

How to Market Your Facility to Tourists

by Susan Snyder-Davis

Even though tourists may only warrant one visit to your facility compared to members of your community, they are still a viable market segment to reach. The following is an overview of ways to reach tourists who visit your area.

1. You'll need to produce an attractive one panel, two- or three-fold brochure, preferably in two, three-, or four-colors, that represents your facility with photographs of happy guests enjoying your attractions along with lively copy. You'll also need a flyer promoting your facility with a dollar-off coupon towards admission. If you're opposed to the idea of offering a dollar off, perhaps you should consider raising your admission by a dollar and then doing a big push on the dollar discount.
2. Visit restaurants in your area near hotels and places where tourists frequent. Find out if you can place an ad on their placemats or if they have racks of activity brochures and if so, be sure to include yours. Make frequent return visits to replenish your materials.
3. Visit all the hotels in your area, especially those near other major attractions, the airport, and other places tourists frequent. Place your brochures in all the hotels' racks with the other attraction brochures. Ask if you can leave your dollar-off flyers near the check-in counter and at hotel restaurant registers. Check with each hotel to find out if they distribute information in guest rooms and if your flyers can be included. You may want to work with the hotel manager on creating a co-produced activity kit for families. The kit could include a coloring book, balloons, a novelty item, your flyers, and hotel promotional items. Also find out if hotels in your area play promotional videos in their guests' rooms showcasing local tourist attractions. If so, inquire how a video of your facility can be included.
4. Be sure to spend time at your local airport looking for locations to leave your flyers.
5. Most major cities and tourist areas have visitor information centers. Don't let your brochure be missing from this important location.
6. Most metropolitan areas have tourist publications. Plan to spend some money placing display ads for your facility in these publications. Make sure your facility receives editorial coverage too. When you place an ad, be sure to have a press release ready with your display ad for inclusion in the publication. Sometimes you can be in the local tourist coupon book as well.
7. If your facility is located in a city where there is a convention and visitors' bureau with major conventions business, you should schedule a meeting with bureau representatives. There are several ways to promote your facility with this group. Find out what conventions are scheduled for the coming year and who the convention planners are. Contact these planners several months prior to their convention and find out if you can work with them in one of the following ways: 1) if you can provide your brochures in their convention registration packets as a location where convention delegates' families can go during their visit, and 2) whether you can work with the convention planner on providing an activity at your facility for the delegates' spouses and families to enjoy while the delegates are busy. Many convention planners provide alternative activities for delegates' families along with convention activities. Why not make sure your facility is included on the agenda by providing a group activity for a day?

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