



Agritourism Marketing

“Marketing is the process of determining what customers want, and of using that information to produce and sell a good or service to satisfy that want” (Southern Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Board). Marketing includes identification of your customer base; a clear description of the goods, services, and experiences offered; and advertising and promotion of your agritourism business.

Create a Marketing Plan

One of the most important aspects of marketing your business venture is the formulation of a marketing plan. This should include:

- Who are your customers?** Identify customers coming to your area for similar attractions. Such information may be found through agritourism associations, regional tourism councils, or local chamber of commerce and other outlets. Be specific in identifying the group of consumers you wish to target.
- Become familiar with your market.** What types of agritourism activities are popular or increasing in popularity? Notice where growth is taking place in the industry and the types of activities and goods consumers are seeking. What changes and developments in the agritourism market might be expected in the foreseeable future?
- Your niche.** What makes your agritourism business unique? What would set you apart from competitors? Some examples: a farm/ranch operated by your family for generations with unique heritage components; a unique location with attractive amenities; specialized attributes of your products or services, such as organic produce or meat, raising exotic animals, or unique activities available.
- Budget.** A rule of thumb for a beginning agritourism operation is that 10 to 30 percent of gross revenues should be invested in marketing.

In your plan, clearly state marketing goals with regard to the number of visitors, revenue and expenses, etc. Assess your success in meeting these goals over time. Make sure your plan is flexible, so you can adapt to changes in the marketplace or results that do not match expectations as you monitor your business’s progress.

The Four P’s

Throughout the planning, building, and expanding of your agritourism business, it is important to keep these fundamental aspects of marketing in mind.

- Product.** Is there a market for what you are selling? Is there some way to change your goods or services to more adequately address a consumer demand? The quality of your staff and their training is also an important consideration in agritourism.
- Place.** Is your location one that is easily found by consumers? Will potential customers notice your agritourism business in passing? Are there other beneficial aspects to your location such as impressive natural scenery?
- Price.** Balance the price charged for your goods and services between the need to attract customers and maximize sales, and the need for those sales to yield a profit.
- Promotion.** Where and how to promote and advertise your business are important considerations. Advertising in agritourism and similar businesses has traditionally come mostly from customer to customer word-of-mouth communications. Advertising through various forms of media (websites, brochures, etc.) can also be effective in getting the word out about your agritourism operation. Membership in agritourism organizations and business associations, such as your local chamber of commerce, can help publicize your business and inform consumers specifically seeking the goods and services you offer. The popularity and usefulness of the internet can make it an effective place to market your business if used properly.

Promotion and Advertising

All of the following may be appropriate forums for promoting and advertising your agritourism business:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper | <input type="checkbox"/> Brochures | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Cards | <input type="checkbox"/> Signs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Radio | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet | <input type="checkbox"/> Direct Mailings | |

Mailing List

As agritourism businesses generally depend on repeat customers, building and maintaining a good mailing list and email list of your customers is important.

Image and Partnerships in your Community

Creating a favorable public image is important both in attracting customers and in maintaining the ability to draw support from your community. In addition to providing customers, your community can provide you with potential business partnerships, promotion, and publicity. Others in your community can provide goods and services needed for your operation.

Public Relations

Recognizing the strength of your own stories and communicating them to the media, community members, visitors, and others to efficiently and effectively market your business.

References and Resources for Additional Agritourism Marketing Information

Market Maker is a searchable database of food industry related data
<http://national.marketmaker.uiuc.edu>

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<http://www.agecon.uga.edu/~caed/Agritainmentpdf.pdf>

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<http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/agritourism/factsheets.html>

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