

Advertising and Communications FY 2010

Work to achieve the following objectives:

Reach consumers through advertising, communications, and interactive media to:

- Engage consumers in the Mississippi brand and use the brand to differentiate Mississippi from our competitors.
- Maximize the return on investment in tourism.
- Carry the Mississippi brand through all contact points with the consumer, and across all program areas within Mississippi tourism.
- Continue to build and expand, our public relations goal focusing on communicating and differentiating the Mississippi brand by establishing the uniqueness of our state.
- Build awareness among our key target audiences that Mississippi is the best value, a must-see for culture, culinary, outdoor, and golf.
- Motivate consumers to actively seek more information.
- Build awareness that Mississippi is the perfect vacation destination for Mississippi families.
- Lengthen the average stay by encouraging visitors to hub and spoke from their main destination.
- Cooperate with local, regional, national, and private industry tourism entities.
- Create interest in Mississippi.
- Convert interest into a sale by delivering consumers the tools to a make a vacation decision.

In FY 2010 MDA Tourism will be adding a new focus on engagement – getting consumers involved through their senses, through our brand values, and through virtual communities.

The goal of our digital marketing efforts is to engage and interact with consumers in the Mississippi brand and use technology to generate interest.

- The Mississippi Development Authority's Tourism website www.VisitMississippi.org is the main tourism digital marketing tool. The website has nearly a half a million unique visits per month.
- Build community and connection by developing a relationship with consumers.
- Generate conversations so consumers help spread the word about Mississippi to their family and friends.
- Develop Widgets and RSS feeds to allow persons to incorporate custom content into their blogs and websites. Creating and publishing such feeds (for example a widget that feeds every image on Flickr tagged Mississippi) will allow fans to take the Mississippi message far beyond the borders of Mississippi. The creation of user-generated content on visitmississippi.org through wiki-power also holds promise; maintaining wiki-based destination information pages so that users can interact with each other and provide input about places to go and see.
- Mississippi's entire library of content will be made available for PDA and mobile device users.

Social Networking. The proliferation of broadband and the rise of social media have radically changed the vacation planning experience. The web is no longer a “look to book” tool, but part of the whole process, from the ideation stage to post vacation trip rating and

sharing of experiences (examples: rating hotels, attractions, uploading photos and videos, etc.). Consumers have transformed travel planning by embracing the web to create a fun, interactive, vacation experience. More than half the visitors to MySpace are now over 35 or over, up from less than 40% last year. In addition, the phenomenon known as Second Life, the online virtual-reality world, is a growing online trend. Second Life's 2.7 million registered users can do just about anything there: buy virtual property, establish and frequent virtual businesses, strike up a relationship. So it is not surprising that some non-virtual companies such as Starwood Resorts, GM and Toyota are setting up shop as well. Just imagine a virtual trip to Mississippi. Mississippi will engage in conversations with customers; this allows consumers to become fans of our product and in turn become our best proponents. We must consider user-generated content for the website, soliciting feedback on a blog posting, or asking our audience to upload and vote on their favorite vacation videos, "engagement" will increasingly become the cornerstone of our strategy. Let them write reviews about places, share travel tips, rate content, add photos, query reviews example search for what families do on a trip to Mississippi.

Public Relations objectives involve national, regional and in-state media relations activities, industry outreach, and sophisticated partner communications. To build awareness of, and engage consumers in, Mississippi's brand we will:

- Provide information about events, itineraries, copy, and custom media kits to engage out-of-state media and travelers to visit Mississippi.

- Provide in-state media with information about activities and destinations that will motivate Mississippians to overnight. Offer media and travel writers stories, events, itineraries and custom media kits that instill a sense of things to do close to home.
- Demonstrate value to the industry, and tourism's value to the economy of Mississippi.

Advertising and Communications Strategies for FY 2010

Integration – In 2010 Mississippi will update our whole media and publication plans and take a “holistic” view. We will establish a publishing strategy that combines the strengths and synergies of print and online, working together. Make the plan immersive with the use of multiple formats and media to extend the experience. For example, if the print ad is about “Wyatt Waters” painting the Mississippi River Bridge, drive folks online to watch a video or photo story of the artist enjoying his passion. Feature other stories from artist in a blog, and provide an art itinerary for visitors and art tips in the enewsletter. This also is a way to tie in social media to the story. Secure “local experts” to blog and write about their favorite galleries/museums and invite residents and visitors to submit their own!

1. **Mobile** - Mobile content is finally approaching the mainstream market. Over the coming 5 years it can build on print's role as a portable, accessible source of travel information. 17% of American Leisure Travelers reported in July 2008 using a mobile phone or PDA to access travel related content – mainly maps and flight information (for now). Mississippi should make our content available mobile and make it available in a way so that it's easy for itinerary building.

2. **Target with a single purpose** - Print pieces need to have a clear role in the travel decision process example: as a rich, experiential magazine style publication (to sell the destination) or as a practical/portable guide for use while traveling.
3. **Delivery** - Traditionally, print guides take 1-2 weeks to get to their destination. In the age of instant gratification and compressed planning cycles, this seems ancient. Provide consumers with multiple ways to order publications including real time, first class, etc. And maybe, we consider charging consumers for enhanced delivery. Certainly, one choice would be electronically.

The Birthplace of America's Music

As part of an increased focus on promoting Mississippi as the Birthplace of America's Music, the Mississippi Development Authority/Tourism Division continues to engage in marketing Mississippi's unique musical heritage. The primary elements of being:

1. The Mississippi Blues Trail,
2. Tune In Mississippi web radio station, and
3. "Mississippi—The Birthplace of America's Music Celebrates Its GRAMMY® Legacy" event.

The objective of the Mississippi Blues Trail is to give visitors a more up-close and in-depth experience while they are visiting historic music sites in Mississippi.

The objective of the Tune In Mississippi web radio station is to attract listeners to hear and learn more about Mississippi's musical heritage. This cutting-edge tourism marketing effort, which is an online radio station, can be listened to 24 hours a day on the Mississippi Tourism website, www.VisitMississippi.org. The state will benefit from the Tune In Mississippi web radio station by further sharing Mississippi's music with the world—at no charge to the listener.

The objective of the “Mississippi—The Birthplace of America’s Music Celebrates Its GRAMMY® Legacy” event, the only annual GRAMMY® event of its kind held in Mississippi, is to continue to showcase Mississippi’s far-reaching musical influence on the world. This star-studded gala event hosted by Governor Haley Barbour and First Lady Marsha Barbour.

Mississippi’s “Follow Your Passion” ad campaign takes a highly targeted niche marketing campaign to four areas of focus in terms of tourism products. It also focuses the geographic reach to a specific audience. The niche marketing campaign was first designed to reach an audience within a 750-mile radius of the state. With the increase in gasoline prices and research such as the Travel Industry of America’s findings that among the 41% of respondents to their travel research stated their plans would change if gas prices rise further, the greatest percentage stated that they would simply travel a shorter distance to their vacation destination. Therefore, based on the data available, we will make our prime focus to a 250 mile radius. Also, a focus of the niche marketing campaign is to provide an in-state tourism campaign to emphasize Mississippi’s new culinary trail giving Mississippians a new reason to visit their own state. In addition to the brand Mississippi Birthplace of America’s Music message, the niche “Follow Your Passion” advertising campaign also targets a much younger audience 25 to 34. Yet this message does not turn away any audience. In determining the four themes of focus for the Mississippi Tourism niche marketing campaign, several areas were identified that showed the most potential for growth and development, as well as the ability to provide an honest, unique and rewarding experience for visitors expecting their visit to Mississippi to live up to and even exceed their expectations.

The areas of focus of the Mississippi Tourism niche marketing campaign are:

- Outdoor Adventure—outdoor activities including hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, canoeing, kayaking, camping, rock climbing, RVing, bird watching, equestrian and other nature tourism-related activities.
- Food—including restaurants, recipes, chefs, specialty food items and products, and cooking schools.
- Golf—as a year-round, accessible, and affordable activity.
- Mississippi Culture—with the greatest focus on music, literature, history, African-American heritage, arts and crafts, and fine arts.

As part of the implementation of the niche marketing campaign, print advertising, television, and website/interactive media are the major focuses of the advertising effort. The primary creative focus of the print advertising is the use of a unique, high-impact, single image photograph that tells the story along with a brief headline and limited supporting copy. All of the Mississippi Tourism print advertising encourages readers to call the toll-free number or go to the website for more information in order to generate inquiries and website visits.

While the niche marketing campaign includes four areas of focus, it was determined that each of the four consumer tourism areas, should have their own television spot. The primary creative direction of the television campaign is focused on real people engaged in and enjoying the activity—in a very active and interesting way.

All of the television spots are fast-paced in the editing as well as the music. In all of the television advertisements, it is only revealed at the end of the commercial that Mississippi is the advertiser.

The television commercials were shot in locations throughout the state so there is a regional diversity aspect throughout each ad. There are four television advertisements as part of the Mississippi Tourism niche campaign featuring the following subjects:

- Outdoor Adventure
- Food
- Golf
- Mississippi Culture

Customized Monthly E Newsletters. Our consumer monthly e-newsletter was launched in 2005 and aims to keep Mississippi top-of-mind. We now have a database of 200,000 email addresses. Ideas for improvement would include adding feature stories, unique escape ideas, suggested itineraries, special promotions and contests. Segment the e-newsletter audience through self-selection into multiple categories to our niches. Consumers can then tell us their interests and preferences over time which will allow Mississippi to direct them only towards appropriate content on the website and receive tailored email messaging and promotional offers.

Grant/Cooperative

Advertising/Partnering Opportunities: Increase our advertising presence by partnering with the Mississippi tourism industry on cooperative advertising opportunities.

Strategies and tactics include:

- **Increased Participation in Advertising Partner Program:** The goal of the Advertising Partner program would be to increase the Mississippi “voice” in media in which Mississippi Tourism advertises, by offering discounted grant rates to partners who advertise in the same media.
- **Branded, Co-op Print Advertising with Product Call to Action:** Implement a print co-op program with a direct call to action for packages, including hotels and experiences. The objective to align products thematically with the brand ads and translate consumer interest into sales by taking them from an “idea” of a vacation to a tangible vacation product package; provide a larger presence for Mississippi; and create affordable opportunities for our partners to buy into the state brand campaign.
- **Regional Cooperative Advertising:** Through the Regional Cooperative Marketing Program, partner opportunities with participating regions/destinations to share development and placement costs for ads that follow the same creative direction as the established Mississippi Tourism advertising campaign, but include a focus on the unique activities and destinations of a particular region or industry organization.
- **Open Media Plan:** In addition to the opportunities mentioned share our media plan with MTA and the industry, informing partners that any insertions are available to become co-ops.

Marketing Tactics: New Publications

Develop Future Publications: Mississippi Tourism oversees the development, production and distribution of a family of publications designed to deliver the brand message, inspire travel to and within Mississippi, and facilitate travel planning. We also support niche-market collateral development.

- **Tourism Magazine:** A new showpiece for the state, Travel Mississippi magazine features unique travel ideas to motivate visitors to travel to and around Mississippi.

This publication could offer a behind-the-scenes glimpse of experiences, allow us to cross-promote and engage consumers.

- **Culinary Escapes:** To continue our development of our growing food niche we could have trails featured and themed itineraries. We could partner with the Mississippi Restaurant Association to produce.
- **Mississippi Trails Guide:** In concept, this publication would be designed to provide the visitor with detailed trail information. This “lure piece” would engage the prospective visitor with feature stories and ideas that showcase the actual experience of traveling around the state, providing inspiration and itinerary ideas.
- **Mississippi Kids Guide:** This guide would build on our student guide and feature activity pages and favorite activities from local children. It could include games and be interactive with a new special section on our website.