



Regional Tourism Organization 12 / Explorers' Edge
2016 / 2017 Marketing Plan

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Marketing Plan

Based on the exceptional results garnered with the “social/content/mobile marketing strategy” that was implemented in 2015-2016 (see above), and on the information gleaned from the Tourism Business Indicator Framework, the Board of Directors of RTO12 has recommended that the marketing strategy for 2016-2017 be a continuation of what was set in place in the previous year, with the introduction of various refinements (e.g. quality of content over quantity, the testing of new channels, etc.).

Marketing Mission

To make our target audience (“Ontario Explorers”) aware of the Explorers’ Edge region and of the exceptional tourism offerings found in the sub-regions within, in order to convert targeted audiences into overnight travelers to the region.

Marketing Manifesto

As our target audience continues to turn away from traditional advertising and other interruptive marketing, we will continue to use content marketing to ensure this region is foremost in their consideration when they are thinking of travelling.

The challenge with traditional advertising is that most of what it communicates is irrelevant to our target needs or reaches them at the wrong time. What distinguishes content is that it seeks not to interrupt, but to be found – and to be found at precisely the moment when the target is ready to consider our message. Moreover, because it's better suited to inform and educate, our content will attract visitors to Explorers’ Edge and its 5 sub-regions, and engage potential customers much earlier in the path to purchase.

And unlike traditional advertising, content marketing doesn’t limit the scope of our message, and allows us to communicate the breadth and depth of the Explorers’ Edge proposition and be inclusive of ALL the regions it comprises. (It also means more of our marketing budget is spent on reaching the prospect and not on agency fees and creative development.)

We have already found our voice as social mobile content publishers, and have proved that content marketing can bring qualified prospects to the region.

In 2016-2017 we will fully commit ourselves to solidifying our place as the leading content marketers in the Ontario tourism industry, and to out-performing our competitors for the attention of Ontario Explorers. We will publish more compelling content – content designed to convince and convert - and ensure that it is fully optimized for the social mobile consumer.

We will be Ontario tourism’s leading social mobile content marketers in 2016-2017.

Brand Positioning

A quintessentially Canadian wilderness experience just 2 hours from the city.

Tagline

“The great Canadian wilderness just north of Toronto.”

Brand Voice

Earnest, approachable, informed and, most of all, “Canadian”

Marketing Priorities

- Publish exceptional content that serves the ‘Ontario Explorers’ segment as well as specific niche markets (pertaining to product development – cycling, paddling, craft beer and culinary) and promote it via social media (inbound marketing) primarily
- While our focus will be on “discoverers” (i.e. new audiences), our content marketing strategy will also attract “searchers” (i.e. audiences planning trips who are further down the purchase funnel)
- Grow amount of quality traffic to the Explorers’ Edge website (800K visits total)
- Grow number of qualified referrals out to tourism stakeholder websites (200K total)
- Convert Visitors: Nurture consumer leads and convert them to “heads-in-beds”
- Target U.S. and U.K. markets (via the Partnership Program – articulated at the end of this Marketing Plan)

Objectives

Marketing Objectives 2016-2017

- Brand: increase aided brand awareness of Explorers’ Edge
- Increase website analytics, sessions, users, page views, pages/session and average session duration
- Provide greater reach and access to Explorers’ Edge region by linking the consumer to regional information, via developed content, developing additional pieces of content for the year
- Provide increased number of tourism experiences and packages that correspond with seasonal and general tourism marketing initiatives.
- Increase in brand/story awareness and produce unpaid, positive and engaging editorial coverage in target markets.

Additional Objectives 2016-2017

- Publish 150+ pieces of exceptional quality content across three websites: 1) Explorers’Edge.ca (most important) 2) www.bikecottagecountry.ca and 3) www.rockstreeslakesbeer.ca

- Drive 800K visits to the Explorers' Edge website using content marketing
- Add 4K leads to the email database
- Drive 200K referrals to regional tourism stakeholder websites
- Increase the number of Earned Media impressions
- Continue to promote the brand for competitive positioning

Priority Target Markets

Priority Target Market(s) (See Appendix #1)

- Ontario Explorers: Married with kids – 35 to 60 years old. Above average household income (HHI) and education. Uses digital media to plan holidays and enjoys broadcast media like radio during commute. Takes family trips in Ontario every summer.
- We will target Ontario Explorers who are not actively seeking information (a.k.a. “discoverers”) by increasing the amount of content published on social media platforms
- We will target Ontario Explorers who are actively seeking information (a.k.a. “searchers”) by increasing the amount of content on EE.ca and with search engine advertising.
- The Ontario Explorers (2012) mirrors the identified Connected Explorer that was segmented in the Consumer Insight Research Segmentation Report (2013).

Product Positioning

Content Publishing Strategy & Product Positioning

We focus editorial content on the following:

- Content that is attractive to our six established marketing “Personas” – Motorsports Enthusiasts, Food & Culture Fans, Outdoor Adventurers, Family Vacationers, Hunters & Fishers, Fit & Sportives
- The purchase decision criteria where EE is perceived to be lacking against competitor regions (these include proximity/accessibility, accommodations, cultural activities, attractions and dining/entertainment)
- Communities of interest, or niches, such as cyclists and paddling enthusiasts, etc.
- We will publish content that has universal appeal (and thus highly shareable) but still connects to the region (e.g. *“Winter Photography: Don’t Put Your Camera Away Just Yet”*)








- We will publish 150 pieces of content in 2016-2017 using this strategic mix as a guideline
- We will produce high quality content, which may include quality videos and photos, as well as text that is optimized for search (and includes no fewer than 500 words).

Marketing Tactics

Timing

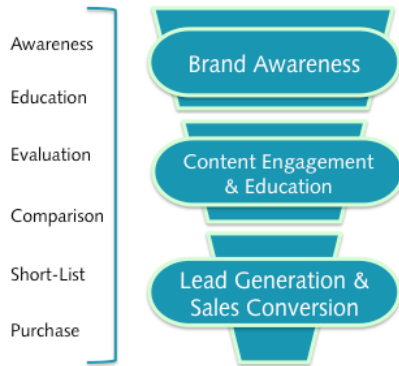
- In market June, 2016 and run thru March, 2017

Marketing Channels

	Primary Audience(s)	Primary Platform Role	Platform Content
	Searchers & Discoverers	Organic and paid search, lead capture/CRM, sales	Original long-form text and embedded video content
	Discoverers	Amplify blog and YouTube content to reach people unaware of EE	Blog links and YouTube link posts, photo posts, curated third party content
	Searchers, Trade	Communicate "in-the-moment" developments	EE news and promotions, especially those of interest to travel trade
	Searchers & Discoverers	Educate and entertain, build SEO	EE news and promotions, especially those of interest to prospects who already have EE in their consideration set
	Discoverers	Reinforce EE's brand position and create desire to visit	The best in photography from the region
	Searchers	Conversion to heads-in-beds	Participate in forums, add content to EE destination page
	Searchers	Conversion to heads-in-beds	EE news, offers and promotions targeted to the specific segment needs

Marketing Funnel: Inbound Marketing to Move Followers Further Down the Funnel

By using content marketing to attract email sign-ups (inbound marketing), Explorers' Edge intends to develop more targeted communications with interested parties in order to move them further down the "purchase funnel" (i.e. turn discoverers into searchers into purchasers). This is known as the Lead Nurturing Strategy, which relies on email marketing software from Hubspot to build enhanced customer experiences ("Consumer –Centric Regional Application" from the 2014-2017 DDP) to enhanced customer relations (and ongoing selling).



Media Tactics

- Social Media Advertising – Facebook Ads
- Search Engine Marketing – Google Adwords
- Lead Ads – Facebook Ads
- Lead Nurturing - Hubspot

Partnered Activities

Marketing partnership as it relates to OTMPC’s work on the Group of Seven. At a high level the campaign is intended to drive consumer interest in the Group of Seven to the campaign web site / content and ultimately to an opportunity for the consumer to book a package or activate an itinerary.

Tracking and Performance Measures

Tracking / Measurement

As part of our marketing management, we will track the results of the campaign and provide a “dashboard” of results. These metrics include:

- Web ad impressions/clicks
- Traffic profiles/trends on Explorers’ Edge websites
- Visits by influential bloggers to the region
- Social media posts
- Social network mentions (Facebook/Twitter)
- New interactions with Explorer's Edge (including e-news sign ups)
- Net new Facebook fans and Facebook interactions (insights)
- Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, Pinterest and Google Plus insights
- Referrals – Jack Rabbit Referral System and outbound links

Budget 2016 / 2017

Social Media Advertising - Facebook Ads	\$365,000.00		
Search Engine Marketing - Google Adwords	\$35,000.00		
Lead Ads – Facebook	\$10,000.00		
OTMPC	\$10,000.00		
Sub Total		\$420,000.00	
Content Development / Guest Authors	\$10,000.00		
Promotions/Contests/Incentives	\$10,000.00		
Creative Development	\$5,000.00		
Project Mgmt. (Facebook)	\$47,450.00		
Project Mgmt. (Google)	\$5,250.00		
Project Mgmt. (Lead Ads)	\$1,300.00		
Monthly Retainer (\$4,000 x 12 months)	\$48,000.00		
Lead Nurturing Program	\$24,000.00		
Sub Total		\$151,000.00	
Total			\$571,000.00

