

TOURISM RESEARCH 2016

BACKGROUND

Through its provision of Tourism & Visitor Services in Lambton Shores and surrounding area, the Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce has experience and insight into the needs of local small tourism-based businesses and volunteer-organized events. That experience and insight is the foundation of its advocacy work for the area with government agencies including destination marketing organizations such as Tourism Sarnia Lambton (TSL) and Southwestern Ontario Tourism Corporation (SWOTC).

Over the past 10-years, government and third-party funding sources have increased and tightened financial reporting conditions and grant application requirements, in a sense professionalizing the grant application and reporting process. This significant change in requirements and expectations places the onus on local, small not-for-profit service clubs and volunteer-organized event planners to be statisticians, record-keepers, bookkeepers and report writers.

One of the challenges faced by many local groups in accessing funding dollars is a frequent and common requirement to demonstrate positive progress towards quantifiable goals and objectives made possible by the funding. This requirement is only satisfied by the ability to benchmark data points at the start and end of a project/initiative. For example, the ability to demonstrate an increase in the number of visitors, guests or attendees, an increase in the amount of money spent locally or ticket sales or paid parking revenue.

OPPORTUNITY

Through discussions with TSL, SWOTC, the Ontario Ministry of Agricultural, Food & Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and Trillium Grant personnel, the Chamber sees an opportunity through which it can assist local community, volunteer-organized event planners and other local non-for-profit initiatives and projects that seek grant money. The opportunity is the undertaking of statistical benchmarking of area tourists and visitors.

As a result, a comprehensive survey has been developed with assistance from SWOTC and through a literature review of similar tourism-industry surveys completed in Canada, the United States and Europe.

OBJECTIVES

- Establish quantifiable local data points in support of accessing funding sources
- Share collected data with local not-for-profit organizations and groups in support of events, projects and initiatives that support local economic development
- Track data point changes over 6 years, repeating the survey every other year (i.e. 2016, 2018 and 2020)

APPROACH

An online “post-trip” survey (see [Appendix: Survey Questions](#)) was selected as the data collection tool due to its universal access by area visitors once they’ve returned home, its relatively low cost to implement and manage, and desire to gather information about visitor activities in the area for a period of time (week, weekend or more) instead of just daytrippers. To encourage survey completion, a travel prize is offered.

PLAN

- Survey questions developed with input from SWOTC and with review of similar surveys conducted elsewhere.
- Using the Chamber’s Constant Contact account, setup the online survey and establish a timeline for collection and completion.
- Develop a marketing plan to promote the survey to area visitors.
- Incent area visitors to voluntarily take the survey with a travel prize package.
- Offset the marketing and implementation costs with sponsorship.
- Use Constant Contact’s built-in statistical tools to analyze the data and provide a final report.

SCHEDULE

- Survey questions researched and developed: November - February
- Survey questions approved: March
- Survey setup online and ready for data input: March
- Survey implementation plan developed: November - February
- Marketing plan developed: January – February
- Marketing plan start date: April 1
- Survey data collection: April 1 – November 31, 2016
- Prize package winner selected and announced: December 14, 2016
- Survey data analyzed and report shared with key stakeholders: January 2017.

RESOURCES

The printing costs associated with producing the survey postcard are partially offset by sponsorship from SWOTC and the Municipality of Lambton Shores. The Chamber's staff, Constant Contact account and ability to distribute promotional material to local businesses and to promote the survey to visitors is utilized.

The cost of providing the survey incentive prize – the \$750 travel package – is shared by the Chamber and participating accommodations and restaurants selected by the prize recipient. A list of participating accommodations and restaurants will be provided to the prize recipient who can select any place to stay or dine they wish. As well, the prize recipient is provided with four vouchers – one each for accommodation, breakfast, lunch and dinner for up to four people. The vouchers are accepted at the participating accommodation and restaurants for the full cost of services (with the exception of alcohol and alcohol tax).

The total cost of services is shared 50/50 with the Chamber. For example, if the prize recipient's group wished to stay at Pine Dale Motor Inn for the two nights accommodation during July and the cost for the room was \$370, then the Chamber would reimburse Pine Dale \$185 and Pine Dale would incur \$185 of the cost. Likewise, if the group of up to 4-people dined at Smackwater Jack's Taphouse and their bill – including taxes and gratuities – totaled \$277, the Chamber would reimburse Smackwater's \$138.50 (does not cover alcohol or alcohol tax – see [Appendix: Survey Conditions](#)).

The selected accommodation provider or restaurant invoices the Chamber for 50% of the entire cost along with the redeemed voucher.

COSTS

EXPENSES		
PostCard Production & Printing	\$450.00	5,000 copies
Print ad in Visitor Guide	\$0.00	
Online Survey Cost	\$0.00	
Prize Package	\$750.00	
Web Ads on GrandBendTourism.com	\$0.00	
Facebook Ads	\$100.00	
Total Costs	\$1,300.00	
REVENUE		
sponsorships	\$400.00	SWOTC / Lambton Shores
in-kind donations	\$375.00	Participating Businesses
Total Revenue	\$775.00	
Net Cost to Chamber	\$525.00	

APPENDIX

2016 VISITOR SURVEY – TRAVEL PRIZE PAGE

THIS PRIZE PACKAGE INCLUDES:

- Cost of one night's accommodation for a family group up to 4 people staying in the same room.
- Cost of one breakfast, one lunch and one dinner for the same family group of up to 4 people during the same visit, including taxes and gratuities.
- Prize winner will be provided vouchers for accommodation and meals that participating accommodation providers and restaurants will accept for full payment along with a list of participating accommodation providers and restaurants.

PRIZE PACKAGE CONDITIONS

- The survey period runs from April 1, 2016 through to November 31, 2016. The travel package prize winner will be selected from completed surveys that contact information within 10 working days of the survey's closing date (i.e. by December 14, 2016). The winner will be notified by email and phone.
- Only one winner per household is permitted.
- The prize package is not redeemable for cash and there are no prize substitutions, cash equivalent or transfer of prize allowed.
- If the winner is unable to use any element of the package, there is no substitution for the unawarded portion of the prize.
- Award recipients must have reached the age of majority where they live.
- The prize package restaurant vouchers do not cover the cost of alcohol or alcohol tax.

2016 VISITOR SURVEY – QUESTIONS

1. Name / phone / email
2. What was the purpose of your visit to the Grand Bend Area? (select one)
 - Pleasure
 - Visiting Friends or Family
 - Shopping
 - Business (Meetings, Conventions, Conferences, Other)
 - Other

3. How long was your visit?
 - Daytrip
 - 1 night
 - 2 nights
 - 3 nights
 - 4 nights
 - 5 nights
 - 6-9 nights
 - 10+ nights
4. Including yourself, how many of each age category travelled with you? (Select "0" for those age categories for which you have no fellow traveler)
 - Under 5 years
 - 5-12 years
 - 13-17 years
 - 18-24 years
 - 25-34 years
 - 35-44 years
 - 45-54 years
 - 55-64 years
 - 65+
5. What is your home address postal /zip code?
6. What type of accommodation did you choose? (select one)
 - Bed & Breakfast
 - Family or Friend's Home
 - Hotel/Motel
 - Personal Cottage/Second Home
 - Rental Cottage, Cabin or Home
 - RV/Tenting Campground
 - Pinery Provincial Park
 - Other
7. What time of year was your visit? (select one)
 - January - March
 - April - June
 - July - September
 - October - December
8. How often have you visited this area in the last 3 years? (select one)
 - Once / First time
 - 1 or 2 times a year
 - 1 to 3 times a month
 - Most weeks / Weekends
 - Other
9. How far in advance did you plan your trip? (select one)
 - Less than 2 weeks before the trip
 - Within 2 to 4 weeks before the trip
 - Within 1-2 months before the trip
 - Within 3-5 months before the trip
 - Within 6-11 months before the trip
 - A year or more before the trip
10. Which attraction or amenity prompted you to visit this area (select one)
 - Event or Organized activity
 - Area's natural and/or commercial attractions
 - Beach
 - Grand Bend Motorplex
 - Huron Country Playhouse
 - Pinery Provincial Park
 - Visitor Friends or Family
 - Other (please comment)

11. What activities did your group experience during your visit? (Click all that apply)

- Beach
- Biking / Road Biking / Cycling
- Birdwatching / Wildlife Viewing
- Boating / Motorboat / Jet Ski / Kayaking / Canoeing / Wakeboarding
- Dining Out
- Festivals / Events / Fairs
- Fishing
- Fossil Hunting
- Golfing
- Hiking
- Horseback Riding
- Motorsports
- Museums / Art Galleries
- Parachuting
- Parasailing
- Photography
- Shopping
- Theatre / Drama / Concert / Cultural Performance
- Visiting Friends/Relatives
- Youth / Amateur / Collegiate / Professional Sporting Event

12. Did you shop any of the local farmers' markets or "farm-gate" locations (such as pick-your-own fruit, vegetable stand, specialty food or drink store)

- Farmers' Market
- Farmers stall / retail outlet
- Pick-Your-Own fruits and vegetables
- Specialty food store (cheese store, bakery, country market)
- Specialty beverage (local winery or micro-brewery)

13. If you took in a show or saw a movie, what theatres / venues did you attend? (check all that apply)

- Huron Country Playhouse (Drayton Entertainment) – Grand Bend
- Blyth Festival Theatre – Blyth
- Victoria Playhouse – Petrolia
- Stratford Festival – Stratford
- Starlite Drive-In – Grand Bend
- Kineto Theatre – Forest
- Park Theatre - Goderich

14. What towns did you visit while in the Greater Grand Bend Area? (Click all that apply)

- Arkona
- Bayfield
- Blyth
- Clinton
- Exeter
- Forest
- Goderich
- Grand Bend
- Hensall
- Ipperwash
- Lucan
- Northville
- Parkhill
- Port Franks
- St. Joseph
- Zurich
- Other

15. What were your top sources of information that helped you plan your visit? (click all that apply)

- GrandBendTourism.com website
- Facebook.com/grandbendtourism
- Facebook – other
- Search Engine (Google, Yahoo, Bing etc)
- Travel Provider Website (hotel, motel or tour operator)
- Travel Review website (TripAdvisor, Yelp, etc.)
- Travel website (Expedia, Travelocity, etc.)
- Travel Club (CAA / AAA)
- Visitor Guide – “It Starts at the Beach”
- Visitor Guide – “Navigate”
- Visitor Guide – “Ontario’s West Coast”
- Visitor Guide - Other
- Newspaper / Magazine Article
- Friends/relatives
- Previous visit / local knowledge
- Other (please comment)

16. Out of these information sources listed above, which was YOUR most important source of information? (please comment)
17. Please estimate how much you spent on ACCOMMODATION during your visit (ENTRY BOX)
18. Please estimate how much you spent on AMENITIES (like golf fees, spa etc.) during your visit
19. Please estimate how much you spent on ENTERTAINMENT / ADMISSIONS during your visit
20. Please estimate how much you spent on FOOD / DRINK / DINING during your visit
21. Please estimate how much you spent on GROCERIES during your visit
22. Please estimate how much you spent on SHOPPING / GIFTS / SOUVENIRS during your visit
23. Rate your experience of the following, where 1 is POOR and 10 is EXCELLENT
 - Overall visit
 - Accommodation
 - Food & Drink
 - Shopping
 - Festivals & Events
 - Entertainment / Theatre
 - Outdoor Activities – Hiking, Parasailing, Canoeing, Wakeboarding etc.
 - Beach

Comments:

24. What were the BEST things about your visit? (Open ended)
25. What were the WORST things about your visit? (Open ended)
26. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your visit to this area? (Open ended)
27. How likely are you to return to the area for another visit?

Least likely / Somewhat likely / Don't Know / Somewhat likely / Most likely