Financing Parks through Marketing

World Parks Congress 2003, Durban South Africa
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Outline

- Marketing basics
- Case study: A provincial park agency’s marketing plan

What is marketing?

- Marketing ≠ selling
- Marketing > promotion
- Marketing is:
  1) a client-oriented process and philosophy;
  2) when park managers make the effort to keep in touch with the park and park agency’s stakeholders, understand their needs and motivations, develop products that meet these needs and build a communication program that expresses the purpose and objectives of heritage management.

Marketing: Essential elements

1. customer orientation
2. consumer must perceive benefits
3. marketing research is used throughout the process
4. audiences are segmented
5. all 4 Ps are considered (pricing, promotion, place, and product)
6. results are measured and used to improve programs/policies (feedback is valued and encouraged)
Concerns about Marketing

- Potential to increase visitor numbers and negative impacts
- Perception that marketing = commercialization
- Use of appropriate cultural images in promotions
- Use of appropriate nature-based images in promotions

Demarketing

- Demarketing involves the use of marketing strategies to discourage rather than encourage potential visitors to visit particular protected areas; in short is it “marketing in reverse”
- Focuses: 1) sites that receive too much visitation; 2) people who are undesirable; 3) seasonal/times/peak periods

A change in marketing focus

- Products
  - Camp site; lake
- Services
  - Reservation system; canoe rental
- Experiences
  - Interpretation program; volunteer expedition; campfire dinner
Case Study
- Ontario Parks system – A Canadian case study
  - 272+ parks
  - 7.1 million ha
  - 9.4 million visitors per year; $35 million in revenue
  - 20,000 car campsites; 4,000 backcountry campsites
  - Generates $1 billion in economic activity/year in region

Case Study: Ontario Parks
- Before 1997 – little to no marketing efforts
- Marketing and Communications section created
- New name and visual identity created for Ontario Parks
- New business model/plan emphasized

Case Study: Ontario Parks
- Goals
  - Marketing initiatives will never compromise Ontario Parks’ stewardship of park resources
  - Strengthen brand identity/increase awareness of Ontario Parks
  - Increase both day visitors and campers by 5% per annum, increasing revenue
  - Exceed visitor expectations in the areas of customer service and product/service offerings

Case Study: Ontario Parks
- Strategic Principles
  - Capitalize on under-utilized capacity by:
    - Encouraging day use
    - Increasing use during shoulder seasons
    - Focusing on less well-known parks
  - Spend 75% of effort on existing park users
  - Spend 25% of effort creating new users from under-represented groups:
    - Residents of GTA
    - Older users (50+)
    - Ethnic groups
    - Residents of US border states
Case Study: Ontario Parks

- Strategic Principles (cont’d)
  - Use “gateway” parks to introduce the park experience to non-users
  - Use partnerships to fund new marketing and promotion initiatives
  - Develop a comprehensive customer database and use direct marketing as a key communication key

- Key Marketing Messages
  - Tag line: “Nearby and Natural”
  - Parks are not full to capacity
  - “something for everyone, every age”
  - All dollars collected in parks are reinvested in the parks system
  - Ontario Parks supports the stewardship of Ontario’s natural environment through preservation, education, appreciation

- Promotion
  - Park Guide distribution, expanded through partnerships; e.g. Canadian Geographic
  - 2-3 key trade shows focusing on different customer segments
  - Regular contact with travel & outdoor media
  - Adverts: Develop print ads with consistent theme/image

- Incentive Programs
  - Coupons encourage shoulder-season use, promote less used parks, increase day use, create new campers
  - Develop loyalty program to reward core users; involve partners e.g. CAA, Pepsi, Canadian Geographic
Case Study: Ontario Parks

- **Product and Service Enhancement**
  - Private label service program (CND$1M sales/yr)
  - Increase number of parks offering equipment rentals; acquisition through partnerships
  - Increase number of parks offering roofed accommodation

- **Distribution (Place)**
  - 1-800 number, reservation agent can divert potential visitors to under-visited parks (demarketing)
  - Website – reservation, campsite location and qualities

- **Market research**
  - Continue park user survey each year
  - Began research program in ’97
  - Consumer research survey included in-depth telephone interviews, 1,502 consumers in Ontario

- **Plan Evaluation:**
  - # of campsites, day use permits, seasonal passes
  - Attendance at education programs
  - Increases in use by under-represented groups
  - # and value of partnerships
  - # of media articles and website hits
  - Rate of coupon redemption
  - # of customers who are part of loyalty program
  - Merchandise sales
Useful resources


Further Information

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