

# ShelbyKY Tourism

## FY 2023-2024 Marketing & PR Plan



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## Mission & Vision Statement

The mission of ShelbyKY Tourism is to promote Shelbyville, Simpsonville, and Shelby County as a unique year-round destination driving sustainable economic growth and quality of life.

ShelbyKY will be a getaway destination for leisure, equine, and sports travelers, with a thriving downtown core connecting Shelbyville and Simpsonville.

## Executive Summary

The ultimate goal of ShelbyKY Tourism is to entice travelers to visit the distilleries, restaurants, accommodations, and other attractions that form ShelbyKY's tourism infrastructure, thereby increasing the quality of life for residents and bolstering the local economy. ShelbyKY Tourism promotes all of ShelbyKY (Shelbyville, Simpsonville, and Shelby County) as a destination for leisure, group, sports, and business travelers, with a focus on developing overnight stays and targeting travelers participating in the Kentucky Bourbon Trail®.

## Visitor Research

Research, provided through the Kentucky Department of Tourism and self-gathered through various methods, including Smith Travel Research (STR), Airdna, and Zartico, provides invaluable information as ShelbyKY Tourism plans its marketing, public relations, and advertising efforts. Highlights from the research include:

- The top five markets for the north-central region of Kentucky are Ohio, Indiana, Tennessee, California, and Illinois. In addition, intra-state travel (people traveling within Kentucky) is still very popular.
- The average overnight visitor tends to stay for three nights in a group of at least three.
- Generally, ShelbyKY is a four-season destination and visitors still come, though maybe less frequently, during traditional "off" seasons
- On average, visitors to ShelbyKY spend \$515 while in market on various expenses, including food, fuel, lodging, and retail.
- ShelbyKY businesses with more than 50% visitor-to-resident ratio are, in order from highest to lowest: Bulleit Distillery, Hampton Inn, Holiday Inn, Ramada Inn (now Comfort Inn), and Jephtha Creed Distillery.
- The Outlet Shoppes of the Bluegrass is the single largest tourist attraction in ShelbyKY, with 44% of all visitors to ShelbyKY visiting the Outlet.
- The percent of overnight to day-trip visitors has increased to 67.4% in April 2023, compared to 35.5% in April 2022, amounting to a 90% increase.

## Objective

Utilize the three main tenants of tourism in ShelbyKY — bourbon, horses, outdoor adventure — to position ShelbyKY as a premier destination for leisure travel by increasing brand awareness in key target markets to increase ROI and help achieve strategic sales goals.

## General Strategies

- Utilize advertising to drive visitation in current traveler markets:
  - Individual/family travelers — leisure, short-term travel focused on outdoors and other non-bourbon aspects of tourism in ShelbyKY
  - Bourbon travelers — groups and individuals planning Kentucky Bourbon Trail trips
  - Group tours — motorcoaches
- Target earned media efforts to position ShelbyKY's brand as a bourbon destination
- Leverage digital programs to reflect a lifestyle brand that will grow engagement
- Drive campaigns to support developing new markets
- Continue outreach to the regional drive audience (1.5+ hour drive radius) to inspire short-term travel, i.e. weekend getaways, girls trips, etc.

## Growth Indicators

1. Generate at least 75,000 unique website visitors, a target increase of 25% from FY23
2. Engage and retain existing 7,500 social network subscribers across all channels
3. Generate an additional 2,500 social network subscribers, a target increase of 33%
4. Generate and service five hosted media visits, at least two of which are group visits (FAMs)
5. Convert 12 press pitches to coverage, 8 of which at regional or national publications
6. Generate and fulfill at least 4,500 consumer requests for visitor guides

## Example Target Audiences

- **Families** — domestic units of parent(s) and child(ren). Typically target mothers/women ages 28-54, with whole household income of at least \$75,000.
- **Bourbon** — couples/partners, bachelor/bachelorette, corporate travelers. Bourbon travelers span the leisure, group, and business travel categories.
- **Sports** — a new target audience for ShelbyKY, sports travelers in Kentucky are typically families traveling for their child's sporting events. Further, ShelbyKY Tourism is aggressively pursuing professional and junior-league sports, such as the PGA, American Pickleball Conference, and others.
- **Business/Corporate** — with the development and success of the Shelbyville Conference Center, ShelbyKY Tourism will continue to pursue business and corporate travel through meeting and development marketing.

## Target Markets

Prior to FY23, ShelbyKY Tourism has focused on developing intra-state visitors and those who are embarking on road trips who may be going elsewhere. In FY23, ShelbyKY Tourism shifted to developing overnight visitors from significant nearby drive markets — more than 2 hours by car. In FY24, ShelbyKY Tourism intends to continue its focus on developing those markets which may be further away, but

result in increased overnight visitation. Such markets include those already targeted by the Kentucky Department of Tourism and nearby DMOs, such as Louisville Tourism, VisitLEX, and Bardstown Tourism.

*Focus markets:*

Indianapolis, IN  
Cincinnati, OH  
Nashville, TN  
Chicago, IL  
Atlanta, GA

*Growth markets:*

Columbus, OH  
Detroit, MI  
Charleston-Huntington, WV

Some intra-state marketing for local events, etc. may include Lexington, Louisville, Bowling Green, and Northern Kentucky.

## Messaging Strategy

The overarching messaging strategy for ShelbyKY Tourism will continue to be *ShelbyKY — Your Bourbon Destination*. This message has generated a tremendous response and serves well to generate both leisure and group/business travel. The *Your Bourbon Destination* theme is supplemented in various mediums by ShelbyKY's value as a destination — ease of access, safety, affordability, and variety of things to do with diverse groups of travelers.

When marketing for meetings/conference development, ShelbyKY positions itself similarly as its Bourbon marketing. Highlighting prominent location, ease of access, plethora of lodging, and other elements that are attractive to both leisure/group travelers and meetings/conference travelers.

## Tactics

### **Advertising**

Paid advertising efforts will consist of multiple campaigns targeted to reach consumers at as many touch points as possible along the travel purchase funnel to keep ShelbyKY top of mind when travel decisions are being made.

*Social Media Advertising*

Always-on, seasonal social media advertising has proven to be a low-cost, high-return method of generating brand awareness, website users, and eventually in-person visitors, and will remain a part of the FY24 marketing and advertising arsenal.

### *Search Engine Marketing*

In FY24, ShelbyKY Tourism will continue its always-on bourbon-themed SEM campaigns, and bring on seasonally appropriate other SEM campaigns, such as outdoor adventure, holiday shopping, summertime getaways, romantic retreats, and others. SEM is another low-cost, high-return method of advertising for ShelbyKY Tourism.

### *Streaming/Television Advertising*

In FY23, thanks to grant funding provided by the Kentucky Department of Tourism, ShelbyKY Tourism began running streaming and television advertising in the Chicago market. Those streaming/TV ads generated more than a million impressions and featured a 5% click through rate. In FY24, ShelbyKY Tourism intends to continue running streaming and television advertising using self-service models, such as Hulu and YouTube TV.

### *Print Advertising*

Still one of the most significant aspects of the ShelbyKY Tourism advertising strategy is print advertising in regional and national magazines and other publications. Planned print advertising is attached in the Advertising Schedule section.

## **Public Relations**

Earned media is a key element of ShelbyKY's media plan. Working with its public relations agency, ShelbyKY Tourism will seek to secure placement in key regional and national publications highlighting the various aspects of tourism in ShelbyKY, namely bourbon, horses, and the variety of outdoor adventure available.

### *Press Releases*

From time to time, ShelbyKY Tourism issues press releases detailing important information, such as visitor spending, new hires, and other industry information.

### *Pitching*

In FY24, ShelbyKY Tourism intends to develop alongside its public relations agency a formal pitching strategy for regional and national press, to meet a goal of at least one pitch converted to coverage in a regional/national publication per month, plus four additional pitches for special and/or seasonal content (like holidays, etc.).

### *Media Visits/FAMs*

ShelbyKY Tourism has a long history of hosting media visits and FAM (familiarization) tours for qualified local, regional, and national press. Working with its public relations agency, ShelbyKY will invite additional press to cover unique aspects of ShelbyKY, focusing on large national and regional outlets. In addition to hosting two FAM tours per year, ShelbyKY will invite individual writers to visit to generate coverage in publications who may not be available for group visits.

## **Content Marketing**

### *Blog*

The blog feed on ShelbyKY Tourism is paramount to generating website visitors through organic search. Keyword-rich, SEO-friendly blog posts will be featured on the ShelbyKY Tourism website, social media, and advertising.

### *Visitor Guide*

The ShelbyKY Visitor Guide is an invaluable resource for prospective and actual visitors. ShelbyKY Tourism completed the first major redesign of the visitor guide since 2018 and has seen a tremendous response. Within the first five months of its release, ShelbyKY Tourism has distributed more than half of the guides at travel shows, to Kentucky's interstate welcome centers, and fulfilling consumer requests.

### *Social Media*

The use of social media in tourism marketing continued to be a significant means of generating and maintaining connection with potential and repeat visitors.

### *User Generated Content (UGC) & Crowdriff*

In FY24, ShelbyKY Tourism will onboard the user generated content platform Crowdriff. In doing so, ShelbyKY Tourism will have access to a wider pool of content from which to choose when sourcing for its social media and website.

## **New Asset Development**

### *Website Redesign*

ShelbyKY Tourism is completing the first major redesign of its website since 2016, and the redesigned website is expected to launch in late Q2 FY24. The redesign will emphasize ShelbyKY as a bourbon destination with a refined and bourbon-inspired, design and elements, reconfigured navigation, and SEO updates throughout the site.

### *Content Creation & Photography*

As part of the website redesign, ShelbyKY Tourism is capturing all new photography for the listings, landing pages, and other content areas of the website. New content creation will begin in late FY23 and continue through the early stages of FY24, as well as ongoing updates as needed. Destination-wide photography with a travel and tourism-focused photographer focusing on bourbon, horses, dining, and lodging will be conducted in late summer or early fall using a professional travel/tourism lifestyle photographer.

## Advertising Schedule

### *Print*

Publication	Run Date/Notes
ShelbyKY Visitor Guide*	Released January 2024
Kentucky Visitor Guide*	Full page; released January 2024
Official Guide to Bourbon Country	Full page + two pages for advertorial content; June 2024
Kentucky Monthly	September 2023, March 2024, and April 2024
Shelby Life Magazine	Shelbyville Conference Center; full year
The Local Palate*	Spring 2024 Travel Issue
Hearst Women's Travel Group*	Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 — Country Living, Good Housekeeping, and Woman's Day
USA Today Travel Guide*	September 2023
KDT Co-Op: Indianapolis Monthly	October 2023 and April 2024
KDT Co-Op: Atlanta Monthly	March 2024
KDT Co-Op: Chicago Magazine	May 2024
KDT Co-Op: Washingtonian	April 2024

\*National distribution

### *Digital*

Platform	Run Date/Notes
Search Advertising	Focusing on bourbon and outdoor adventure, plus other seasonal topics
Programmatic Retargeting	Kentucky Department of Tourism Co-Op
Social Media Paid Advertising	As needed

### *TV/Streaming*

Platform	Run Date/Notes
TBD	TBD

### *Travel Shows*

Show	Run Date/Notes
Chicago Travel & Adventure Show	January 2024
Indianapolis Travel Show	February 2024
Louisville Boat & Travel Show	February 2024
Atlanta Travel & Adventure Show	March 2024



Southeast Tourism Domestic Showcase	April 2024
Southeast USA Spotlight	July 2024
Kentucky State Fair	August 2024
Travel South International Showcase	November 2024