



# Group Tour Marketing Basics

Explore Minnesota Tourism

# Group Tour: defined

- Escorted travel
- Prepaid travel
- Preformed groups or individuals
- Planned itinerary

# Characteristics of the group market

- Size of group
- Age of participants
- Special interest
- Changing population

# The face of a group tour

- Retail
- Affinity groups
- Music performance
- Reunions
- Student/youth
- Bank clubs
- Church groups
- Senior groups
- Park & rec
- International

# Why people travel as a group

Because their wife makes them

- Economics
- Education
- Convenience
- Green
- Uniqueness
- Safety
- Companionship
- Variety

# The appeal to the supplier

- One booking fills occupancy
- Fills the books far in advance
- Fill the valleys/lulls of demand
- Repeat sales with successful tours

# The cost of targeting groups

- Requires a long-term commitment
- High level of service required
- Cost of doing business
- Bird in the hand

# Pursue the mature market

- Seniors spend more than \$30 billion on travel each year
- People over 50 account for 43 percent of all U.S. households
- Median age in the U.S. is on the rise due to aging Baby Boomers
- Baby boomers are retiring: the youngest are 47, the oldest are 65

# Group booking economics

## Tour Group of 46

- Lunch: 44 @ \$12 each
- Attraction: 44 @ \$7 each
- Dinner: 44 @ \$20 each
- Theater: 46 @ \$22 each
- Hotel Stay: 23 @ \$109 each

\$5,104

## Family of 4

- Lunch: 4 @ \$12 each
- Attraction: 4 @ \$8 each
- Dinner: 4 @ \$20 each
- Theater: 4 @ \$25 each
- Hotel Stay: 1 @ \$119

\$379

# Types of tours

- Day Tours –usually traveling within a 90 mile radius and not including an overnight stay
- Extended Tours – multiple days, resulting in overnight stays during a longer journey
- Hub and Spoke Tours – using a key overnight destination with day excursions.

# Itinerary types

- Eco/Green Tours
- Culinary Tours
- Educational
- Historical
- Volunteerism
- Girlfriend getaways
- Sporting events
- Multi-generation
- Pilgrimage
- Mixed elements

# Mystery tours

- Promote a destination that may be not be high on a bucket list but has potential
- Create a buzz for those that have been everywhere
- Test the waters of a new concept before adhering to a label/theme.

# Tour Operators

- May or may not have their own fleet of motor coaches
- If chartering, they get a coach to meet group needs
- Execute itineraries on behalf of group leaders
- Often feature retail tours through a catalog/website
- Significant time/resources on research and development
- Are deluged with solicitations from suppliers

# Tour Leaders/Escorts

- Lead a tour on behalf of a tour operator company
- May be an employee of the tour operator or free lance
- Are often NOT driving the vehicle
- Take on superhuman characteristics – able to forecast weather better than Paul Douglas
- Act as timekeeper, nurse, babysitter, counselor, confidant, police, on-the-spot negotiator.

# Group Leaders

- Serve as generator of affinity and specialty tours
- May be a church leader, scoutmaster, chapter president, choir director, family matriarch
- Know best what their peeps will want to experience and how much they'll want to pay
- Are not always the largest sphere of influence in choosing a destination

# Elements of successful tours

- **Location** (location, location)
- **Staging**
- **Cleanliness**
- **Facilities**
- **Flexibility**
- **Marketing and planning support**
- **Accessibility**
- **Consistency**

# Marketing: embrace their uniqueness

- Advertise in group publications
- Customize communication
- Simplify your product/service/contracts
- Provide suggested itineraries
- Collaborate with others in your area
- Meet with them: trade shows, sales calls
- Orchestrate fam experiences
- Network with peers, competition, other geo areas
- Interact with social media



**Groups yield more heads in beds,  
more dining chairs, more theater  
seats through a focused effort.**

**A well-orchestrated delivery  
brings repeat business.**

**Group leaders are loyal to  
well-run organizations.**