



Five-Year Tourism Marketing Strategy for Northern Ontario

Consultations draw stakeholders



Eight industry consultation sessions across Northern Ontario drew considerable interest with almost 300 stakeholders participating. While no two meetings were alike, discussion was animated and some common themes were evident, as follows—

.....with two clicks of the mouse, visitors should be able to find Northern Ontario destinations on the web....leadership and collaboration are critical.....the greatest challenge is to create a structure that enables co-operative packaging....need transportation infrastructure....must review and refresh product....we don't have a framework that makes sense, and we don't know what other destinations are doing....while there is a strong tradition of partnering, affordability and return on investment are disincentives for partnering with government.....

Did you know?

E-tineraries

Get with the program

According to a recent survey conducted by Cross-Tab Marketing Services for Yahoo! Canada, over 90 per cent of Canadians use online resources to learn, explore and book travel.

In fact, the survey finds that Canadian travellers are more likely to use search engines instead of consulting family or friends when planning trips. The survey also found that users of online resources take an average of three-and-a-half trips per year, compared to only two trips for travellers using offline resources. It found that Canadians who use search engines and company web sites are more likely to complete an online purchase (59 per cent).

Participants talked frankly about positioning Northern Ontario from the consumers' point of view—

.....we need to educate people on what the North really is.....there is too much brand confusion.....we need to streamline brands.....each region is distinctive and needs its own brand.....we need a strong, iconic brand.....we have world class outdoor product.....

Next steps include consolidating what was heard through the consultation meetings, emails, faxes, and responses to questions on website, and drafting the Foundation document. This will enable the partnership to begin development of the new Five-year Tourism Marketing Strategy for Northern Ontario.



Building on strengths

Fitting the pieces together

Over 3,835 different visitors have checked out the connexion-north website as of May 7. Plus, 718 people have visited the “Have Your Say!” page. The following question drew this thoughtful response from an industry stakeholder—

What do you think the roles and responsibilities of each of the following should be in support of tourism in Northern Ontario?

Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC)—The role of the CTC is to brand and promote Canada as a destination for international travellers. It must have a good understanding of why people travel to this country and be able to access that market in countries around the globe. I like the new “Keep Exploring” brand as I believe exploring is one of the top reasons people visit this country. Northern Ontario has the product that represents why people come to Canada; we have wilderness, wildlife and water. We are an explorer’s paradise! The CTC could use more of Northern Ontario’s charm to bring people from around the world. In addition to the outdoor paradise, Northern Ontario is the most logical place for visitors to see the nation’s three founding cultures all in one place. English, French and First Nations cultures can be explored all within short drives between communities.

Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation (OTMPC)—The role of OTMPC is similar to that of the CTC but on a provincial scale. It should concentrate its efforts on bringing tourists from other provinces and nearby states. The role it can play to assist Northern Ontario is to reinforce the wilderness outdoor experience and remind potential travellers of the other opportunities that can enhance their holiday. It can continue to support the NORTA program that provides more effective tourism marketing to specific regional partners. It is quite difficult for small businesses and communities to participate in OTMPC marketing programs as the costs are out of reach. Larger cities receive marketing partnership grants from OTMPC programs that smaller communities cannot access. These funds could be distributed more equitably among all Northern Ontario partners to provide a better cross section of tourism opportunities.

Northern Ontario Regional Tourism Alliance (NORTA)—The role of the NORTAs is to be the voice of the local industry to the provincial and federal tourism ministries and their programs. In addition, they are the grass roots of the industry and assist small operators to market to regions that they would not be able to reach on their own. By creating regional partnerships, the NORTA program supports and enables local partners to work together and create more opportunities for the visitor. It is not financially viable for most Northern Ontario businesses to take advantage of programs offered by OTMPC and the CTC, therefore the NORTA is the logical choice for them to partner.

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