



Hamilton County Tourism, Inc. 2018 Visit Hamilton County Marketing Plan

HCT Vision 2025 dictates a focus on digital marketing, data analysis and connectivity—not only as strategies to attract visitors to Hamilton County, but also as tools to maximize additional efforts in tourism and destination management. Opportunities exist to (1) create campaign efficiencies for greater ROI and expanded reach, (2) support efforts in group sales and service, (3) maximize the marketing efforts of key tourism partners, and (4) build excitement locally to encourage social sharing of key messages. The 2018 Marketing Plan continues the progress made since 2016 when HCT Vision 2025 was adopted.

In 2017, the HCT Marketing team updated and redesigned a number of core brand elements for more eye-catching and expressive messaging across its entire platform. A new sweeping, brushstroke font called Wild Spirit was designed to carry key words that communicate the essence of Hamilton County’s visitor experience. More than 30 photo shoots produced new and evocative still, video and drone images. Market testing occurred throughout the year to determine high performance and greatest return among travel seasons, messages, ad sizes and digital outlets. HCT also developed systems to forecast hotel trends, periods of high demand, and region-wide compression events to inform future marketing plans and gain higher yield. Harnessing the power of digital analytics to inform real-time, market-driven decisions has come to HCT. The Marketing team is well on the way toward its vision of providing authoritative, market driven and adaptive intelligence reporting to Hamilton County’s tourism industry.

Marketing Goals

- Increase Hamilton County hotel room demand by 8%.
- Attract 500,000 unique visitors to VisitHamiltonCounty.com, and convert over 1,600 of those visitors via newsletter sign-ups or travel guide requests.
- Stimulate 200,000 engaged posts from followers of HCT social media channels—Facebook, Twitter, Instagram.
- Develop at least 165 published news stories, round-ups or blurbs that feature Hamilton County lifestyle and travel with six of those stories reaching a national audience through conventional media sources.
- Connect positively with 78 reporters, writers and influencers to build conduits for news that influences travel.
- Renew at least 90% of current tourism marketing partners, and gain 35 new partners at the gold level.

Strategies

- **Updated Brand Architecture**
Incorporate the new creative brand design into all marketing assets. Manage and enforce a consistent style and design standard. Build upon the architecture in various niche markets. Grow the brand creatively and boldly, not only nationally but also locally to build a feeling of pride and ambassadorship among local residents.
- **Destination Advertising**
Execute seasonal campaigns in the Chicago DMA to include conventional print, radio and TV media buys. Use 30 different :15 videos that highlight the HC visitor experience as the core of the new brand launch. Distribute videos throughout owned, purchased and shared digital channels as well as in television ad buys that will bookend commercial breaks. Develop two 60-second radio ads to mimic the emotion and feeling designed into the new architecture. Direct all call-to-action to VisitHamiltonCounty.com, and monitor engagement in real time to prioritize higher performing ads. Layer and support campaigns with a Midwest digital content media program to include Google Adwords, daily optimization and strategic landing pages, paid and organic social messaging, and email marketing. Monitor Midwest DMAs for future campaigns based upon strong interest to travel during low occupancy.

- **Group Market Advertising**
Advertise in trade publications and with Google Adwords to build brand awareness among group travelers to include corporate meeting planners, association and fraternity executives, sports events governing bodies, wedding and golf groups. Sponsor trade shows in target markets to build awareness for sales initiatives. Layer and support those campaigns with lead generation, reader board service, email marketing and link strategy programs.
- **Promotions**
Build weekend travel packages using certificates and inventory from tourism business partners. Use those packages to gain additional value and advertising through special promotions in radio and social media promotions. Identify unique, local tourism-driving opportunities that demonstrate the potential to drive excitement and viral buzz on social media channels. Maximize their impact by creating real-time, live promotional events. Promotional events for 2018 include, but are not limited to, National Tourism Week, Tenderloin Tuesday, Live Nation ticket giveaways, Delta direct from Indy to Paris and other. Look for ways to build soft shoulder months through unique seasonal promotions. Use events such as Colts Training Camp and Nickel Plate Express to generate social media sharing, goodwill and ambassadorship while activating and providing value to tourism partners.
- **Web Performance**
Continue to prioritize digital content by implementing a strategic content calendar and management system designed to synchronize messages across all channels. Implement Schema code throughout VisitHamiltonCounty.com to ensure search engines return more informative results to users, specifically location. Work strategically with Google Travel Products to update imagery and content on behalf of Hamilton County tourism business partners in order to enhance their online Google listings. While investing in Google Travel isn't directly measurable, look for ways where the enhancement will help improve the overall Hamilton County brand.
- **Communications**
Complete a national search and contract with a PR firm that will deliver regional and national story development. Connect HCT to national media outlets and writers by pitching, deskside appointments and destination visits. Continue local media efforts as needed. Shape social networking efforts so that consumers sign up for email and e-news as well as engage in communicating and sharing on various channels. Use a paid content strategy for blogs, video and campaigns to reach engagement goals. Conduct a communications audit and utilize results for improvement.
- **Print**
Incorporate updated brand elements into all published resource guides, calendars, maps and sales collateral for leisure, groups, weddings, sports and other targeted audiences as needed. Design print collateral not only to act as information resources but also to inspire and motivate behavior.
- **Market Development**
Package and scale existing product in meaningful niche travel experiences and itineraries focusing on Biking/Outdoors, Food, Events, Music and Holiday Shopping. Develop strategies in each niche, create plans and apply resources. Communicate and test via the website, maps, blogs, video and sales channels. Use results to inform new efforts.
- **Market Research**
Now with year-round marketing and advertising programs in place, invest in market research designed to determine return on advertising effectiveness in Chicago, both in spring and fall, along with data services that watch the consumer travel planning process and spending trends from "look to book to brick." Maintain Rockport research studies that identify annual economic activity and Destination Analyst research determining return on website investments. Purchase a Tableau subscription to help visualize data into easy-to-understand infographs, charts and dashboards. Report results, trends and analysis to local tourism partners and stakeholders.
- **Marketing Cooperatives**
Support the efforts of Hamilton County tourism partners—as identified and prioritized by HCT's destination development program—by maximizing their resources spent on marketing plans. Accelerate goals, build larger campaigns, expand reach, enhance brand or amplify message among other mutually beneficial cooperative marketing strategies. As the Nickel Plate Heritage Railroad plans coalesce, build and support a baseline budget and plan for marketing the new attraction. As plans for Colts Training Camp take shape, look for ways to strengthen and support tourism and visitor experience efforts.