

***Working Together, Succeeding Together – A Marketing Forum  
for Tourism in Sunset Country***  
**Summary of Proceedings**

Day One:

*Northern Marketing Strategy*

Chris Milner, Director, Northern Office

Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation

2010 – 2011 represents the second year of implementation of the 5 Year Northern Tourism Marketing Strategy

The Strategy's key directions are:

- Target - Best Bet markets and maintain avid focus
- Align, Coordinate and Cooperate – Cascading approach
- Interactive Focus – Northern Portal , SEO and CRM
- Partnership basis to develop content and implement programs
- Recognize regional realities
- Integrate and align with OTMPC Brand Strategy
- Maintain and grow our strategic partnerships (FedNor / MNDM/ NOHFC).

We are implementing the Strategy within the current Northern Office budget of \$4.75 million on a partnership basis, leveraging investment from FEDNOR and MNDM/NOHFC. To identify Northern consumer segments, the Northern Tourism Marketing Strategy fine tuned the Enveronics Consumer profiles to better reflect consumers with an interest in Northern Ontario and outdoors experiences. Similarities that exist between the North American and Northern segments will allow for alignment of message and effort under the umbrella OTMPC brand strategy.

The lead domestic segment--Ultimate Adventurers--represents 251,000 household in Ontario with a strong interest in the outdoors between the ages of 45 and 64. They are well established, university educated, white collar earners making about 60% more than the average Ontarian.

The lead US consumer segment, Trophy Outdoors. is a group with higher than average income and education, with a passion for travel and pushing the boundaries of experience in a broad range of outdoor activities and pursuits

The Northern Strategy related the northern consumer segments with geographic location, market knowledge and leisure interests (TAMS) to identify domestic and US “best bet” markets that would be targeted in Avid Experiential programming and broad messaging about outdoor experiences in Ontario.

The 2009 – 2010 domestic Best Bet Markets are GTA (emphasis on 905 area code), the Ottawa Region and Winnipeg for the Northwest market. For 2010 -2011, the strategy will be to maintain current markets and target Hamilton, subject to budget.

The 2009-2010 US Best Bet markets are Chicago and Minneapolis. We deferred Albany, New York in favour of the Domestic Market of Ottawa. For 2010- 2011 the implementation plan calls for the avid and broad outdoors programs to add focus on Milwaukee subject to budget and improving market conditions.

The Northern Strategy also called for the use of the internet to generate “buzz” based on a depth and breadth of content. The years 2010-2011 will see a continued focus on SEO, SEM, avid contests and other tools from OTMPC avid sites to drive consumer interest and data base registration. An adapted French language version of the portal will also be maintained. In addition, fee for service contracts will be utilized to develop the depth of content required to ensure that [www.northernontario.travel](http://www.northernontario.travel) consistently ranks in the top ten of all organic searches for Northern Ontario travel. Northernontario.travel is the key call to action for Northern Programs and links from OT.net

From 2009 – 2010 OTMPC embarked on a broad outdoors marketing program on a partnership basis targeting domestic best bet markets. From 2010 – 2011 OTMPC will move to strengthen and grow these partnerships.

Retail Strategy: partnership with Bass Pro Shops in Vaughn

Chill Magazine: partnership with Chill Media to present outdoor content and messages to target consumers.

Consumer Shows: Toronto Ski and Snowboard show in partnership with OSRA, the Toronto Sportsmen Show and Ottawa Sportsmen shows in partnership with NOTO.

Winnipeg: subject to adequate budget and partner interest 2010 – 2011 will represent a third year in this very important market for the Northwest.

Ontario Canada’s Great Outdoors

- Ontario Canada’s Great Outdoors presents the breadth and depth of northern Ontario’s outdoor experiences.
- In 2009-2010 return to Chicago for year 3 and in 2010-2011 target consumers in Chicago and Wisconsin.
- The Chicago program will continue to leverage a known outdoor celebrity
- Aligned with OTMPC Brand
- Strategic use of targeted consumer shows and contesting will augment the overall campaign.
- Call to action: [www.northernontario.travel](http://www.northernontario.travel)

Avid Experience Programs

Angling Program - Go Fish in Ontario

- 2010-2011 focus on SEO and SEM with the overarching goal of driving consumers to [ontariotravel.net/gofish](http://ontariotravel.net/gofish)

- Domestic Focus on the development of the 'Fly Fishing' product and the Chinese market in the GTA.
- Consumer Shows and Media Fams
- 2010-2011 US Focus: Minneapolis and Wisconsin supported by Babe Winkelman

#### Hunting Program

- SEO and SEM to drive interest to [ontariotravel.net/hunting](http://ontariotravel.net/hunting)
- Domestically and in the US, focus on familiarization trips and media relations and one consumer show

#### Sources:

For Copies of the Northern Strategy and Background Documents visit: [www.connection-north.ca](http://www.connection-north.ca)

Program samples: [www.tourismpartners.com](http://www.tourismpartners.com) [www.northernontario.travel](http://www.northernontario.travel)

#### *Regional Tourism Strategy Update*

Michael Kurts, Assistant Deputy Minister  
Ontario Ministry of Tourism

Border crossings from the U.S. into Northwestern Ontario declined by 5.8% in the first seven months of 2009 compared to 2008.

Within the province, there are over 100 agencies and organizations, often small and financially fragile, working to promote tourism. In the last provincial budget, the Province of Ontario allocated \$40 million annually to support tourism province-wide.

The *Ontario Tourism Competitiveness Study* recommended the establishment of tourism regions to better coordinate tourism marketing and management across the province. The idea is that each region will work towards creating a unique brand and strong experiences within a provincial brand. The benefits of such an approach would include reliable funding, collaboration, clear roles with respect to what the province is doing and coordination with the review of the OTMPC. While discussions are ongoing, it is envisioned that these DMMOs' roles and responsibilities will include: strategic planning, marketing, tourism and workforce development, partnering, training and investment.

The Ministry has heard that DMMOs should be industry-led not for profits with an accountable, elected Board representing all interests. In industry consultations held in the spring of 2009, the Ministry was told that funding should be tied to the level of tourism activity with the acknowledgment that some will need more funds than others and that the funding should be sufficient and reliable.

The boundaries of the proposed regions are still being examined but they will clearly need to be small enough to make sense and large enough to generate sufficient revenues.

In terms of timelines, the new funding begins to flow in the next fiscal year, which begins on April 1, 2010. The Ministry is using that as a target date to begin implementation of the regional approach.

*Travel Trends in a Changing Economy*

Berkeley Young, President

Young Strategies

2009 saw dramatic declines in the travel and tourism sector with no clear signs of improvement for 2010. While economic conditions appear to be improving, spending is still low. The tourism industry now faces multiple issues as today's news drives the decisions of their potential customers.

This year in the U.S., more men lost their jobs and household incomes declined, resulting in the highest poverty rate since 1997. Across the travel industry, jobs were cut during a time when service is more critical than ever.

In Canada, the Index of Consumer Confidence increased for a sixth consecutive month. 52% of Canadians say it is a good time to make a major purchase and 30% believe they will be better off in a year's time. More Canadians are choosing to cut their travel costs by staying closer to home. Despite this, Canadian occupancy rates are still down.

In the U.S., Price Waterhouse Coopers is forecasting revenue per available room to decline by 16.1% this year but only by a further .1% next year. Average daily rates declined by 8.7% this year and are expected to decline by 1.1% again next year.

No other segment of the travel industry has changed as much in the last decade as lodging, incorporating new lobby spaces, room design, bathrooms and bedding, along with improved loyalty programs.

Airfares are at record lows. The industry is cutting capacity to keep load factors up. Domestic demand is showing signs of stability but international travel continues to decline.

Business travel, typically 33% of lodging occupancy, is off 7% this year and is projected to be down by 4% next year. Media coverage of corporate meetings at resort hotels has hurt bookings. 67% of U.S. meeting planners expect to have smaller budgets for off-site meetings next year. Groups are looking for deals and creative promotions. As a result of all this, more local and smaller meetings are popular and "off the radar" cities are increasingly viewed as appealing destinations for meetings and conferences.

With respect to leisure travel, total travel expenditures are forecasted to decline by 8.8% this year. The desire to travel, however, is on the rise.

What does the future hold for the travel industry? Leisure travellers will be looking for unique experiences, beaches and lakes, mountains, parks, recreation and snow sports. There will be more adults travelling without children and more year 'round leisure visits. Travellers will be seeking aggressive discounting and packaging. 72% want to go west and 62% are looking to the South. Only 21% intend to travel to the Midwest. Florida is the top state at 34%, followed by California at 30%.

There is a potential for a rebound within the group tour industry. Greener than individual travel and value driven, group touring by bus appeals to Baby Boomers and students, among others. Group touring by ship has always been strong. The cruise ship industry has averaged 7.4% annual growth since 1990, outperforming all other travel segments since 2000.

As travellers increasingly seek less structure, attendance at many historic sites and museums is declining.

Travel is viewed today as much-needed therapy and more and more travellers are facing time poverty. They have no time to plan and experience frustration with any difficulties that they face in organizing a trip.

Destination Marketing Organizations are facing multiple challenges, including increased costs and cuts in budgets and grants. Needing to do more with less, you need to look for your most likely visitor – who came last year, last month. Go find more of them this year. Make better use of social marketing. Twitter, for example, is a real-time short messaging service that works over multiple networks and devices. You need to drive increased visitation through out of market promotions, drive increased spending and work together to create a destination experience.

My forecast:

- Slow recovery with another dip coming soon
- Consumer behaviour will never be the same
- Overall customer service will improve
- Business will always get together to meet
- There will be fewer small airports and more coach and rail travel
- We will emerge as better marketers

Sell the fun and escapism. Travel is therapy.

Solutions by Us, For Us  
Product Priorities Workshop # 1  
Facilitator: Patricia Forrest, President  
Forrest Marketing + Communications

Agreement that beauty, nature, wilderness and scenery (14), fishing (13), lakes (9), outdoor experiences (8) and hunting (7) are the region's key strengths:

- Yes (6)
- Route of the voyageurs is a potential world class experience on canoe routes and trails
- Need more tourism products
- Need new branding – “Sunset Country” is not the one we should use
- Need infrastructure – maps etc. for canoe routes
- Fishing might not play as important a role in the future – might become a secondary activity – where are the younger (under 50) anglers?
- Sell the remoteness and offer packages

Other strengths:

- Winter, four seasons, serenity, diversity of wildlife – real, no cage
- Lifestyle vacation options – trapping, guiding, etc., diversity of offerings
- History and culture – listen to the murmur
- Geocaching (European GPS adventure)
- Develop fall and winter packages with authentic activities (everything from forest colour changes to dog sledding)
- Promote the same brand (all groups) – example Tackle Ontario
- Not enough eco tourism products
- Need for snow machine and boat rentals
- Change business hours to make convenient for our shoppers, visitors
- Communications and networking opportunities to keep everyone in touch to work together
- Central booking system to address full occupancies
- Horseback and agriculture experiences
- The industry will have to evolve: Canoe tripping/kayaking, package shorter visits, mushroom/berry picking, attractions, rest stops with developed trails and vistas, infrastructure
- Festivals and cultural activities (pow wows)
- High adrenaline adventures – rock climbing, cross country skiing
- Conferencing – niche activities: quilting, scrap booking, writers, film eco tours (birding), “green” building, “how to” seminars (trapping)

Agreement that marketing (16), customer service (11) and change in government rules and regulations (7) are the most appropriate actions to build on strengths:

- Yes, we agree (2)
- Build on strengths: regional brand – consistency across Northwestern Ontario. If we don’t brand ourselves, the perception will be made without us – perhaps not what we want.
- Work together – put aside petty differences (2)
- Marketing is key – needs to be coordinated (2)
- Need to protect our forests (National Park) and need education and awareness of what/how we do things in our forests
- We have a unique area to offer a backdrop for all of these activities
- Customer service is the key

Other suggested actions:

- Product development and diversification to meet new trends
- Government rules and regulations should use the KISS (keep it simple) principle for implementation
- Accessible training workshops on customer service
- Not possible to change government regulations unless we work together with one voice and one message
- Collect customer feedback

Agreement with recommendations of *Discovering Ontario – A Report on the Future of Tourism* (Sorbara report):

Proposed New Regions (11 recommended):

- Keep Sunset Country (4) as a separate (12<sup>th</sup>) DMMO (unique products and markets [2, if Sunset Country is generating the most funds then we want our region represented in the spending formula)
- Focus on major strengths – loss of identify otherwise
- Proposed regions not appropriate for our needs (demographic, geographic differences of markets)
- Establish regions – but must be sensible boundaries – these are not.
- New region should include Ignace to Atikokan south and diagonally over to include Armstrong to the North
- How is Southern Ontario so unique that it warrants nine regions yet there are only two in all of the rest of Ontario?
- Not enough funding is being directed to DMMOs now. How will it be distributed?

Proposed Destination Marketing Fee:

- Disagree with destination marketing fees (2) (not appropriate for our region/ no to DFM's across the province until PST and GST issue is finalized – some lost GST rebate)

Increased E-Marketing and Online Booking:

- Disagree with the idea that the industry should lead (if resource-based tourism businesses desire online booking, make tools and training available).

Other Recommendations Supported:

- Agree with modernizing regulations (3) (MOT needs to work with MNR, MNM), need for service standards (4) (create culture of service, diversity of offerings requires too varied a standard), developing workforce (3) – training, service culture, open doors (2) (we must be open for business, must be open for business at Fort Frances), transportation infrastructure (3) (more rest stops year round, better routes within the region, not just at access points), access to capital (3), transforming attractions (2), focus on unique products, improving way finding (there is more to NW Ontario than Dryden, Kenora, Thunder Bay, Fort Frances), attracting investment

- Qualified “yes” to idea of attracting investment. Government shouldn’t make the investment decisions – need to be based on/made by projects/destinations/communities

Other Comments:

- Make sure the \$30 million goes to marketing and not a general fund
- Need recognition of hook and bullet – that is what we do
- Need improved telephone service

Recommended actions:

- Take advantage of the suggestion to grow trail system through National Park designation
- If border crossings are such an issue, it should be a priority to fix. There is the need to stay ahead of the issues instead of behind

*Positioning and Branding a Destination*

Berkeley Young

Branding a destination works the same as branding a business. According to Wikipedia, a brand:

- Is the symbolic embodiment of all the information connected with a company, product or service;
- Typically includes a name, logo and other visual elements such as images, fonts, colour schemes or symbols; and
- Encompasses the set of expectations associated with a product or service which typically arise in the minds of people.

A well-established brand such as American Express, KFC and Volkswagen always generates some mental imagery of the logo, product, place or experience. As the world’s largest industry, travel and tourism has some very well known brands that cost millions of dollars to create and build such as Hilton, Disney and Princess Cruises. Others, despite having spent significant dollars on branding, are not so easy to recognize. While the brands of New York, Virginia and Las Vegas tend to spring quickly to mind, those of destinations such as Boston, Pittsburg and Chicago are not so easy to recall.

Tourism is a very competitive business with destinations spending millions on marketing. For example, Hawaii has a marketing budget of \$69 million, while Illinois spends \$47.8 annually to promote itself as a destination. In light of this, it is important to take a hard look at how much money you have to brand yourself as a region, a community or a business, keeping in mind that:

- Building awareness is expensive
- Destination marketing is becoming more and more competitive
- Multiple messages confuse the customer

Is it possible to truly brand your destination?

Your best shot at success in marketing your destination is not through branding but rather by positioning. You will need to:

- Position your destination based on unique attributes (what sets you apart?)
- Use research to determine your marketable assets, target audiences and effective messages;
- Develop a powerful positioning statement; and
- Unify all of your destination marketing messages.

Listen to your customers. Don't oversell, undersell or be generic. And don't spend a fortune of logos and image packages. The message is what is important. To maximize impact you will need to develop partnerships with other area marketing groups and avoid turf wars. Co-marketing stretches dollars, encompassing a shared website with unique portals, coordinated show representation and a shared media kit, among other things. A 2003 research study of two separate and competitive organizations (Central Florida Sports Marketing and Central Florida Visitors and Convention Bureau)—both marketing the same destination--revealed a substantial duplication of effort, mixed messages, a constant battle for funds and animosity. The two organizations were both promoting recreational sports, often competing for the same event. PCSM produced a "Great Outdoors" guide while the VCB was producing a separate fishing guide.

As a result of the study, the two organizations merged, resulting in coordination of all marketing, consistent imagery and messages (with unique approaches for each niche) and no job losses.

In summary, for your best shot in developing your brand:

- Combine and coordinate efforts (streamline)
- Do research for the market, the message and the media
- Develop a consistent positioning and look
- Focus on your best target segments
- Use public relations
- Stay on top of your competition and your marketing

As Walt Disney said, "You don't build it for yourself. You ask the customers and you build it for them".

### *Building the Branson Brand*

Dan Lennon, VP Marketing and Public Relations

Branson/Lakes Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)

The mission of the Branson/Lakes Area CVB is to enhance the economic health of the Branson/Lakes Area, and to lead the area in becoming one of the most recognized communities in America in terms of quality of life, business opportunities and family

vacations. Its Chamber division focuses on community development while the CVB's efforts are directed towards marketing.

Its 2009 revenues were \$8,421,826, derived from a City of Branson Tourism Tax (4% lodging and entertainment = \$2,050,000), a Tourism Community Enhancement District (TCED) Tax (1% retail = \$4,610,693), matching grants (\$860,000) and publication, web and other revenues (\$901,133). Total marketing expenditures were \$8,421,826 of which 70.2% was spend on media, 6.3% on publications, 6.3% on trade shows, 6.2% on Public Relations and 11.1% on all other programs. Media buys are backed by extensive research including intercept surveys, zip code collection and conversion, PRIZM analysis and more.

With a population of just 7,000, the City of Branson hosted an estimated 8.1 million visitors in 2008, making it the 20<sup>th</sup> most popular vacation destination in America. Tourism supplied about 1.5 billion dollars to the area, roughly 75% of its gross revenues. Offering 100+ live shows annually, Branson features three lakes, Ozark Mountain views, a major theme park (silver Dollar City) , 250+ restaurants, 22,000 hotel rooms, 53,000 theatre seats, a \$420 million shopping/dining complex, a new airport and convention centre and more than 200 outlet stores.

Attendance has risen steadily after a 1991 feature on *Sixty Minutes* profiled the region. From 1994-2004, the basic community marketing approach focused on the summer season. Between 2000 and 2004, tourism numbers were relatively flat; the number of first time visitors had dropped to 20% from 53% in 1992. A new strategy was needed to increase overall visitors, first timers, length of stay and expenditures.

In 2004, an extensive branding study was undertaken to identify Branson's key appeals. As a result, the following Branson key appeals were identified:

- (1) LIVE ENTERTAINMENT BONANZA (100+ shows!)
- (2) AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS (hospitable, genuine local culture)
- (3) ACTIVE RELAXATION (lakes, golf and the gorgeous Ozark Mountains)

In addition, a brand position was developed:

***Entertainment you can touch... Entertainment that touches you.***

The study also identified a perception gap between Loyals (80% of customers) and Resisters (who had a limited view of Branson). The need to surprise these Resisters was identified.

In late 2005, the new 1% TCED Retail Tax passed, adding \$6 million to the annual marketing budget. PRIZM socio-economic segmentation research was used to identify "best bet" new markets. Target markets for 2006 included Women 35+, specific PRIZM clusters, Resisters in primary markets and Unfamiliar and Resisters in national markets.

In 2006, the new tourism tax put \$3.2 million more into the media budget and this was used to target Dallas and Chicago and Fall and Christmas markets. This was also a time of record product development. New creative was also developed. As a result, visitation increased by 8.9%, with Dallas up by 26.5% and Chicago up by 18.1%. Inquiries were at an all time high at 64.5%.

In 2007, leisure travellers nationwide responded to increasing costs of gasoline, heating, transportation and mortgages by staying closer to home and visiting familiar destinations. This was reflected in Branson's numbers which increased 5.2%, but showed a 24.2% increase from nearby markets with much lower increases from more distant markets.

Despite the recession and severe weather conditions, Branson's 2008 numbers dropped by just 3.7%. For 2009, visitation is down just .4%--better than most destinations in the current economic climate. While family visits are down, the older adult visitor is more often a first timer who spends more and stays longer. This is projected to continue through 2009. From 2010-2012 the DMO will continue to:

- Monitor changing media, economic, and tourism trends during development of 2010 marketing plan
- Continue to market in selected markets closer to Branson to leverage the trend of travellers staying closer to home, without abandoning national cable outreach.
- Stress new product in advertising messages to increase appeal to a repeat audience.
- Stress the value that Branson affords its travellers in all of messages.
- Increase allocations for Web Marketing/SEO, Public Relations and Research
- Organize marketing co-ops to coordinate and leverage local marketing resources
- Leverage PR wherever possible
- Work to unite the community in an area-wide strategic destination vision.

Critical factors in Branson's success have been:

- Product, message and community
- Resources (sufficient tourism funding)
- Target customers
- Media
- Public relations
- Research

Solutions by Us, For Us

Product Priorities Workshop # 2

Facilitator: Pat Forrest

Agreement with key infrastructure issues - roads (12), outdated accommodations (6):

- Yes, we agree.
- Yes - rail access, highway (Greyhound), 4 lane, rest stops, north/south roads, airfare prices high, crown land availability (fair market value), transit rentals and ownerships are all important issues.

- Better highways, appropriate access management (enhance access or retain remoteness), more and better rest stops year round all needed. Quetico and Minaki conference centres could not survive; need more signage; no to destination attractions; informed helpful government personnel instead of regulatory needed

Other issues:

- Need money to upgrade.

Agreement with actions:

- Yes re: lack of tourism destinations. Harbour front, boat launches, appearance are all city issues; poor cellular and internet – fix it (more towers, government to subsidize). No to time shares (except in Ear Falls) and crown land lots; yes to lower hydro rates.

Other actions:

- Guide/system for gathering information on what's available.
- Federal and provincial funding to keep tourist centres open
- Need more group marketing, coo-op advertising
- Need improved cell service

Festival ideas:

- Bass tournaments, Native, winter, ATV, arts, crafts and photography.
- Regional festivals

Other thoughts:

- Ensure venture activity (entrepreneurial training, internships)
- Need information centres to stay open.

*Fish Where the Fish ARE! (Not Necessarily Where You Want to Fish)*

Berkeley Young

First impressions are important. Gateways and visitor centres can create a sense of place and the feeling of being in a unique destination. Visitor centres can also function as sales centres, thus helping to offset the expense of running the centre.

In planning the location of visitor centres, it is important to control the entrance. The new Squamish Adventure Centre and the Whistler Visitor Centre are two examples of centres that are positioned at the point where visitors enter. Both centres feature cafes and gift shops, with the Whistler Centre also offering a place to book activities.

DMOs in other locations have found innovative ways to get to where the visitors are. In Melbourne, Australia, kiosks are positioned at subway exits. Others use customized motor homes, vans and even Segways, storing their literature with local merchants. Displays of visitor information literature can be found right on the sidewalks in some communities, while others use volunteers to meet tour busses and cruise ships in person.

To keep visitors coming back, it is important to keep on reinventing the experience. This is the strategy that they use at the Biltmore Estate and its working. While the government-run Hearst Castle had its worst year in two decades, the Biltmore Estate had its best year ever. Operators of the Estate regularly introduce new tours, attractions and events such as the Downstairs Tour, the Behind the Scenes Tour, Christmas activities and a Festival of Flowers. They have also incorporated a gardening centre into their greenhouse through a partnership with Lowe's, resulting in a 200% increase in revenues from an area that was not a profit centre.

The incorporation of new products on an ongoing basis has not only ensured a high level of attendance but it has also served to maintain attendance levels throughout the year. While in the 1970s, attendance peaked in the summer, between 1995 and 2004 attendance numbers have remained virtually the same across all months.

You must have a strategy for every month of the year but avoid staging too many festivals, which are a drain on both volunteers and dollars. It's all about the experience. It's what makes you unique and irresistible. Experiences lead to repeat visits and referrals.

In this region, when you're fishing for visitors remember to:

- Focus on your largest market first and foremost – that's fishing
- Determine where the anglers are who would find this fishing destination experience unique
- Find out what new anglers like the most
- Identify opportunities to make more money
- Once you have addressed the fishing market then go on to the next biggest segment
- When you run out of marketing dollars and time, then stop
- Don't forget the value of travel writers

Day Two:

*How to Market Tourism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

John Hope-Johnstone

Certified Travel Consultant

Marketing has changed from being a push model in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to a pull model in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The five hot buttons changing marketing are:

- The Experience Economy
- Satisfaction gap
- Authenticity
- Search
- Social media

So what has changed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Just about everything:

- People
- Culture
- Processes

Experience Economy:

As a population the average age in Canada is 40 years making the average buying age to be 45- 47 (and aging). While this makes Canada the youngest of all the G8 countries, it is the oldest of all the Americas.

In the 60s and 70s, the average age was about 27-35 years. This means that our consumers tend to be more reluctant to change (not all), going through mid life, dealing with aging parents and children (the Sandwich Generation). This has changed their expectations (they are more mature travellers) and makes them more demanding. What they are demanding to “do” gives them an “experience” that they value and are willing to pay for. Today we tend to scrimp on purchases that we feel give little experience to pay for ones that give more experience.

In the 50s people who came into a visitor center would ask “What is there to SEE here?” In 2009 the visitors ask “What is there to DO here?” They value the experience more and they will pay to engage in the experience. That is why people pay \$4 for a cup of coffee at Starbucks, that costs 20 cents in beans to produce—because people place a value on an experience.

The old value model has changed: The old model is:  $\text{Price} + \text{Quality} = \text{Value}$

The new model is:

$\text{Experience} + \text{Price} + \text{Time that it takes to acquire the product} + \text{Quality} = \text{Value}$

You are in the experience business but don't confuse experience with just entertainment. Building a valuable experience requires engaging your consumer in four different ways: Escapism: Learning: Entertainment: Esthetics —and the recession only adds to the need for people to escape to new experiences. It is important to reinforce the idea of the getaway as the antidote to stress.

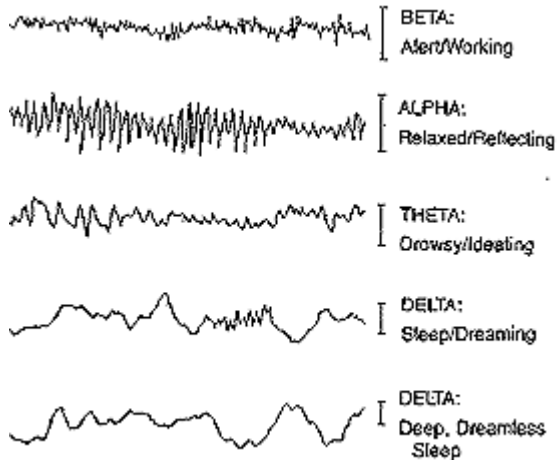
Consumers no longer acquire their experiences in the old 20<sup>th</sup> century manner moving neatly from one marketing touch point to the next:

Advertising>Promotion>Distribution>Sales.

Instead they now snack on digital content created on Web sites, blogs, twitter, videos, flickr and others and provided through a multitude of devices such as television on demand to PCs to Lap Tops to Smart Phones. The Internet has shattered the idea of the old linear purchase model.

While people are older and tend to be less satisfied with the travel experience there are two top satisfaction criteria for travellers: 1) Change Travellers 2) No Change Travellers.

A change traveller seeks to change his/her brain wave function from beta to alpha waves through mild to drastic change during his or her vacation. This can be as simple as going to a new country with new language and currency and customs to Xtreme sports. The results are the same as the individual is jolted out of his or her regular state into a zone where relaxation can occur.



The no-change traveller enjoys returning to a location time and time again to the point that the mere thought of the location brings on a relaxed and reflecting brain wave pattern.

#### The Satisfaction Gap:

In studies done in the 1950s, 35% of American consumers indicated that they felt satisfied with their lives. In 2008 the number remained the same and yet our affluence had risen 70%. Stuff does not create satisfaction with our lives. Time with family, time to reflect, time to build memories--these bring satisfaction into our lives. Tourism is not just leisure time but the creation of satisfaction to our lives. It is the addition to meaning above and beyond work to our existence. This helps to fill the “meaning” gap. Bottom line: you are in the satisfaction growth business.

#### Authenticity:

People are seeking authenticity more in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Consumers trust travel advertising almost at the same level they trust used car dealers. Building trust is a key factor in your marketing program. This is part of the reason social media has grown so rapidly in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. People trust the comments of other travellers more than they trust the brochures produced by the people who market the products.

The more experiences travellers absorb, the more authenticity in the experience they require.

Search has changed the way we market our products. Search means that communities of common interest can find small quantities of products that they would have never found in the past.

Search means that we are selling less quantity to more communities. An explosion of new communities has exploded into the market place:

- Girlfriend getaways
- Mancations
- Destination Weddings
- Procreation Vacations
- Necro-Tourism
- Babymoos
- Medical
- Volun-tourism
- Pet Travel
- Culinary Travel
- GLBT Market

And many many more.

107,000 new blogs are started each day

50,000 new videos are posted each day

100,000 new entries into Facebook each day

By 2011 it is estimated Facebook will have over 500 million members making it the 8<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world.

Summary:

- Work on defining your communities of common interest
- Don't commoditize (cheapen) your product. Increase the experience value instead.
- Make sure that you are authentic and that you under promise and over deliver the experience
- Remember that people look to leisure travel to escape something rather than go towards something
- Social media and social networking give you a flat world and equal marketing opportunity with the big people.
- 70% of people using social media for brand promotion are wasting their time and have no strategy.

*Solutions by Us, For Us – Marketing Success I*

How marketing of the Sunset Country region should be planned:

- One organization that promotes the entire region and all of its interests/experiences because this is the most cost effective method.
- One umbrella organization to eliminate possible redundancies and to combine resources – dollars, knowledge, experience. Leave the Chambers separate.
- Sunset Country (3) – already have funding and staff who can do the job/very effective and have the know-how, credibility, brand name and awareness in markets/Gerry Cariou has proven himself over the long term, can deal with operators and different communities, is trusted and passionate
- Possible other region 12 for DMMO – funding should be given to existing government funded organizations to handle (NORTAs)

How the region be depicted or positioned in its marketplaces:

- For the West we are their escape/getaway experience
- For North Central U.S. – big fish, many species, hunting
- Tag line: You're welcome in Sunset Country
- Possible name change – slogan, consistent, catchy – focus on our strengths (the experience). Need funding to develop this.
- Sell Canadian experience – four season water, woods, wildlife, welcome
- Freshwater Canadian experience with visuals to make the traveller more aware of the surroundings, scenic lookouts, rest stops with information, know the history of your own area and capitalize on these stories
- Wilderness/remote/fishing/nature/scenery/engaging with nature/water
- We are all the marketers as communities or camp operators – we need a brand and a “glue”. We can't find the exact words but we need to portray: remote, real, extreme, less populated, nature in the raw, wilderness, “escape to the Canadian wilderness”. We know the tune but we can't sing. Create a grand picture.

Agreement with identified gaps and issues (border issues [4], lack of steady funding [4], lack of working together [3])

- Yes (4)- but not so much emphasis on “more government assistance/funding/reliance”/there is always a lack of funding. We all want the same things and have the same goals but we need to work together more to accomplish this.
- In order for Sunset Country to lead it needs to have funding to train the individual marketers. Need workshops in communities. You are only as strong as your weakest link. As a region, we can't afford failing businesses. Offer knowledge on their turf ( marketing workshops, help with web sites, help for new operators)

Other gaps and issues impacting the marketing of Sunset Country:

- Lack of primary research – needed for effective promotion
- Lack of recognized brand and image(s)
- Inter-municipal rivalry among local governments

- Lack of participation/involvement of native culture
- Lack of recognition by municipal governments of the cost to market/promote effectively
- Winter tourism
- Entrepreneurs
- Need to share leads
- Government not supporting our industry specific to our region. We have funding but will it be ongoing?
- Too many agencies all doing the same thing – there is a need to consolidate and coordinate

Agreement with actions identified:

- Yes – it is not “more working collectively” but rather ONLY working cooperatively
- Market ourselves as one – don’t fragment the funding – work together
- No bed tax
- Yes – border personnel

Other actions:

- We need to change the corporate culture about providing customer service
- The importance of tourism needs to be acknowledged by politicians and residents as a priority sector
- Support/assistance for entrepreneurship related to tourism businesses is needed.
- Need more federal assistance with signage: “Welcome to Canada”. Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) should take the lead
- First impressions stick – the first person that visitors speak to should be welcoming (border issues)
- Regulations are overdone – ice hut commercial rentals, snowmobile issues - knee jerk reactions – change government focus from regulating to helping.

### *How to Use Social Media*

John Hope-Johnstone

For detailed information on this topic, go to: [www.buzzmaster.wordpress.com](http://www.buzzmaster.wordpress.com). The content pull down on the right side allows you to select a topic.

### *Solutions by Us, For Us – Marketing Success II*

Facilitator: Pat Forrest

Best Marketing Opportunities:

Psychographic:

- Canoeing, eco-tours, historical education, outdoor experiences (2), fishing (3), hunting (3)
- Go to markets with brochures that are the best markets (low lying fruit)
- Winter markets – those who are looking for those extreme experiences.
- What shows are going to provide us the opportunity to reach our best markets?
- Escape

- Fellowship
- Sport interests

#### Geographic:

- # 1 Midwest U.S. (2)
- # 2 Western Canada
- # 3 Half back belt (2)
- Southern Ontario
- Manitoba
- International markets
- More focus on Canadian travellers passing through. How do we keep them?

#### Demographic:

- DINKs (Dual income, no kids)
- Gangs (Me and my....)
- Younger generation
- Families
- Existing customers

#### Best Way to Advertise:

- Billboards (2) at gateways/bus, subway, cab etc.)
- Internet (3) – community web sites
- Social network (2) (You Tube, video logs)
- Trade shows
- Radio (2)
- TV (3) for defined markets/OLN, TNN, ESPN
- Trade publications/periodicals (2)
- Airports
- Mobile visitor centres (i.e., Polo Park kiosk, Pine Grove)
- Internal deferrals
- Word of mouth

#### How should marketing be funded?:

- Funding should be % based on size or some figure
- Every community contributes to the pot from tax money
- May need to be a mix of funding types – not a “one size fits all” solution
- Fishing licence tax? All suggestions of types are good but not fitting all groups
- Direct government allocation/membership/user fees/branded merchandise
- Government involvement (all levels – contact or office for communications)?user fees/memberships

#### Other Comments:

- Need internships to help Sunset Country and interested members to become proficient in networking/marketing
- Need hands on how to sessions to learn how to use and access mediums via the web: how to set up web site, social networking, content