What is Your Niche within the Vermont Tourism Industry? How to Identify, Package & Promote It!

33rd Annual Vermont Tourism Summit

April 13, 2016

Killington Grand Resort, VT

Examples used in this presentation are primarily of clients Pam Knights Communications has worked with.
WHAT WE’LL COVER TODAY

• Niche Marketing
• Niche Tourism
• Types of Niche Tourism
• Determining Your Niche
• Identifying your Unique Selling Points
• Events & Programs
• Creative Packaging
• Define Your Audience
• Brand Identity
• Brand Promise
• Messaging
• Marketing Options
• Resources
• Q&A and Door Prizes!
NICHE MARKETING

-A niche market is a subset of a broader market.

-Tailored to meet and satisfy the needs of a “small” but specific and well-defined segment of the population.

-Competing within a narrowly defined market segment with a highly specialized offering.

-Smaller is bigger in business; smaller is not all over the map; it’s highly focused.

-Become a big fish in as small pond instead of a small fish in a big pond.

-Form of micromarketing
NICHE TOURISM

-Special interest tourism based on particular areas or activities

-One of fastest growing sectors in travel and tourism

-Caters to tourists who seek new destinations, specific activities, and experiences

-Creates opportunities for tourists interested in personal growth through experiential educational vacations

Galusha Hill Farm Lodge, E Topsham, VT
TYPES OF NICHE TOURISM

Factors that can attract & impact a vacationers choice of destination

- **Culinary Tourism**: local foods, wine, craft beer, festivals, dining, cooking classes, health & wellness, weddings

- **Agritourism**: Farm stays, farmers markets, corn mazes, farm stands, u-pick, sugarhouse & winery tours, harvest festivals, gardening & cooking classes, Christmas trees, weddings

- **Cultural/Heritage Tourism**: historic sites, museums, covered bridges, performing arts, visual arts, festivals, craft classes

- **Nature-Based Tourism**: Birdwatching, boating, fishing, hunting, walking, photography

- **Sports/Adventure Tourism**: Alpine and x-country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, mountain biking, white water canoeing, hiking, equine, golf, yoga, events

- **Also Destination Weddings, Family Vacations**
DETERMINING YOUR NICHE

- What niche tourism market(s) do you fit into?

- What do you primarily specialize in? At different seasons of the year?

- What do you offer that satisfies a specific market need within your target market(s)?

- What makes your property or business unique, different and special?

- What sets you apart from other properties/competition within your niche segment?

- How can you integrate that into your brand development and your marketing?
CULINARY TOURISM

Do you:
- Produce, purchase and/or serve locally grown and/or organic foods? Is farm-to-table part of your menu mix?
- Sell signature and/or value-added products that you make or that are produced in Vermont?
- Do your neighbors host food-related events and celebrations? Can you team up with them?
- Offer cooking demos, classes or talks?
- Offer theme dinners or culinary “weekends” focused around food and/or food “experts”?
- Are you located near family-operated farms that offer tours or activities?
- If so, do you position your business as a culinary destination?

Molly Stevens teaching at The Inn at Weathersfield
AGRITOURISM

Do you:
Own a farm and offer farm stays? Or live in proximity to a country inn?

- Welcome (and are properly insured to have) people onto your farm?

- Offer guided or self-guided farm tours, picnicking on the property, use of recreational trails?

- Offer horse-drawn wagon and/or sleigh rides? Use animal power on your farm?

- Offer harvest festivals and celebrations?

- Offer gardening or cooking demos, classes or talks?

- Have a farm stand, CSA, participate in farmers markets, offer value-added products?

- If so, do you position your business as an agritourism destination?
CULTURAL & HERITAGE TOURISM

Do you:
- Have a historic property? Is it registered on the National Register of Historic Places?
- Is it a lodging property, located on or near a farm or in an historic district?
- Speak a foreign language and cater to international guests?
- Are you located near a museum, performing arts center, fine arts venue, crafts center?
- Offer educational programs, artists retreats, classes?
- Offer events or festivals that celebrate the historical significance of your property or the area?

-If so, do you position your business as an cultural or heritage tourism destination?

Naulakha at Scott Farm in Dummerston, VT
NATURE-BASED & ECO-TOURISM

Do you:
- Own a business that sells or provides equipment rentals, guides, educational programs
- Own a lodging property in close proximity to a pond or lake, forested, birding and wildlife areas, or a State Park
- Offer hiking, camping, fishing, hunting or boating on your property or nearby
- Practice and promote environmental conservation
- Offer nature-based educational and/or conservation programs, retreats, photography, art and craft classes?
- Offer events or festivals that celebrate the natural significance of your area of your property or the area?

If so, do you position your business as a nature-based or eco-tourism destination?
Do you:
- Own a business that sells or provides equipment rentals, guides, educational programs
- Own a lodging property in close proximity to a pond or lake, forest, mountains, ski area, mtn bike trails, etc
- Offer hiking, boating, fishing, hunting, tennis, horse back riding, llama treks, x-skiing, mtn biking on your property or nearby
- Live in proximity to a ski area, rock climbing, zip lines, white water canoeing, hot air ballooning, gliders, dog sledding
- Live in proximity to competitive sporting events
- Provide accommodations for guests to participate in or observe sporting events

- If so, do you position your business as a sport and adventure tourism destination?
DESTINATION WEDDINGS

Do you:

- Have a property with facilities to host weddings?

- Do you have on-premises lodging and/or lodging properties nearby to accommodate overnight guests?

- Have adequate parking?

- Have the staff, and the personality, to handle weddings?

- Are there recreational activities nearby?

- Do you provide food or have access to good caterers and other needed service providers in your area?

- If so, do you position your business as a wedding destination?
Do you:
- Welcome children?
- Have recreational facilities, programs, and or events attractive to families?
- Allow pets? Or have kid-friendly animals?
- Do you offer a child-care program?
- Do you “cater” to school groups?
- Are there family-friendly recreational activities nearby?

- If so, do you position your business as a family vacation destination?
WHAT MAKES YOUR PROPERTY UNIQUE?

In addition to determining what sectors of the tourism market you fit into, need to identify the unique attributes that make your property/business stand out and contribute to YOUR STORY.

UNIQUE SELLING POINTS

- Do a SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)

- Identify the key aspects of the business that make it unique, special, and attractive to visitors.

- Narrow them down to 4-6 bullet points, succinctly describing what you offer, that align with what you have determined your target audiences need and want (these may change for various audiences).

- These key points will be used in developing your messaging across all of your marketing communications platforms.
GREEN ACRES CABINS & LAKEHOUSE

TOURISM MARKETS

Nature-Based
Sport & Adventure
Family Vacations
Destination Weddings

UNIQUE SELLING POINTS

• Five Fully Equipped Cabins
• A Three-Bedroom Lakehouse
• Family Friendly
• Private Beach
• Lake Willoughby Weddings & Family Reunions
• Boating, Fishing, Hiking, Mountain Biking & More

The Cashin Family
1051 VT Route 5A
Westmore, Vermont
802-525-3722

GreenAcresCabins.net

Full Service Food, Farm, Lodging, Agritourism & Small Business Marketing
Northfield, VT 802-485-7274 PamKnights.com
CEDAR CIRCLE FARM & EDUCATION CENTER

TOURISM MARKETS
Agritourism, Culinary, Family, Wedding

UNIQUE SELLING POINTS
- Certified Organic farm with a social mission
- Greenhouses
- Farmstand- vegetables, dairy, meats & value-added signature products
- Commercial kitchen
- On-farm coffee shop
- CSA- summer, fall, winter, flower & Friday night dinner shares
- Wedding flowers
- PYO berries, flowers, pumpkins
- School programs & summer camps
- Annual harvest festivals with horse-drawn wagon rides
- Gardening & cooking workshops
SCOTT FARM & LANDMARK TRUST USA

TOURISM MARKETS
Culinary, Agritourism, Nature-Based, Heritage Vacation Rentals, Weddings

UNIQUE SELLING POINTS

• 110 ecologically-grown heirloom apple varieties plus uncommon fine fruits
• Farm store (Labor Day-Thanksgiving)
• PYO apples
• Fruit tree sales, grafting classes, pie baking classes
• Annual Heirloom Apple Day
• Internationally renowned orchardist Zeke Goodband
• 571 conserved acres, 23 buildings all on National Registry of Historic Places
• Former home of Rudyard Kipling
• 4 fully restored historic year-round vacation rentals
• Weddings
ISHAM FAMILY FARM

TOURISM MARKETS
Culinary, Agritourism, Nature-Based, Heritage, Weddings, Families

UNIQUE SELLING POINTS
- Owned by 5th generation farmer
- 125-acre farm conserved by the VT Land Trust
- Fully restored 30 x 102′, 200 year old English style timber frame 3000 sq ft barn for weddings & events
- Maple sugarhouse & sales
- PYO berries & pumpkins
- Corn & Sunflower mazes
- Calves for naming & petting
- Christmas trees and wreaths
- School groups, kids birthday parties
- Community hiking trails
- 3.5 miles from the Williston Exit on I-89, 10 miles from Burlington
SAAP RESTAURANT

TOURISM MARKETS

Culinary, Heritage

UNIQUE SELLING POINTS

- Authentic Northern Thai cuisine
- Chef owned, husband & wife team
- Native Thai chef from Isaan region
- Lunch & dinner
- Meetings, private parties, rehearsal dinners
- Asian cooking classes
- Community dinners made with Randolph Tech culinary students
- Outdoor dining
- Located in the historic Kimball House, and next to White River Craft Center
- Plenty of free parking

Connor Morgan
General Manager
802-377-0400 (cell)
eat@saaprestaurant.com

Kimball House
50 Randolph Ave
Randolph, VT 05060
802-565-8292 (Restaurant)
SaapRestaurant.com

Full Service Food, Farm, Lodging,
Agritourism & Small Business Marketing
Northfield, VT  802-485-7274  PamKnights.com
LIBERTY HILL FARM & INN

TOURISM MARKETS
Culinary, Agritourism, Nature-Based, Heritage, Farm Stays

UNIQUE SELLING POINTS
• Welcoming guests from around the world since 1984
• Comfort farm-fresh food featuring Cabot products prepared by Beth Kennett
• Green Hotel, first Green Agritourism Enterprise
• Greek Revival 1825 main house with 7 Guestrooms
• Historic red barn
• Cabot farmer- owners
• Gold Barn Award VT Fresh Network Member
• Home of Award Winning Robeth Holsteins

LibertyHillFarm.com

PamKnights.com

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FOOD RELATED EVENTS & PROGRAMS

Seasonal Food Celebrations
Wild edibles, berries, apples & other fruits, heirloom vegetables, garlic, maple, honey, heritage breed meats, holiday favorites

Events Based on Celebrated Ingredients
• Farm visits with farmer-led talks & tours
• Gardening, cooking, preserving & butchering classes
• Cookbook author talks and demonstrations
• Special dinners & brunches featuring chosen ingredient
• Art, photography, writing, craft workshops focused on chosen food or holiday

Harvest & Holiday Festivals with Live Music
- Host or collaborate with a local farm or inn
- Tag activities onto an existing event
CREATIVE PACKAGING

Ideas that do not include romance, golf or outlet shopping!

- Floral Design
- Rug Hooking
- Knitting
- Quilting
- Painting
- Photography
- Storytelling
- Portraiture
- Star gazing
- Yoga
- Medicinal herbs
- Music
- Christmas Tree Cutting & Wreath Making
- Holiday themes
A CHALLENGE!

Romantic Getaways Packages are popular the world over, so why not come up with an innovative one?

- A sunset sail
- Horse-drawn carriage or sleigh ride with champagne
- Dinner and theater tickets
- Snow cat ride to a romantic dinner on the mountain (Epic at Okemo)
- Aphrodisiac dinner menu (oysters, avocados, arugula, figs, chocolate, honey, strawberries, bananas, cherries, whip cream)
- Aphrodisiac dishes couples cooking class
- Lakeside dining
- Couples massage, hot tub and fireside dinner

Winter Stowe Getaway: Snow, Food & Romance
DEFINE THE AUDIENCE

- Look at your customer data re: where coming from, age groups, professions, interests, how found you, season visited

- Determine how they prefer to communicate - print, email, various social media platforms

- Tailor packages or other promotions to meet the needs of select audience(s)

- Segment out offerings to reach those target groups

- Create an outreach communications plan
A BIT ABOUT BRAND IDENTITY

• Logo
• Color palette
• Taglines & slogans
• USP bullet points
• Boiler plate business descriptions in different character lengths
• Consistency!
• Website address on everything

And don’t forget about good photography and video!

Determine your BRAND PROMISE and be true to it.
A BRAND PROMISE

More than a mission and vision statement, USPs, logo & tagline- not a description of products and services, but **how a business provides them** and **what sort of character it has**.

A Brand Promise creates an **EXPECTATION** that needs to be defined and consistently fulfilled throughout the life of the business. It describes **how people should feel when they interact with the brand**.

- Connects your purpose, positioning, strategy, people and customer experience.
- Enables a business to connect emotionally with customers and differentiate their brand
- Is what the business stands for & its values
- What customers can expect from the business when they interact with the brand
To motivate customers to buy and to create loyalty, a Brand Promise needs to

- Convey a compelling benefit(s)
- Be authentic & credible
- Be understood and practiced by employees
- Be delivered on consistently
- Be measurable
- If can’t be measured, can’t be managed
- Promise must be kept, every time

Every decision made about and for the business should be measured against the brand promise to see if it aligns with, and supports it at its core.

A brand is not a logo... It’s a promise.

STAY TRUE TO YOUR BRAND PROMISE
Determine the value proposition and the language/content of your offer with the intent of inspiring, persuading and motivating customers to ultimately buy your product or service.

- Use simple clear language and impressive photos/graphics
- Be consistent across all platforms of communication
- Include a call to action
- Have a plan in place before you start promotion
MARKETING OPTIONS

Integrated Combination of

- Print
- Advertising
- Email Marketing
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Pinterest
- Twitter
- Website
- Blog
- Online calendars
- Press Releases - email and electronic
RESOURCES

-VermontVacation.com – VT Dept Tourism & Marketing
List your business: http://www.vermontbusinessregistry.com/VTPWelcome.aspx
List your lodging packages: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/packagesubmission
List your events: https://vermontvacation.com/plan-your-visit/events

-Dig in Vermont: www.diginvt.com/home/criteria
Connects public to VT ag and culinary experiences. Event listings; blog entries. Must be member of VFN; VT Grape & Wine Council

-Farm to Plate’s Vermont Food Atlas: http://www.vtfoodatlas.com/atlas
For people, places and resources in VT farm and food sector
- Vermont Fresh Network: http://www.vermontfresh.net/become-a-member/
Build partnerships among farmers, chefs and consumers
- Chamber of Commerce event listings
- Find & Go Seek events calendar: http://www.findandgoseek.net/events_calendar
- Front Porch Forum
THANK YOU FOR COMING!

- Q&A

Doorprizes:
• A complementary 1/8 page ad in Edible Green Mountains ($325 value)

• $50 certificate towards spot CLEAR printing at Jet-Accura Printing in Berlin, VT

-Please help yourself to a magazine and my business card

-This presentation will be posted at http://pamknights.com/workshops on Friday, April 15.