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Fisheries & Tourism Fact Sheet Series: Marketing 101

Maine Sea Grant

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FISHERIES & TOURISM

FACT SHEET SERIES

Marketing 101

A marketing strategy includes everything you do to inform potential customers what you have to offer, and to influence their decision to spend their money with you.

1. Identify your customer.

Who are your target customers? Not everyone is looking for the same experience. You need to focus your marketing on those who might actually spend money with you. People who choose to go on boat tours are likely interested in nature and culture, or want to experience the outdoors and meet people who make a living on the coast. A growing number of people are looking for this kind of experience, so focus your marketing efforts and dollars on this group. For example, advertising in *Audubon* magazine might bring you more customers than the local radio station. It depends on the nature of your tours. Think about what you offer, who might be interested, and where they get their information.



Natalie Springuel

2. Define the experience.

There are plenty of excursions on the coast of Maine, what makes yours unique? Remember that you can offer a wide variety of tours from the platform of your boat, such as lobstering, aquaculture, offshore bird-watching, whales and seals, lighthouses and maritime history, fall colors and spring migrants, Native American heritage, island lore... What do you know and love about the coast of Maine that nature and culture tourists would like to hear? Market these experiences to them.

3. Establish the price you will charge.

Many resources are available to help you identify what to charge to break even or draw a profit. Tour price is

an important part of your marketing strategy—the cost must fall within the range that your target market expects, striking a balance between affordability and quality. Business-support resources include the Small Business Administration (sba.gov), Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (ceimaine.org), Sunrise County Economic Council (sunrisecounty.org), and University of Maine Cooperative Extension (umaine.edu/ext-business).

4. Promote your tours.

Target your promotion dollars for the highest return. Websites and social media like Facebook are critical to helping your potential customers plan their vacation. Brochures and business cards help once tourists are in the region and looking for things to do. Ads are expensive, so place them only where your target market gets their information. Promotion organized by your local chamber of commerce or other tourism entities reaches a wide audience. Invite reporters and travel writers on your tour. Consider partnerships with other businesses to pool marketing dollars, such as creating package tours (see the fact sheet on “Creating partnerships with tourism businesses”). Finally, remember that tourists ask for recommendations, so make sure staff at inns, hotels, restaurants, and even the local gas station know about you.

Marketing resources

The Maine Office of Tourism (visitmaine.com) has FREE options to market your tours, events, specials, and travel packages. Some tourism regions have their own website and when you enter your information there, it will automatically be listed in the visitmaine.com site, and vice versa. All for free.

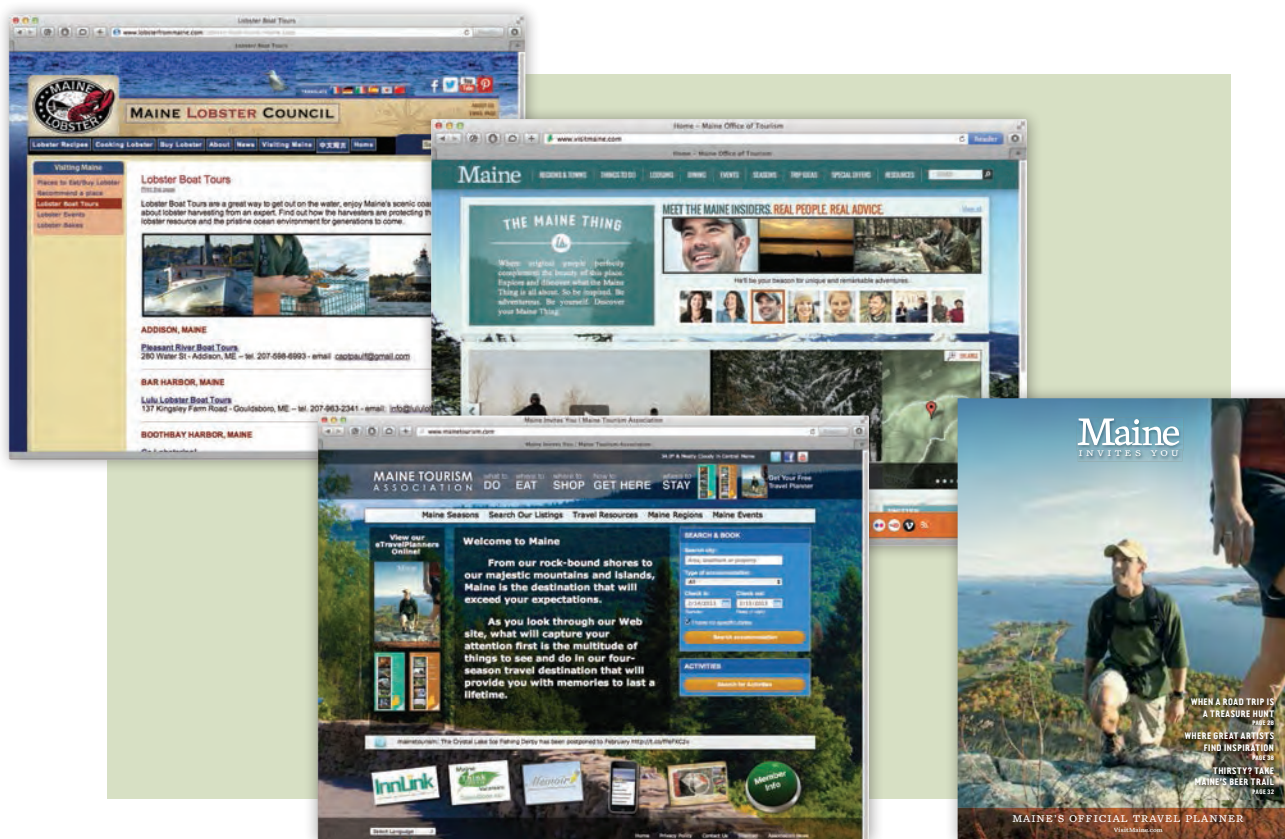
Join (for a fee) the Maine Tourism Association (mainetourism.com) to

- ▶ get listed in their promotions, including “Maine Invites You,” the state’s printed travel planner that gets distributed worldwide; and
- ▶ display your brochures at one of Maine’s eight visitor centers (including those along I-95).

List your tour with the Maine Lobster Council (lobsterfrommaine.com/lobster-boat-tours-maine.aspx).

Connect with your local chamber of commerce.

Finally, remember that word of mouth and your customers themselves are your best marketing tools. ■



This fact sheet is part of a series intended to provide resources for fishermen and aquaculture farmers who seek to augment their earnings through tourism. More information, including the legal research upon which these fact sheets are based, can be found at seagrant.umaine.edu/fisheries-tourism.

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