations

It's easy to become confused about the difference between advertising, marketing, and public relations since the terms are often used interchangeably. Though they are all effective ways of promoting a product, service or destination, each uses a different set of methods to generate results.

**The most successful promotional endeavors use a combination of marketing, advertising, and public relations to generate responses from target audiences. When all three disciplines work in unison to deliver the same message, the results can be very powerful.**

## Marketing

Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large. — American Marketing Association



The PESO model identifies the four media types — **Paid, Earned, Shared, and Owned** — and merges them together. This gives you a framework for maximizing opportunities or identifying gaps in your communication strategy.

Paid – Any paid advertising (print, digital, out-of-home, broadcast)

Earned – Public and media relations

Shared – Social media

Owned – Website, webinars, podcasts, videos and content created on your behalf



Think of marketing as a big umbrella and under that umbrella is everything included in the PESO model. Marketing encompasses all the activities and tactics used to reach your targeted audience in the most effect manner. Marketing begins with:

- **Researching customer groups**
- **Analyzing their needs**
- **Using the research to make strategic decisions on reaching the customer and building relationships with them through several touchpoints**

## Advertising / Paid Media

- **Buy space (online, print, broadcast) to promote a product or service**
- **You have complete control**

Your research and marketing plan will guide your advertising. You know your audience. Is your audience getting information online, in print or through television and radio? Are you targeting potential visitors in Portland or Boston? Does your targeted audience read Backpacker or the Wall Street Journal, or do they rely on social media for their news? You will want to work with an agency that will consider all available research and the demographic or psychographic information of your targeted audience.



Since paid advertising is a costly marketing tactic, it may be beneficial to partner with another Maine destinations or reach out to businesses in your community that may be interested in partnering for co-op advertising opportunities.

It may be tempting to buy an ad in your favorite publication or website but be sure it fits in with your overall marketing plan and that you will see an optimal return on investment. A reputable agency will guide you through the process.

**For the most part, one-off ads do not work!**

# Public Relations (PR) / Earned Media

Working through third parties to build:

- **Public awareness**
- **Support**
- **Excitement**

Elements of PR include:

- **Media relations – if you have a high-quality product or offering and the story angle is well presented, the media will listen. They are most interested in information on:**
  - **What’s new**
  - **The best deals**
  - **What’s “hot” or “the best” in a particular genre**
  - **Exclusive, distinctive attractions, services or products**
  - **Research or studies related to present day concerns or interests**
  - **Good human-interest stories**
  - **How a national trend is playing out at the local level**
- **Influencer campaigns – tap into an existing community of engaged followers. Influencers are specialists in their niches and have established a high level of trust and two-way communication with their follower bases. (HubSpot)**
  - **Their fans/followers have a great deal of trust in them**
  - **They tend to align with like-minded brands**
  - **Unlike travel media, they are often paid**
- **Speaking engagements**
- **Newsletters and e-newsletters – establishes ongoing communications with your targeted audience**
- **Planning special events / virtual events**
- **Creating fact sheets, etc.**
- **Planning contests/giveaways**
- **Drafting letters to the editor, position papers, guest columns**

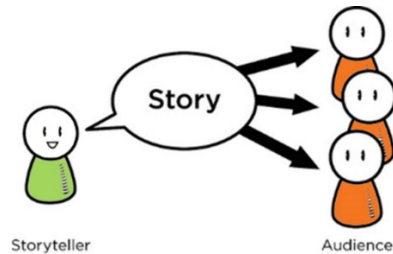


Earned media is not a new strategy, but it’s more important today because of social media.

- **Print and broadcast coverage is now shared online:**
  - **Shares**
  - **Likes**
  - **Tweets and retweets**
- **Builds brand awareness**
- **Helps Google understand that your content is relevant and moves it higher in search engine results**

For destinations, key elements of a PR / Earned Media program involve:

- **Pitching newsworthy, timely and unique ideas to media and influencers**
- **Following leads**
- **Press and influencer visits**
- **Press events**
- **Responding to requests for information and fact checking**
- **Providing images and video to the media upon request**



As you prepare to enter the world of PR, pay attention to the kinds of stories you see in media outlets and online that cover travel. The strategic marketing plan you have worked on has determined your audience and your differentiators. Now, you are ready to be the storyteller for your destination.

**As you develop your marketing plan, be sure to refer to the most recent Maine Office of Tourism plan. You will want to align your plan and target markets with it.**

## Social Media Best Practices – Travel/Tourism

Quality over quantity is the guiding principle of social media. If you have limited resources, it is recommended that you concentrate on one or two platforms and do them well. First, identify your social media goals and target audiences, and then focus on the social media platforms that speak to those audiences. Your personas research that was part of your marketing plan will guide you through this. Here are the basic best practices for travel/tourism brands on social media:

### Basic practices

- **Follow/like all partners' social pages. This includes businesses in your community, attractions, lodging properties, restaurants, and even media you have targeted as part of your plan.**
- **Be consistent, decide how many posts a week you will post (we recommend 3-5).**
- **Monitor posts daily and respond to both positive and negative comments.**
- **Update all bios (this is the section in your profile where you tell your audience who you are) to align with the vision and mission, link to your website whenever possible and, if space allows, reference other social media account links within the description/bio sections.**
- **Identify a hashtag to use in all bios, posts and on the website.**
- **Use identified hashtag and other trending hashtags related to travel or your destination on all social posts, but don't overwhelm followers with too many.**
- **Share all earned media results (magazine and newspaper articles, online and broadcast coverage) on all social accounts and tag the media outlet.**
- **Negative posts should be handled appropriately based on the comment. If profanity, slander or offensive language appear in the comments of a post, the comment should be hidden or removed. For other negative comments, always thank followers for their feedback and tell them you've responded in a direct message. It's always a good idea to take the conversation to a private direct message.**

## Social Media Platforms

With many social media networks available it is easy to feel overwhelmed by which platforms make the most sense for your destination. The best way to choose primary, secondary and tertiary platforms for your brand is to first identify your goals and target audience(s) and see where your audiences spend time online. Focusing on one or two primary platforms is key to growing a following and producing quality content over quantity.

The social media platforms we are about to identify are best for travel/tourism brands. These social networks focus on connecting with people by building meaningful relationships through sharing stories, photos, videos and information with friends and family. While there are other platforms available, we recommend starting with the following.

### Facebook

Facebook is one of the most popular social networking platforms for personal and business use. Facebook is a place to connect with others by sharing stories, updates, photos, videos and general news with those who follow or 'like' your page. Businesses and organizations use Facebook Business pages to showcase their brand, share updates and share events.

HootSuite 2020 demographics for Facebook



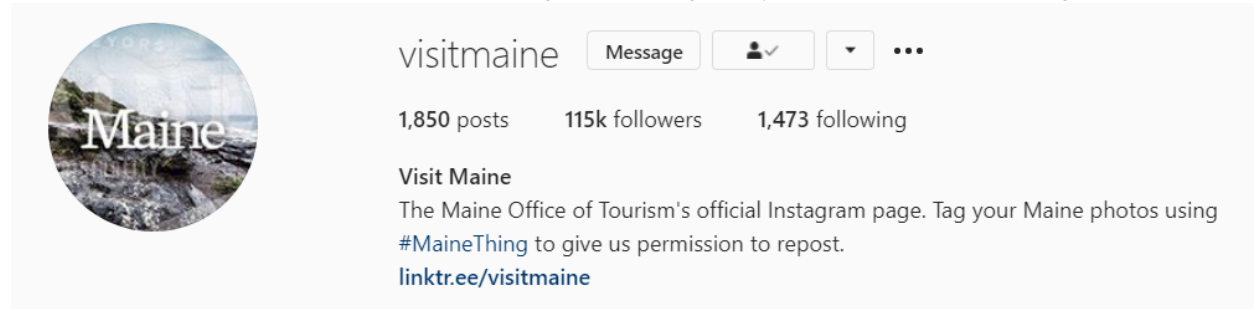
Why should we promote our destination/region/area on Facebook?

Facebook is a great platform to build a fanbase of visitors and potential visitors. Sharing beautiful photos of places to see, things to do, where to eat, where to stay and links to your website and guidebook is great for travel inspiration. Also, encouraging engagement with return visitors to share their vacation memories and tips and tricks allow for two-way communication that builds trust with followers and is a resource for potential visitors

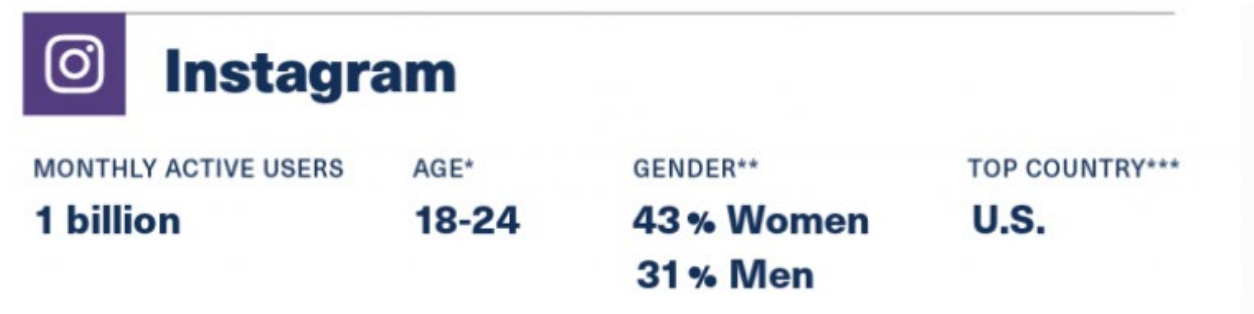
### Instagram

Instagram, owned by Facebook, is another popular social network focused on photo-sharing. Instagram allows people, content creators and businesses to edit and upload photos and short videos through a mobile app. With Instagram primarily being a mobile app there is limited accessibility on a desktop computer. People share photos and videos with a caption and one or more hashtags. Hashtags are used to categorize photos in buckets. It is important to use a brand specific hashtag on Instagram, that way followers can use that hashtag, too. This is where user-

generated content comes in, followers will share their photos using brand specific hashtags. It is important to have a brand specific hashtag in the biography on the brand homepage. Example:



### HootSuite 2020 demographics for Instagram



#### Why should we promote our destination/region/area on Instagram?

Instagram is one of the best social media networks for travel/tourism brands because its sole purpose is photos and videos. The best way to showcase a destination to potential visitors is to show experiences through photos and videos. Also, a brand specific hashtag is a great way to access user-generated content to share with followers. Sharing fans' photos builds trust and shows off experiences from the visitors' perspective.

#### Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blogging social network meant for messages to be sent quickly. It allows for quick and instant updates, breaking news and a place to network with media, similar brands, and followers.

### HootSuite 2020 demographics for Twitter



#### Why should we promote our destination/region/area on Twitter?

Twitter is a platform to have a presence on to keep connected with industry news and media. There are many travel/tourism focused Twitter Chats where you can participate. Twitter chats are a great way to be part of a community of industry leaders.

## Pinterest

Pinterest is a photo sharing site that allows you to create theme-based collections of photos called “boards”. Boards are a way to organize and share ideas with others. Each “pin” is a photo or video that has a description and links to a website.

### Why should we promote our destination/region/area on Pinterest?

Pinterest is a good choice for travel/tourism brands because it’s all about photos, inspiration and each pin has longevity. The travel niche is well represented on Pinterest because this is the blogging platform that people use for planning purposes. While planning a trip, it is easy to save pins to travel-inspired boards. Use Pinterest to keep evergreen content that you want potential visitors to see year after year.

## Hiring the right firm

Just like other components of the destination development process, the marketing of your destination cannot be done without professional guidance. By now, you understand that marketing is more than placing an ad or creating a brochure. We mentioned at the start of this section that marketing is an investment. To protect that investment and to ensure you are following a path that is sustainable and measurable, you will need help from a qualified marketing communications agency.

Remember the Dating Game show, where a single person had 15 minutes to ask three hidden bachelors or bachelorettes a series of questions before choosing the one to go out with? At the end of each show the winners blew a kiss to the audience and (hopefully) left for a fun evening.

Finding “the one” with all its excitement and stress is a lot like finding the right agency for your organization.

Here are some things to keep in mind when you’re looking for a marketing partner:

- **Experience in your market**  
**Hiring an agency is not like hiring an employee, they need to be able to jump into the work without you having to train them on the travel industry or destination marketing. Experienced agencies will already have relationships with your target media outlets, advertising reps, current industry trends, and other travel and tourism clients.**
- **A great reputation**  
**Your mother was right, who you associate with reflects on you – so be sure the agency you work with is reputable, reliable, and responsible. Check references and ask around, when it comes down to it, Maine is a small state and people know each other.**
- **First Impressions**  
**The agency you hire will need to know about your destination and your organizational structure. The very first meeting you have will be important for you to share as much information as possible and for them to take it all in.**
  - **What was your impression?**
  - **How did you feel after the meeting?**
  - **Did they take over the conversation?**

- **Did they ask insightful questions, and did they listen to your answers?**
- **Cost/Return on Investment**
  - **Understandably cost is one of the main factors in choosing an agency – but beware, sometimes you get what you pay for. Just like you may not want to go to the cheapest surgeon, you may not want to hire the agency with the lowest bid.**
  - **Decide on your goals,**
  - **Determine your benchmarks of success**
  - **Ask for case studies on similar projects**
  - **Ask for reference**
  - **Look for the best return on your investment.**

## Request for Proposals (RFP)

An RFP is a document that serves as an announcement that a business, non-profit, or government agency is requesting services from a professional, in this case, marketing agency. They are doing so by a bidding process and have created an outline of requirements.

An RFP does not have to be an intimidating, voluminous document, but it does need to be clear and comprehensive. Here are the typical elements of an RFP:

- **Cover letter – brief outline of the services you are requesting, the timeline of the process, when, where and how to submit proposals, information on a question/answer period, if there is one, and contact information for the person requesting the proposal**
- **Introduction – brief general overview of the project and your organization**
- **Scope of Services – list of all services you are requesting be handled by bidders. This can include things like strategic plan, website development, PR services, ad plan and social media**
- **Duration of Services – length of contract/agreement**
- **Budget – it is a good idea to include your budget, or a do not exceed amount, so bidders know what they can include in their proposals**
- **Contents of proposal – this is typically a list of what you want included in the proposal: Agency experience, staff bios, recommended tactics, references, measurement of success, etc.**
- **Scoring criteria – how each element of the proposal will be scored**

A simple Google search will provide several examples of various RFPs.

### Resources Cited or Referenced:

- Marshall Communications. *Marketing and Communications Chapter*. Marshallpr.com 2020. Web & Print.
- Forsey, Caroline. *How to Write a Request for Proposal*. Hubspot.com. 2018. Web.

# Evaluating Destination Success Over Time

Throughout this destination development process, great effort has been made to:

- **Inventory and assess community assets**
- **Examine strengths, weaknesses, gaps and opportunities**
- **Develop a vision, mission, goals and action steps to accomplish agreed upon goals**

Through marketing and public relations planning the leadership team and destination marketing organization have carefully crafted the following:

- **A thorough, research-based marketing plan**
- **A social media strategy**
- **An invitation to targeted visitor markets through various media**

The destination marketing organization is prepared to manage the experience of guests by providing information services to help ensure a fulfilling visit. Another part of managing the destination is trying to ensure that growth is aligned with community core values, protection of resources – environmental and cultural – and that the economy remains viable. This requires clear communication and partnerships to manage the various aspects of a destination.

## Determining Success

How do you know if you have been successful in reaching your goals? This is where you come to fully understand why the goals you establish must be **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic**, within a set **Timeframe** (SMART goals)! If you cannot measure what you hope to achieve, then you will never know if you were successful or not.

So, what were the key measures that community brought up in early discussions?

Examples:

- **Increase population by 20% within two years?**
- **Open five (5) new businesses in next six months?**
- **Increase visitation by 10% by end of this year?**
- **Increase retail sales by 15% over same month last year?**

**The focal points of early group discussions are the measurements that should be tracked over time to determine if you are accomplishing the goals established.**



It may take a few years before you begin to see things change in a positive direction. However, it is a proven fact that you will accomplish whatever has been your point of focus. If you get sidetracked, then your goals may suffer.

Every community will be quite different in terms of both goals and measurements, but here are a few examples of things you might consider:

- 1. Goal: How much has interest in our destination increased since we began destination development work? Establish a base year (FY 2017) as a starting point and then track metrics forward.**  
**Review:**
  - **Social media: track increase in followers over months, years**
  - **Website visitation: look at page views, bounce rate, time spent per page**
  - **Trip advisor rankings: for key properties in destination, year by year**
  
- 2. Goal: How much has visitation increased and are visitors spending more money?**  
**Track:**
  - **Visitor center traffic numbers – monthly, seasonally, annually**
  - **Local state park visitation – annual year over year**
  - **Meals and lodging taxable sales – monthly, seasonally, annually**
  - **Retail taxable sales – monthly, annually**
  - **Regional economic impact figures**
  
- 3. Goal: Have we expanded our shoulder season visitation this year over last?**  
**Percentage?**
  - **Visitor center traffic numbers – monthly, seasonally, annually**
  - **Local state park visitation – annual year over year – only open spring-fall**
  - **Meals and lodging taxable sales – monthly, seasonally, annually**
  
- 4. Goal: Is our school enrollment increasing or decreasing? Percentage increase or decrease?**
  - **Track enrollment by grade year over year to determine the health of a critical institution**
    - **Helps track families moving in and out of community**

You will note in these examples that many of these are already being monitored by some other organization or group. It is a simple matter of making a few calls and obtaining the data that you are seeking to record. You can then manage your own unique set of metrics for your own tracking purposes. For an example of a simple tracking spreadsheet contact the Destination Development Specialist at the Office of Tourism.

For organizations that have a sustainability focus and goals, you will find some ideas here to assist you in determining what metrics could be tracked.

<http://whc.unesco.org/sustainabletourismtoolkit/guides/guide-10-monitoring-success-sustainable-tourism>

#### Resources Cited or Referenced

- *Online Sustainable Tourism Toolkit, People Protecting Places*, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Heritage Convention. whc.unesco.org. UNESCO World Heritage, 2020. Web.

# Additional Markets

## International

Overseas markets are reached through international tour operators and U.S.-based receptive tour operators who receive a percentage of published rates to package and market your experience internationally.

While there are many advantages to reaching these markets, there are also many factors to take into consideration to reach those markets efficiently and effectively.

#### **Advantages:**

- **The international visitor stays longer and often travels geographically broader than the domestic visitor.**
- **The average European has a four to six-weeks paid vacation, thus has time to travel and vacations are a priority.**
- **International travelers spend more than domestic visitors.**
- **International travelers book months in advance and are not dependent upon weather conditions for travel.**
- **The average household income of international travelers tends to be significantly higher than that of the average domestic traveler.**
- **New England tends to attract a more sophisticated international traveler, with disposable income, who seeks activity combined with the essentials - good food and lodging.**

#### **Disadvantages:**

- **It is expensive and time-consuming to market internationally on your own.**
- **Lacking cultural understanding, offensive social errors can be made unwittingly that impact sales effectiveness.**
- **The destination itself must be prepared to welcome non-English speaking markets by overcoming language and cultural barriers.**
- **To be effective internationally, one must learn and understand how to work with the travel trade chain.**

- **To work internationally, some financial concessions must be made to work with the travel trade to gain new markets for the long term.**
- **It is difficult to make an impact as a small single property or even as a single state in an international country, thus cooperative sales make for greater impact and more effective international marketing.**

## Discover New England (DNE)

For the reasons above, five of the New England states work together to market New England as a region to overseas markets. This collaboration, under the umbrella of Discover New England, allows the states to pool resources for effective and impactful marketing to potential overseas visitors. DNE's primary efforts are in the UK and Ireland, and in secondary markets of Germany, Japan and Australia/New Zealand. MOT also markets to France independent of DNE.

For more information, go to [discovernewengland.org](http://discovernewengland.org).

## INTERNATIONAL & GROUP TOUR BUSINESS CHAIN

Supplier → Trade Professional(s) → End User

### YOU ARE HERE

(Accommodations, attractions, etc.)



### U.S. RECEPTIVE TOUR OPERATORS

(Contract with you for 20-40% off published rates)



### DOMESTIC & INTERNATIONAL TOUR OPERATORS

(Contract with you for 15-20% discount from your published rates)



### TRAVEL AGENCIES, AAA, WEB, Etc.

(Earns a 10% Sales Commission from your published rates)



### END USER .... Our Actual visitors

They should never pay more than your published rates!

## Group Tour & Motorcoach

Group tour and Motorcoach are domestic markets that can have significant impact on communities in high season, but most especially in off-season months. These markets are only reached through the group tour and motorcoach companies that receive a percentage off published rates to package and market your experience for you to their own exclusive and targeted consumers.

### Advantages:

- **A tour operator will market and sell your package and property.**
- **Multiple people (30-50) are arriving and departing a property at a specified time, making staffing requirements easier to anticipate.**
- **This mode of travel has a significant impact on a local economy – gas, shopping, dining, lodging - for however number of nights a group remains in a community.**
- **Many people see motorcoach travel as a “greener”, more efficient mode of travel, cutting down on carbon emissions by servicing many people in one vehicle.**
- **Often a tour guide travels with a group enhancing the experience by delivering background information and providing VIP access to certain attractions that visitors would not be able to enjoy traveling on their own.**
- **Motorcoach tours service student, family and senior travel markets, thus they can be targeted for very specific purposes if you have the product the markets seek.**

### Disadvantages:

- **As property owner, you are trusting a third party to market and sell your package.**
- **If a tour operator fails to sell a tour, a facility could have a large room block vacant to sell to walk-ins at the last minute. To avoid this, a lodging facility can set deposits and cut-off dates.**
- **On occasion a time schedule is disrupted due to traffic, coach maintenance issues or something else that can disrupt the anticipated timeline and guest flow in or out of a property. Because a coach holds multiple guests, that can create problems for staffing and the property.**
- **There are specific expectations with group business: the driver is given free room and board, baggage handling by the property is expected upon arrival and departure (however, you do charge a per person fee), a greeting with general information is expected upon arrival, key cards should be ready upon arrival for rapid check-in, and a welcome reception is appreciated.**

## HOW TO WORK WITH THE MOTORCOACH MARKET

### Accommodations:

- **Your property should include at least 30 rooms.**
- **A minimum of 25 double/doubles and 2 singles (usually complimentary for driver and escort) may be required for each tour.**
- **Greet groups as soon as they arrive. Consider stepping on the bus for a welcome.**
- **Pre-registration is a necessity.**
- **Make sure baggage handling is swift and accurate.**
- **Several first-floor double/doubles are preferred.**
- **Indoor corridors are preferred, but not always required.**
- **Make sure your elevators are working properly.**
- **Be ready to host a welcome reception, if required.**
- **Some type of on-site breakfast is preferred or “package” with a local restaurant.**
- **Motorcoach parking and turning space must be adequate.**
- **A tiered pricing and flexible deposit policy are preferred.**

### Restaurants:

- **Provide seating in small groups (four or six tops) rather than seating at long tables in a room separate from regular customers.**
- **The facility should be large enough to accommodate group dining during regular hours.**
- **A customized menu or limited regular menu is helpful.**
- **Adequate restrooms should be available to handle a group’s arrival.**
- **Remember, groups must follow a schedule. It’s important to have adequate wait staff to accommodate the group’s schedule.**
- **Consider whether your location and availability are convenient for group tours.**
- **Motorcoach parking and turning space must be adequate.**

### Attractions:

- **Have enough staff to handle each group.**
- **Speak clearly and distinctly.**
- **Have knowledgeable guides since tour members usually ask questions.**
- **“Hands-on” and interactive programs are preferred over a simple guided tour.**
- **Consider a special tour, something individuals would not normally see or do. Groups enjoy activities that individual travelers may not be able to access.**
- **Let the tour operator know what other group attractions are in the area.**
- **Remember, groups must follow a schedule so keep that in mind during tours.**
- **Motorcoach parking and turning space must be adequate.**

**Remember: Group Tour providers always seek new and unique adventures for their clients every single year!**

## How to be involved

The Maine Motorcoach Network (MMN) is an all-volunteer 501(c)6 non-profit organization founded in 2010 to promote group tours in Maine. The MMN mission is to increase the revenue to Maine businesses by promoting motorcoach and group travel to the State of Maine. It conducts targeted sales missions in Eastern U.S. and Canada, FAM tours within Maine and holds bi-monthly member meetings for networking. A Group Travel Guide is published every year and distributed to tour operators via the Maine Office of Tourism and awards an annual scholarship to a Maine college student pursuing a career in a hospitality or tourism field.

Request the *Guide to Hosting a Motorcoach Tour* from Maine Office of Tourism. Please see the Group Tour page on [visitmaine.com](http://visitmaine.com).

For more information, contact Chiara Moriconi, MOT's Group Tour & Motorcoach liaison. [Chiara.Moriconi@maine.gov](mailto:Chiara.Moriconi@maine.gov), 207-624-9809.