
Case Studies | Tourism Marketing

Client

Beech Mountain Tourism and Development Authority (Beech TDA)
Beech Mountain, NC

Objective

To increase occupancy tax dollars in Beech Mountain, North Carolina, through tourist rentals of condominiums, country inns and private homes.

Challenges

Beech Mountain is located 5,506 feet above sea level in the high country of North Carolina. It is primarily known for Ski Beech, one of the southeast's best winter destinations. Due to the economy, Beech rental revenue had steadily declined over a three-year period. Winter is traditionally a strong season for Beech, the rest of the year tourism traffic waned significantly. The marketing budget for Beech is limited, requiring selective marketing.

Solution

Beech had worked with several advertising agencies over the years to develop a market position. The agreed-upon position and the one we adopted was "Beech Is Eastern America's Highest Incorporated Town." Over the year's, various market surveys had been done by the Beech TDA to determine the types of tourists Beech Mountain attracted and their points of origin. Prior to its association with Gotham, Beech Mountain engaged in costly traditional media including billboards, radio and magazine advertising. Such mass-media campaigns' require bigger budgets to achieve the consistency desired to reach the audience.

Gotham's first suggestion for Beech was a comprehensive strategic marketing plan. After collecting all past market data and rental trends, and conducting conversations with key stakeholders on the mountain, Gotham provided comprehensive messaging and tactics to promote Beech as a year-round destination. Gotham persuaded the Beech TDA to view the mountain as a comprehensive "product." To make the "product" as strong as possible, it was vital to unify the Beech TDA, Beech Mountain Chamber of Commerce, Beech Mountain Resort (Ski Beech) and the private Beech Mountain Club, which offered dining, tennis, swimming, fitness activities and golf.

Ten viral marketing strategies were included in the strategic marketing plan to create newsworthy, word-of-mouth buzz and to help mitigate the low marketing budget. Gotham concentrated the bulk of Beech Mountain's marketing focus away from costly mass media and to online efforts including a new web presence, a blog, a comprehensive full-color brochure, optimized public relations, random search engine optimization and regionalized pay per click.

Rounding out the marketing effort were some traditional media in targeted radio and in magazines with a long shelf life. The Beech TDA also was able to partner with the Beech Mountain Club to offer a free golf, stay and play package to help bolster the traditionally weak summer months.

Results

Within the first seven months of Gotham's working together with the Beech TDA, occupancy tax (indicative of lodging rentals) had grown by 10 percent. Web traffic has grown by 21,000 new visitors in just five months.

Joint efforts are continuing among the Beech TDA, Beech Mountain Club, Beech Chamber and Ski Beech Resort to add cohesion and consistency to the marketing of Beech Mountain.