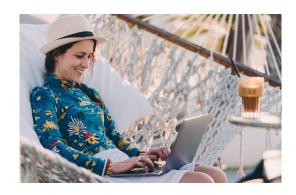




A Guide to Effectively Targeting Your City Visitor Center's Marketing Dollars

There's no way around it. The travel industry took quite a hit as a result of COVID-19, costing \$935 billion in revenue worldwide in the first 10 months of 2020. While tourism won't likely return to pre-pandemic levels anytime soon, city visitor centers must still get to work on wooing travelers back to a given destination.

Even with the vaccine rollout picking up steam almost by the day, this is a tall order. You not only need to convey a sense of safety in traveling to a city, county, or region but also convince potential travelers that there will be something to do upon arrival — beyond hanging out at the hotel.



No doubt, it will take a more nuanced approach with messaging. It will also require a change in marketing mix, as most city visitor centers rely heavily on traditional marketing channels with a digital component for support. That's not to say print advertising and TV spots no longer hold any sway with consumers. It's just that people are now consuming media differently than before. In fact, 65% of consumers would prefer that businesses communicate with them via social media channels.

With that in mind, let's take a look at where you should direct your marketing dollars in 2021 and beyond.

Adapting Your Marketing Strategy

With travel conditions in an almost constant state of flux, visitor centers should start to focus on flexibility in their marketing strategies. In other words, lean on more cost-effective, yet easily scalable channels — as well as those that can be paused at a moment's notice. Should budgets change, you'll enjoy the luxury of turning up (or turning down) the volume of any and all messaging.



Traditional

Though some traditional marketing methods no longer have the same reach, there are still those that can reintroduce travelers to the idea of visiting your location.



TV

While more and more people may be cutting the cord, television still allows you to tell a story and elicit emotion from viewers. It can also reach a wide, yet targeted audience. And with the advent of OTT (more on that later), the same 30-second spot can be used to grab the attention of future travelers across multiple channels.





Email

Email may fall within the virtual realm, but it's still one of the oldest forms of digital marketing when compared to social, for example. That said, it's still a great way to connect with potential customers — through a drip campaign, new promotional offers, and so on. Besides, it's one of the most cost-effective mediums around.



OOH

As you probably know, out-of-home (OOH) advertising is basically outdoor advertising: airport signage, public parks with free-standing billboards, bus shelter panels, and so on. Though many communities are still living with restrictions, people are out and about, and you should be utilizing this marketing channel if it fits within your target market.



Digital

For many visitor centers, digital marketing has traditionally been secondary to more traditional marketing methods. While digital can support traditional (and vice versa), you need to meet consumers where they are — and that's online.



Targeted display advertising

Targeted display is all about online real estate, allowing you to position digital ads in the most opportune locations among search engine results based on specific keywords. If you go with pay-per-click, you only pay for those impressions that led to a click. Coupled with SEO, which can help you rank in organic search results, you could end up listed twice on the same page. This, in turn, can drive even more traffic to your website.



Social media

No one needs to tell you that social media is where consumers spend most of their time online. Sites like Facebook, Instagram, and even Twitter offer opportunities to reach a very targeted audience based on everything from age and locality to interests and specific behaviors. This means you can connect with people most likely to travel to your area.



Mobile advertising

With people on their phones more than ever before, mobile is simply the way to go. Push notifications, text messages, and photos can all be used to spark interest in potential travelers. Just make sure to connect your communication with other channels, such as a website, landing page, or social media account. You may also want to provide an offer of some sort to incentivize a trip to the area.



OTT

Over-the-top advertising sounds like quite the undertaking. But what you're really trying to do is connect with cord-cutters via video spots — much like traditional TV ads. OTT, however, is much more targeted than traditional television, delivered directly to specific viewers over streaming devices and services. If you've already got a TV spot, it can pull double duty.



Bringing It All Together

CMG Local Solutions is a one-stop shop for marketing. Our team is well versed in both digital and traditional channels — which is not something other marketing agencies can always say. We can help city visitor centers find the right marketing mix of email, TV, social, and other online channels to capture attention and bring consumers back to your travel destination. And we can help boost your ROI with our revenue-optimized campaigns.

If you'd like to learn more about any one of our services, a member of our team would be more than happy to discuss your options and help you find the right fit. Connect with CMG Local Solutions today.