

# Responsible Marketing & Communications Strategies

## Reviewing Your Current Marketing Strategy

For longer-term resilience-building, this is a good time to invest in building and/or strengthening your organization or destination's unique selling proposition and ensuring that you are targeting the most appropriate markets for the future. It is important to recognize that incorporating more 'management' into your organization's activities doesn't mean that marketing goes away. The need to address impacts and become more resilient for the future is an opportunity to leverage marketing expertise to achieve these new goals. Marketing has an important role to play in promoting local cultures and businesses, promoting responsible and climate-friendly ways to visit, NOT promoting over-visited and overcrowded sites or experiences, enhancing destination accessibility and inclusion, and increasing benefits to community members, showcasing tourism's ability to deliver value to residents when done right.

***Marketing provides the opportunity to really connect with your audience on the issues that are important to them and showcase the features that will appeal while helping to achieve the right impacts for your destination.***

### The Thompson Okanagan 7 Generations Pledge

#### [The 7 Affirmations for 7 Generations Pledge](#)

was created by the Thompson Okanagan regional destination management organization out of a need to develop guidelines for sustainable tourism and conscious travel within their tourism region. Based on the Seven Generations Principle, rooted in Indigenous philosophy: The decisions we make today will have an impact for as many as seven generations to come.

It serves as a guide for travelers but also is used by the DMO for industry events and across the region in united responsible travel messaging efforts.



It will be useful to consider the following when reviewing your marketing strategy:



To what extent does your marketing strategy align with evolving consumer trends and shifts toward sustainability? For example, are you positioned to respond to the increased demand for local food and for businesses to demonstrate their social impact in the local community? Do your target markets perceive you as such?



How can you demonstrate that you take sustainability seriously and attract visitors that are looking for a more a 'responsible' or 'sustainable' experience? What are you doing to spread the benefits of tourism and showcase your environmental and cultural assets to visitors?



Do you know which of your target markets generate the highest net benefit? Marketing strategies and budgets should be aligned with the market segments that deliver the most value (and not just economic value).



How can you nurture long-term relationships with climate-conscious Gen Z travelers, which could pay dividends in transitioning to a more sustainable tourism economy?



How can your marketing and promotional strategies help to disperse visitors, attracting them to certain areas at optimum times of the week or year?

How can you tweak your marketing (or view it through a climate and DEIA lens) to highlight activities that have low environmental and climate impacts, and positive benefits for communities?

How can you promote responsible, respectful behaviors through your marketing messaging?

## Optimizing Visitor Spend

### Different market segments have different spend patterns

Understanding the potential impacts associated with different visitors is useful in order to optimize visitor spend through targeted marketing and business support. For example, international and out-of-state visitors, who arrive by airplane, are likely to stay for longer, do more, and spend more, but will also have higher associated carbon footprints. International family markets typically spend more on attractions, while younger markets spend more on sporting activities and in bars and clubs. Tourists staying in 5-star accommodations are likely to spend the most in total than other visitors yet visitors in 3-star accommodations often spend more in local businesses (e.g., shops, restaurants) and so they are more 'valuable' in terms of contributing to the local economy.

The Travel Foundation conducted a study for Tenerife, Spain, to analyze behavior patterns of different market segments and identified that higher spending visitors to the island had higher costs related to resource use as well as lower economic impacts because of leakage – their spend tended to be higher in businesses that are not locally owned and therefore much of their spend was leaving the island. The study also pointed to segments that would support local employment and those with a lower carbon footprint, enabling the destination to make more informed decisions about marketing and product development.

### Optimizing Visitor Spend: Key considerations

The highest spending market segment does not always lead to the most benefits for the destination. A more nuanced approach is required based on an examination of existing spend data and alignment with your sustainability goals. When assessing how you want to optimize visitor spend, it may be useful to consider the following questions:

- Which spend supports small businesses/equity and inclusion/the local economy (vs leakage)?
- Which spend supports the most jobs?
- Which spending is most reliable/resilient to shock?
- Which spending is distributed well across time and place?

## Future of Tourism

### Guiding Principle #4

### Choose Quality Over Quantity



Manage tourism development based on quality of visitation, not quantity of visitors, so as to enhance the travel experience while sustaining the character of the destination and benefiting local communities.

It will be useful to look at the specific spend data of different market segments to your business or destination in order to adapt product and marketing strategies to attract more or less of certain segments, according to your vision and goals.

### Relating to the themes above, responsible marketing and communication strategies should include:

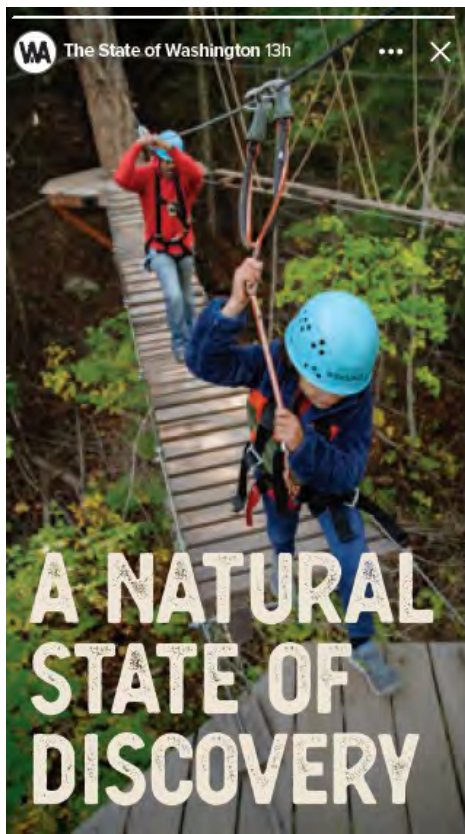
- **Driving visitors towards less-visited products and places and away from the more 'saturated' ones** and showcasing new products that are designed to influence visitor flows: cycling, walking and self-drive routes that also promote local food, lesser visited cultural heritage, and local experiences. Geo-location targeted advertising can also be implemented to influence visitor flows and behavior. (Note: This will need thoughtful planning to mitigate any adverse effects for less-visited communities)
- **Adapting current products to reduce their carbon footprint:** plastic-free tours, cycling instead of driving routes, farm to table / low food mile gastronomy experiences, other human-powered activities.
- **Showcasing travel options which minimize carbon emissions** e.g., 'slow' travel options and human-powered activities like hiking, kayaking, cycling, walking, Nordic skiing and snowshoeing, etc.
- **Stimulating visitor spending on products and experiences that benefit local suppliers and producers** including diverse, marginalized and underrepresented groups.
- **Messaging provides practical information to visitors about how they can responsibly visit** and have the most positive impacts on the local community and environment.
- **Linking good visitor management techniques with visitor safety** will show that places are safe to visit and easy to access e.g., how to book ahead and have a seamless experience at popular attractions.

## True to Nature

In 2022, State of Washington Tourism launched a new destination brand centered the destination name The State of Washington. The launch followed 18 months of extensive listening to local communities, tourism industry businesses, recreation and conservation leaders, local officials, Tribes, and myriad statewide stakeholders. The result was a decidedly values-based brand and a strategic marketing position with the goal of positioning Washington not as mass-market, but as a destination for responsible travelers interested in listening to, understanding and aligning their experiences with Washington's diverse communities.

The brand's first integrated marketing campaign, True to Nature, targets an audience coined "The Pathfinder." The Pathfinder seeks experiences that are as unique and as independently-spirited as they are themselves. Pathfinders inherently care about leaving places better than they found them and enhancing and sustaining local and indigenous communities and outdoor environments.

The campaign inspires both travelers and residents to elevate their ambitions while also spreading awareness of the importance of stewardship.





Where smaller group sizes are required, the benefits of personalized experiences can be highlighted. Many destinations are using apps that allows visitors and residents to see how busy a venue or restaurant is to ease pressure points, making the experience safer and more enjoyable while also supporting the private sector.

- **Multi-attraction tickets and partnership packages** can help to raise the profile of a range of different attractions and suppliers across the supply chain. For example, ‘stay and play’ packages that include accommodation and attraction tickets. This really benefits from a collaborative approach and can lead to some very innovative and creative partnerships!

Just like the pivot that everyone went through during the pandemic to address new health and safety protocols, such as enhancing online sales capabilities, creating new products and experiences and targeted messaging for domestic visitors, it is important to think about other adaptations that may be necessary into the future.



## Future of Tourism Guiding Principle #11

### *Diversify Source Markets*



In addition to international visitation, encourage robust domestic tourism, which may be more resilient in the face of crises and raise citizens’ perceived value of their own natural and cultural heritage.

### Reflections

- **What is the visitor profile of the biggest market segment for your business or destination?**
- **Would different types of visitors provide more value? Could you make any changes to your products to attract different types of visitors?**
- **Do you have strategies in place that target specific visitor groups who are more environmentally conscious?**
- **Can you think of any small tweaks you can make to your marketing and communications that would boost the sustainability and resilience of your community?**
- **Do you have marketing strategies in place that boost the profile of sustainable products and experiences? E.g., cycling tours, local-food products, experiences that support local businesses or underrepresented groups, or social enterprises?**

