

The Raleigh, N.C., Destination Brand for GMs

How area restaurants can help put the destination brand strategy into practice

DESTINATION BRAND PROMISE:

Raleigh stands as the intellectual, cultural, culinary and innovation hub of North Carolina. It's a cool capital city with diverse offerings spanning food, live music, sports, arts and the scenic outdoors. Visitors will be met with Raleigh's kindness, charm and local flair—a unique take on Southern hospitality that promises elevated experiences.

VISITOR SECTOR PROFILE:

- Your Own Visitor-to-Total-Customer Ratio: Averages 20%
- Impact of Your Industry's "Quality Time" with Visitors: Moderate
- Your Industry's Direct Sales to Visitors (2023): \$913M out of \$3.2B
- Challenge for Your Industry: Currently 8% of Raleigh day-trip visitors and 14% of Raleigh overnight visitors say they choose fine/upscale dining here
- Your Relationship to GRCVB: Industry Investor
- Clients/Customers You Share with GRCVB: Leisure/Group Visitors

Order of Your Consideration in an Overnight Visitor's Decision-Making Process (roughly):

1. Destination
2. Budget
3. Hotels
4. Transportation
5. Activities
6. Restaurants (6th)



RESTAURANTS SUMMARY:

Though each business in your industry usually receives an hour or less of a guest/visitor's time during his trip, you are well-positioned to serve all of Raleigh/Wake County's 18+ million annual visitors (day-trip and overnight guests). (Everyone's got to eat!) GRCVB is continuously enacting marketing strategies to increase visitors' circulation/spending throughout the destination, including per-meal spending. Your industry is already harvesting more of the total spend by visitors than local hotel or attraction industries.

Restaurant hosts, servers and other front-line staff are significant touch points for the restaurant's own brand and the destination brand, though they often haven't received any destination-specific training. Having a well-trained corps of front-line staff, who can both sell the menu and speak to their area surroundings, can maximize customer spending plus return trips to Raleigh, N.C., and your establishment.

GRCVB's Marketing Department, Bureau leadership and staff are committed to the success of the tuned-up destination brand strategy for Raleigh/Wake County. Please contact us whenever we can be of assistance with any project, large or small. The destination brand strategy is a work always in progress, designed to take 5+ years.

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TOP CONSIDERATIONS FOR GETTING STARTED:

Dig into your credit card/OpenTable reports to see if you can determine how many out-of-county tables you are serving (20% is just the Wake County average). Alternately, ask the host or servers to randomly survey guests once a quarter to learn how many are from out of town. If only 5% of your guests are visitors, stop here. Great customer service is probably enough; don't worry about enacting brand strategy.

Study your own unique selling proposition (USP) to guests/visitors, and contemplate your establishment's positioning strategy in the greater context of Raleigh, N.C. Is yours unique and competitive with the 1,400 other restaurants in our destination? Does the CVB know your USP, in order to help you reach visitors?

Consider how you are describing the destination and your location, history or origins within the destination on your website or in your ads. How well is your host doing explaining this by telephone or in person? Can your servers answer questions from visitors about what there is to see and do in Raleigh, N.C.? (Do they refer visitors to go elsewhere, i.e., there's nothing to do around here?) Are there ways you can make these interactions more positive and in line with delivering the brand promise above?

Evaluate what visitor/customer service and professional development opportunities are available for your front-line staff and managers. GRCVB offers low-cost customer service and destination awareness classes/tours for the hospitality industries each quarter. Should your staff participate and learn firsthand?