

# 2011

## Kalispell Convention and Visitor Bureau Branding & Marketing Strategic Plan



# Kalispell Chamber of Commerce Convention and Visitor Bureau Tourism Initiative

## Overview

Kalispell became a city just before the first railroad car pulled into Main Street on New Year's Day, 1892. Over the years the railroad, automobiles and aircraft have transported many tourists, pioneers and businessmen to this scenic spot located in the northwest corner of Montana and the heart of the magnificent Rocky Mountains about an hour south of the Canadian border.

Today tourism is a vitally important industry for Kalispell. The city offers a considerable number of services, lodging, shopping, culture, events and more to visitors drawn to Glacier National Park, Flathead Lake, and other Glacier Country attractions. Unfortunately, these visitors frequently pass through the community or perhaps stay a night or two but spend their days and most of their money outside the town. There is a large, undeveloped opportunity for the city of Kalispell to improve its branding and positioning and become a major tourist destination.

Recognizing that Kalispell's unique, central location relative to Glacier National Park, Flathead Lake and the Flathead Valley, its variety of outdoor recreation opportunities, access, infrastructure, cultural amenities, regional shopping and medical facilities equate to a large potential for increasing tourism trade in the area, the City Council created, empowered and funded the Kalispell Visitor & Convention Bureau (KCVB) to develop and build the community's tourism industry. The KCVB is comprised of two important funding sources: Kalispell's allocation of the lodging facility use tax and the newly created Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID).

The focus of the Kalispell Convention and Visitor Bureau is building exceptional customer relationships with its hotel partners, other community stakeholders, meeting planners, travel influencers, the media, and its target markets.

KCVB's charter is generating awareness of the unique opportunities Kalispell offers as the center of the Flathead Valley, the gateway to Glacier National Park and a quality destination in its own right.

As the official marketing organization charged with promoting Kalispell as a leisure travel and meeting destination, the KCVB plans to implement a variety of sales and marketing strategies to increase visitor nights and enhance the local economy through the positive impact of tourism.

To lay the foundation for its branding and marketing initiatives, KCVB contracted with Olson Communications to conduct a strategic planning session and develop an "action plan" to increase visibility and enhance visitor spending.

The intent is to develop a comprehensive vision for Kalispell that maximizes assets, identifies hidden opportunities, and leads to vibrant and sustainable tourism.

In conjunction with improving visitor spending, it is also a goal of the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitor Bureau to support the Kalispell Business Improvement District and the Kalispell Downtown Association in further developing Kalispell as a center of commerce and culture.

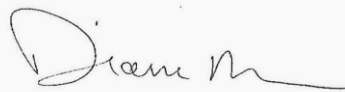
KCVB's leadership role will benefit not only the tourism industry in Kalispell but also its overall economy.

## **KCVB Mission**

To enhance the economic vitality of our community by promoting Kalispell as a year-round visitor and convention destination by maximizing collaborative partnerships, efficient use of the TBID and bed tax funds, and the cultivation of an excellent visitor experience



Joe Unterreiner, President/CEO  
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# Kalispell Convention and Visitor Bureau Tourism Branding and Marketing Strategic Plan

## Stage 1: Strategic Planning

In order to identify and confirm its branding and marketing objectives the Kalispell Convention and Visitor Bureau (KCVB) convened stakeholders and interested individuals to solicit their ideas and vision for tourism in Kalispell and to obtain information and data. This session helped create better understanding of the overall state of tourism and determine priorities, community visions, opportunities, funding issues, marketing and other relative matters. The stakeholder interaction during this Strategic Planning session and additional research by KCVB and Olson Communications provide the foundation of the Branding and Marketing Plan.

### **SWOT Analysis** (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Trends)

#### **Tourism Snapshot: Present**

##### **Q. What are the characteristics of the typical nonresident visitors that come to Kalispell (Age groups; Feeder markets)**

- Families visiting Glacier National Park
- Individuals: people in their 30s; couples, small groups
- Mature couples/ retirees: 55+; often with traveling with friends or family
- Canadian shoppers
- Outdoor enthusiasts of all ages
- People from cities and towns throughout Montana, Washington, Idaho, Alberta, California, Minnesota, Florida, New York, Georgia
- International visitors: Germany, UK, France, Italy, Scandinavia, Australia. Typically they have been to the U.S. previously and come to Glacier County on their third or fourth visit.

##### **Q. What are the marketing approaches to these visitors?**

- Visitor guides and websites. An abundant number of glossy visitor guides are published by the State of Montana, Glacier Country, Glacier Park, Inc., Flathead Valley CVB and numerous other entities. These organizations and the National Park Service also maintain websites. The Kalispell Chamber of Commerce website presently hosts a “Visit” section with Kalispell specific information.
- The State and Glacier Country work with Rocky Mountain International (RMI) to market overseas. RMI creates awareness of and aids travelers in planning adventure travel to the Rocky Mountain states of Idaho, Montana, South Dakota and Wyoming

through the gateway cities of Chicago, Denver and Minneapolis /St. Paul / Bloomington. RMI's principal marketing thrusts are Europe and Australia but the RMI website offers a portal to any visitor interested in its target locations. Canadian travel agencies (Alberta) are going after the Chinese market; their endeavors will filter Chinese visitors to the Kalispell area.

- Marketing in Alberta and eastern British Columbia, Canada. Conducting direct marketing programs in Canada is expensive so a major focus is Calgary trade shows. Awareness building in Alberta is augmented by Glacier Symphony advertising, golf promotions, word of mouth (plays a large role). Many repeat visitors who came on ski buses long ago are returning with their families. Glacier National Park is not the primary draw to Canadians but the outdoor recreation, lakes, skiing, lower cost of goods, no taxes, airline access, and medical support are.

**Q. What are visitors looking to get out of their vacation?**

- A slow-paced educational and breath-taking (once in a lifetime) experience.
- A place with good restaurants, arts and culture, easy to get around, easy access to nature
- Hiking, camping, skiing, snowmobiling, golf, history, heritage, culture, wildlife viewing, shopping, relaxing, spas, dining, photography, horseback riding, lake rides, fishing, rafting, Rocky Mountains
- Authentic American experience: Native American culture, a western experience
- Help with planning their adventures
- Modern conveniences and amenities: 3G access, good cell service
- While it was not mentioned by the Strategic Planning participants, the University of Montana Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research lists scenic driving as the activity most frequently cited as the reason for coming to Montana by vacationers who were surveyed

**Q. What are Kalispell's top activities/ attractions?**

- Glacier National Park, Flathead Lake, Whitefish, Bigfork, Jewel Basin, Lone Pine
- Skiing, hiking, fishing, rafting, golfing, etc
- Galleries, museums and historic buildings
- Summer music and festivals, symphony, live theatre, major summer events
- Shopping
- Visit family and friends
- NW Montana Fair
- Majestic Valley Arena, Kids Sports Complex, Raceway Park
- Business
- Regional Medical Center—draws from Canada and Montana's Eastside

**Q. What are Kalispell's limitations in the eyes of a visitor?**

- People are not aware of Kalispell as a destination when considering the Flathead Valley
- Not enough to do in Kalispell to stay longer than one or two nights; currently no prominent identity
- Downtown not pedestrian friendly; needs to be converted to a friendly and attractive place to stop and hang out
- Night life is minimal in Kalispell, need venues for music and other activities
- Airfares too high; not enough seats; drive times too long; not enough transportation options; not enough rental cars to support summer tourism
- Going to the Sun Road – construction is causing late opening/early closing dates
- Canadian exchange rate (variable limitation)
- Poor messaging from locals. Need to communicate better about what the area and the Park have to offer (the entire experience not just Logan Pass). Infuse positive messages to everyone guests encounter: shuttle drivers, front desk personnel and others thru an Ambassador program supported by training
- Lack of universal events calendar
- Sources for money exchange are not well communicated to the international visitor
- Lack of transportation between venues – need airport shuttle, a local connector, shuttle to Glacier Park, and the SNOBus and Blacktail Mountain Ski Area shuttle to include Kalispell in their routes

**Q. How would you describe present day Kalispell as a place to vacation to someone from the outside?**

- Largest town between Flathead Lake and Glacier Park; Glacier Park's Hometown; the heart of Flathead Valley offering many amenities: shopping, restaurants, arts, education and good old Montana hospitality
- Centralized place to stay for day trips to Glacier National Park, Flathead Lake, Whitefish Mountain Resort, Blacktail Mountain Ski Area, Jewel Basin, Bison Range; great starting point for wilderness exploration
- Variety of price points of lodging, restaurants and shopping
- Local color... small town Montana with a western heritage and some gem places to visit. These include the museums, galleries and historic buildings
- Location for nationally branded hotels such as Hilton Garden Inn, Hampton Inn, Holiday Inn Express, Red Lion, Travelodge, Motel 6, Super 8, and Econo Lodge



**Q. What can Kalispell improve relative to marketing tourism and the visitor experience?**

- Coordinate events, offerings, retail sales with Canadian holidays
- Get restaurants to expand their hours and offer Sunday/Monday options
- Develop sample itineraries within the valley bundling hotel stays with Glacier tours and other sightseeing opportunities, experiences and events
- Develop shuttle between facilities so larger conventions can be hosted
- Make Farmers Market more of an event, look at moving to Depot Park (center of town, more visible)
- Let visitors know what is going on and how to get there
- Encourage development of additional restaurants, bars, unique retail shops, and entertainment venues in downtown
- Attract more events to Kalispell and develop more events that will be sustainable and conducted at an appropriate time of year
- Improve facilities for concerts and other cultural /art experiences
- Build larger multi-purpose event/convention facility
- Develop additional transportation options including public transportation to Whitefish Mountain Resort, Blacktail Mountain Ski Area, Glacier National Park; reliable taxi service; more rental cars during summer months

**Priorities Identified  
Relative to Improving  
Visitor Experiences**

1. Develop a centralized calendar of events and make it available on website(s)
2. Create sample itineraries to let visitors know how much there is to do and to make it convenient for the traveler to set up their overall experience
3. Develop additional transportation options including public transportation to Whitefish Mountain Resort, Blacktail Mountain Ski Area, Glacier National Park; reliable taxi service; more rental cars during summer months
4. Build a Performing Arts / Convention Center / Multi-use facility



## Tourism Snapshot: Future

- We are a quaint, charming town that is a travel destination when a visitor is considering northwest Montana
- Adventure playground surrounded by art, culture, Western history; a place where you find nature by day, art/music at night
- Heart of Montana's high country...where rivers, lakes and glaciers all come together
- A town for all seasons
- A geo-tourist destination with authentic experiences, friendly people, travel deals, notable attractions, hidden corners to explore
- The place to stay when visiting Glacier National Park, Whitefish Mountain Resort, Blacktail Mountain Ski Area or other outdoor recreational venues

**“We need to emphasize the combination of opportunities to play along with the heritage of Kalispell. We can’t lose the charm”.**



**“We need to exploit what we have that others don’t have  
Kalispell is a drop in the tourism industry bucket so  
we need to differentiate our location from the rest  
of Montana and the world”.**

## Target Markets

- Geographical Sources
  - Bordering states; ID, WA, OR (majority of visitors originate here)
  - Canada – Alberta and eastern British Columbia
  - Regional drive and flight markets: Spokane, Seattle, Portland, Calgary, Lethbridge, Cranbrook, Minneapolis, Salt Lake City, Denver, Las Vegas, Chicago, Phoenix, Los Angeles
  - Other specific states including MN, TX, AZ, CA, FL, CO, UT
  - Regional markets: NE, SW, SE
  - AMTRAK customers
  - International travelers: Europeans, Scandinavia, Australia
- Traveler Profiles
  - Outdoor recreation and sports enthusiasts; equestrians
  - Leisure travelers: individuals, couples, retirees, families
  - Shoppers
  - People interested in culture, history, music
  - Corporate/ business
  - Convention / group (smaller venues)
  - Retreat
  - Offseason (it was noted that money should not be spent promoting travel June – August)
- Piggyback on Montana Office of Tourism outreach in Seattle, Chicago, and Minneapolis
- Focus on smaller convention/meeting business: groups of 20 – 200. Introduce them to the community and entice them to return.

## Kalispell's Unique Selling Points

- Differentials from other Flathead Valley destinations
  - Central location for all area activities, ski areas and other Flathead Valley locales
  - Largest city in Flathead Valley; retail and business hub
  - More options and better cost, value in lodging, restaurants, regional shopping
  - Western history, historic buildings, Conrad Mansion, Hockaday Museum of Art, Central School Museum, Fairgrounds
  - Regional Medical Center
  - Flathead Valley Community College events (theatre, speakers, etc.)
- Differentials from other tourism venues
  - Proximity to Glacier National Park and Flathead Lake, all Flathead Valley activities and attractions

These were also listed but are not unique:

- Summer and winter location
- Open land and clean air
- Uniquely Montana: frontier west, arts and culture
- Numerous golf courses and lodging choices

**Q. How would you spend money promoting Kalispell?**

- Connecting Glacier International Airport to KALISPELL
- Clarifying the geo proximity / services connection to Glacier National Park and Flathead—Kalispell is the center of everything
- Communicating value to the target markets
- Spreading the messages developed for Canada to other drive markets
- Developing image of being a “cool place to visit”

**“With a campaign promoting ‘We’ve got that!’ ”**  
**[I.e.—anything you want or need].**

**“However, we can’t be everything to everybody  
or we’ll end up being nothing to anyone.”**

**“We need to encourage visitors to stay longer;  
spend more time and money; and come  
more often”**

## Marketing Initiative Milestones

### ■ First Year (2011)

- Marketing plan completed and launched
- Brand, tag line, images developed
- Marketing collateral and website developed
- Participate in coop advertising opportunities with Montana Office of Tourism and Glacier Country
- Form committee to support existing events and work to develop new events utilizing existing facilities during off season
- Form committee to develop ground transportation options for airport, ski resorts and Glacier Park

### ■ Second Year (2012)

- Target regional marketing to increase shoulder season business of all types (Oct – May)
- Marketing program in place targeted to convention business / groups
- Develop unique vacation packages and itineraries (ex: bird watching)
- Universal events calendar developed
- Create methods to better educate front line employees in tourism related businesses on the activities and events in Kalispell
- Continue to improve ground public transportation options for travelers
- Demonstrate progress made on plans laid out in Year-1
- Demonstrate that awareness is enhanced in target markets

### ■ Five Years

- National advertising campaign complimenting Montana Office of Tourism campaign
- Enhance winter season so winter is not an “off season” but is viewed as a prime season
- Identifiable revenue increase from previous efforts
- Be viewed as a cool place to visit

### ■ Long Term

- Keep informed and involved in the development of a convention, event and performing arts facility
- Hotel occupancy increased year-round
- Travelers spending money in the Kalispell community and not just Glacier National Park
- Kalispell has become a vibrant community with sought after events and activities and a dynamic nightlife

## KCVB Priorities

- Implement Branding / Marketing Plan action steps including developing a brand and a tagline, crafting key messages, creating a logo, developing marketing collateral, building website. Branding and Marketing tactics are addressed in the sections that follow.
- Address specific issues and launch initiatives to support tourism development
  1. Identify local messaging and promotional partnerships
  2. Creating sample itineraries to let visitors know how much there is to do and to make it convenient for the traveler to set up their overall experience
  3. Work cooperatively with other tourism entities to develop a centralized event calendar
  4. Initiating Kalispell-oriented public relations outreach in target markets
  5. Improving local and interconnecting transportation
  6. Keep involved in the process of developing a new performing arts/events/convention center facility

# Kalispell Convention and Visitor Bureau

## Tourism Branding and Marketing Strategic Plan

### Stage 2: Branding and Marketing

Across North America and the globe, tourism has become a significant driving force in importing cash into communities and fueling non-tourism growth. In view of the intensity of tourism competition, the development and implementation of a tourism Branding and Marketing Plan needs to take place in the context of some fundamental principles:

#### The Three Primary Reason People Travel

1. **Family and friends.** If Kalispell does nothing to promote tourism it will have visitors because of people coming to see family and friends. *But do local residents know how much the city has to offer beyond the usual side trips to Glacier, Flathead Lake and destinations beyond the town boundaries?*
2. **Leisure.** This group spends the most amount of money and travels to where they can obtain what they cannot find close to home. Every “destination community” caters heavily to this group so competition in this market is stiff.
3. **Business.** This includes corporate travel, conventions, conferences and meetings. Again, tourism will generate from this segment without targeted marketing. *But do front-line employees do a good job of providing these visitors with information about where to shop, recreate, and “be awed” so they are enthused about returning with their family and friends or motivated to book a group meeting or convention?*

#### The Three Phases of Tourism Development

1. **Getting passers-by's to stop.** If they don't stop in Kalispell, Kalispell cannot become a destination community.
2. **Becoming the hub for area attractions and activities.** Being a hub equates to being an overnight destination.
3. **Becoming the destination.** This is the best of all worlds. People come, stay and spend a greater portion of their time and money in the community. Becoming a destination is the ultimate goal of the tourism program.

#### The Five C's of Tourism

1. **Convenience.** Information is easy to find, planning the trip is hassle-free, and the location is easy to get to.
2. **Control.** Itineraries can be nailed down but also allow flexibility if plans change.
3. **Comfort.** The top 15 percent of lodging facilities command 80 percent of the market. That's why comfortable beds, nice linens and other such amenities are a big selling point.
4. **Cost.** Due to the Internet, pricing is transparent. Travelers expect the very best at bargain prices and many know how to negotiate.
5. **Connections.** More than any time in our history, travelers are looking to connect with their family, their friends, their roots, and the environment.

## Travel Trends

Travel trends also need to be considered in setting the context for recommendations relative to Kalispell's tourism branding and marketing.

### Key Travel Trends for 2010 – 2020

- **Escapism.** People seek to escape from the stress and challenging realities of daily life and take part in the pursuit of happiness. This is a defining behavior for the “under-40” market that sees escapism as a major leisure time factor.
- **Geotrail.** A growing group, geo-travelers have ceaseless expectations for unique and culturally authentic travel experiences, including those that protect and preserve the ecological and cultural environment. They tend to “go local” and patronize locally owned businesses, buy from local craft people and eat at restaurants serving regional cuisine.
- **Adventure Travel / Thrillcations.** This trend is being acted out by an adventurous and curious traveler looking to experience the environment in its most natural state, as well as travel experiences that reflect an active lifestyle.
- **Transformation Vacations.** This decade, will be known as the Transformation Decade, according to futurist David Houle. People are looking to be transformed during their vacations, whether through physical, spiritual or educational experiences.
- **Togethering.** Families are viewing vacations increasingly as reunion opportunities, especially in an age where digital communication occupies more time, leaving less opportunity for in person connections. Top motivators for family and social group travel include experiencing new things together and creating lasting memories.
- **Celebration Vacations.** In difficult economic times, people need a reason to spend money on travel, and celebrations (such as birthdays, anniversaries and graduations) help justify those expenditures.
- **Boomers.** They seek culinary tourism and educational venues, arts, gardening, open markets, cushy adventure activities.
- **Medical.** Worldwide medical-tourism has boomed to \$5-6 billion industry. Medical tourists travel for excellent patient care, spending money on lodging, hospitality and shopping during his or her stay
- **Gender-Focused Traveling.** Research commissioned by I'm In Travel, found that trips taken by friends could annually generate \$11 billion in online sales and reservations alone. These include “Girlfriend Getaways” and “Mancations”. A recent survey of 1,500 women by Impulse Research found that nearly 50 percent of women had taken an all-female trip in the past three years and that 88 percent had plans for another or would like to take a no-men-allowed getaway. An “Urban Dictionary” defines the term “mancation” as men engaging in masculine activities such as sports, camping, gambling and drinking, without the presence of wives or girlfriends.
- **Green & Socially Responsible Tourism.** Today's consumers are looking more and more at the environmental and social impacts of companies with which they do business. For many, the actions and perceived attitudes of companies are strong influences. According to a recent Hill & Knowlton/Harris Poll, 79 percent of consumers consider corporate citizenship in deciding whether to buy a product, and 36 percent call it an important factor in a purchase decision. In a recent survey by the American Automobile Association (AAA), for example, travelers ranked eco-friendly or green programs among the top-ten most desirable hotel features.
- **Meetings and Business Travel.** Value remains the top consideration driving group and individual business travel. The group market is also responding to destinations that have solid reputations for providing quality facilities, services and amenities as well as proficiency in green and sustainability issues and social responsibility initiatives.



## Branding

Branding is the art of differentiation—an absolutely essential marketing tool. A brand is a perception, what people think you are, not what you say you are. A brand is the “feeling” that a visitor has. Examples: when someone mentions Disney World, Paris or Napa Valley, what are the perceptions, the feelings that come to mind?

The challenge in developing Kalispell’s brand is conveying what is unique about the community compared to other nearby Glacier Country communities and other western towns. There are 425 counties in the 11 Western states and nearly all of them promote “outdoor recreation”—that means a large part of Kalispell’s target market can find recreation close to home. To become a highly sought destination Kalispell must offer something else—something visitors cannot get close to where they live and something that helps Kalispell stand out from all other competing communities. Words such as “Historic downtown, gateway, scenic vistas” are not differentiators and do not contribute to creating a meaningful brand.

The stakeholders involved in the Strategic Planning session spent considerable time addressing this, asking themselves: “When people mention ‘Kalispell’ what’s the first thing that comes to mind? What sets Kalispell apart from other communities in the Flathead Valley and other tourism venues?”

The answer is revealed in three words: location, location, location.

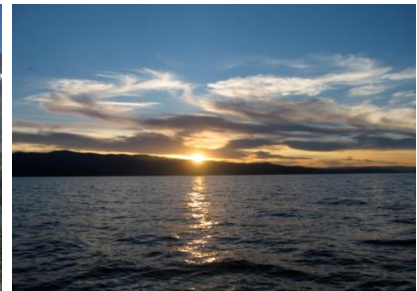
While northwest Montana is a vast geographical area that encompasses the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, the Clark Fork River area, the Flathead Valley, Glacier National Park, Kootenai Valley, the Seeley Swan Valley and the cities of Bigfork, Columbia Falls, Eureka, Lakeside, Polson, Whitefish and Kalispell, there is no question that the principal draw or lure to the region is Glacier National Park—one of the most recognized icons in North America. And Flathead Lake—just minutes from Kalispell—is one of the other most popular travel destinations of Pacific Northwest. Kalispell’s most unique and sellable points are pertinent to its central location between these two very visible tourist magnets and its ability to provide everything needed by visitors coming to northwest Montana. This is the essence of Kalispell’s branding pillars and should be the focus of the resulting branding, messaging, and marketing campaigns.

**What sets  
Kalispell  
apart  
from other  
communities  
in the  
Flathead  
Valley and  
other  
tourism  
venues?**

**The answer  
is revealed in  
three words:  
location  
location  
location**

## Kalispell's Brand Pillars

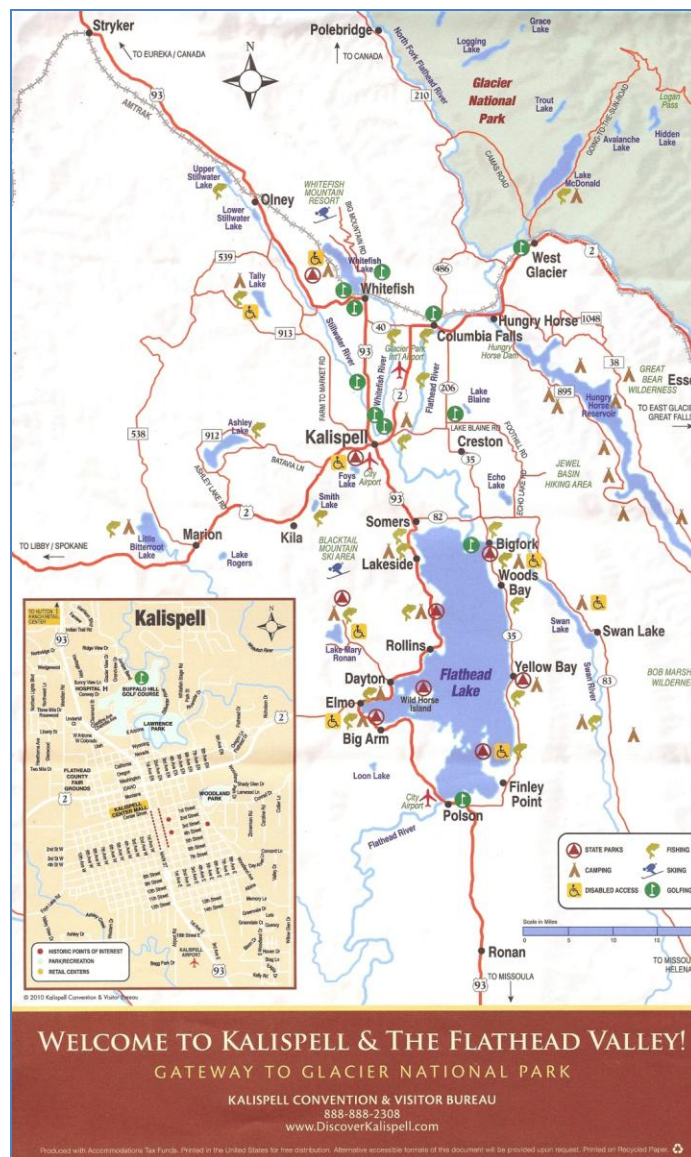
- Northwest Montana offers travelers from around the globe the breathtaking beauty of Glacier National Park, the “Crown of the North American Continent”. Kalispell is the centerpiece of the Glacier National Park experience and the center of everything travelers want and need in the Flathead Valley.
- With some of North America's most dazzling attractions, including the rugged beauty of Glacier Park, the awe-inspiring Flathead Lake, and the beautiful Flathead National Forest, Kalispell offers an authentic American-West adventure in one of world's most pristine landscapes.
- Kalispell is a safe, friendly city with many amenities that people find in major urban destinations including an international airport, distinctive dining, a variety of lodging with a wide range of price points, abundant shopping, highly quality live theatre and modern conveniences such as robust cell phone and Internet connections.
- Kalispell's charming downtown showcases historic architecture, a vibrant arts community, and exceptional eateries. A stroll along the tree-lined streets leads to interesting specialty shops and galleries while regional shopping venues offer branded merchandise at competitive rates without sales tax.
- Not only is Kalispell the best place to base a Glacier National Park experience, it is the launch point for an abundance of adventures including hiking, camping, golfing, skiing, snowboarding, snow-catting, wildlife viewing, photography, horseback riding, lake rides, river-rafting and year round fishing—all set against the incredible backdrop of the Rocky Mountains. It is centrally located between two top-notch winter sports resorts: Whitefish Mountain Resort and Blacktail Mountain Ski Area.
- Kalispell's climate is perfect for visitors all year round: summer days in the mid 80s, spring and fall days in the 60s; and winter days that are perfect for the myriad of recreational activities available within minutes of the city.



## Tailoring Kalispell's Brand

- ▶ Branding should position Kalispell as the “centerpiece” of the Glacier Experience; a destination not just a gateway
- ▶ Marketing should emphasize Kalispell's unique location
  - The center of the Glacier National Park / northwest Montana experience
  - The launch point for enjoying the fabulous Flathead Lake
  - Minutes away from Whitefish Mountain and Blacktail Mountain Ski Area
  - The site of Glacier International Airport
  - Close to the Canadian border

Example: this map is a simple, cost-effective visual communications tool showing that Kalispell is in the heart of Glacier Country and the Flathead Valley and close to the Canadian border.



## Fostering the Brand

Everything Kalispell does in terms of branding and marketing should reinforce the perception, or brand, KCVB is trying to create in the minds of residents as well as visitors.

### Branding Program Goals

1. To increase the awareness of Kalispell as a destination
2. To increase the number of overnights in Kalispell and longer stays with emphasis on mid-week and off-peak travel
3. To increase tourist spending in the community

### Objectives

#### Near-term

- Connect Kalispell to Glacier National Park, Flathead Lake and Glacier International Airport
- Build brand awareness and drive brand differentiation by emphasizing Kalispell's most unique and sellable points: its central location between two very visible tourist magnets and its ability to provide everything needed by visitors coming to northwest Montana.
- Position Kalispell as a year-round destination for meetings and leisure travel
- Create a tagline that is memorable while providing a call to action that is uniquely Kalispell
- Employ visual branding—attractive images go a long way in selling a venue to operators and tourists
- Promote a consistent message in all marketing and communications
- Create a unified community identity that encourages visitor recruitment, business and individual relocation, and workforce development
- Infuse the brand throughout the community—not only in businesses but among residents as well, fostering community pride and participation

#### Long-term / Vision

- Position Kalispell among the west's top year-round recreation and leisure destinations so the word "Kalispell" is in itself a brand evoking a feeling and mental images. A single word that requires no additional explanation.

## Marketing

### Effective tourism marketing campaigns

- Lead to greater outside awareness and an increased flow of tourism dollars flowing in
- Encourage group attendance and spur repeat visits
- Emphasize marketing approaches that are both sustainable and affordable and scaled to the community and its resources

Tourism marketing has several channels unique to the industry, and use of these channels must be balanced with use of newer, “greener,” more cost-effective marketing approaches. Marketing a travel destination is different from most other kinds of marketing in that it involves a dual mode: marketing to both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) audiences. In the first venue the marketers need to get tour operators and other travel-related companies interested and motivated to partner in the marketing process, while at the same time marketing directly to tourists who are planning trips on their own.

Kalispell’s present tourism draw is strongly tied to the visibility of Glacier National Park, Flathead Lake and other Flathead Valley attractions. Fortunately other regional entities do an exceptional job of attracting visitors to the area. Glacier Country Regional Tourism Office, Glacier Park, Inc., the Whitefish Convention and Visitor Bureau and other entities effectively promote northwest Montana and the Flathead Valley. These efforts are well-supported by the Montana Office of Tourism. The State uses Glacier National Park as its primary image to attract visitors and its marketing materials give the Park significant play in many ways.

In view of this significant marketing of the region and the need for Kalispell to create traction for its brand and its offerings, Olson Communications recommends that the Kalispell Convention and Visitor Bureau focus its marketing investment primarily on the merits of Kalispell while tying into the marketing of Glacier National Park, Flathead Lake, and northwest Montana conducted by the other entities.

## Partners vs. Competition

The Glacier Country Regional Tourism Commission, Glacier Park, Inc., Whitefish, the Whitefish Convention & Visitor Bureau, the Flathead Valley Convention and Visitor Bureau, Bigfork and other Flathead Valley communities are not Kalispell's competition. They are more properly viewed as Kalispell's partners and KCVB will work closely with these entities to enhance the synergism that results from strong industry relationship.

Kalispell's competition is any northwestern (eastern British Columbia, Washington, Idaho, Oregon) destination or other destination that features a similar mix of attributes—particularly well-publicized outdoor recreation, scenery, scenic downtown, arts and culture, etc.

Examples include but are not limited to

Coeur d'Alene

Sandpoint

Bend

Lake Tahoe

Bozeman

Big Sky

West Yellowstone

Cody

Fernie

Cranbrook

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**Kalispell's  
competition is any  
destination that  
features a similar  
mix of attributes—  
particularly well-  
publicized outdoor  
recreation, scenery,  
scenic downtown,  
arts and culture**

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## Key Messages

In years past people returned to places they traveled to as kids in the station wagon, or places they had had read about. But people today turn to their internet browsers to search out activities and experiences. With a high percentage of travel decisions being driven by the Internet, key messages and key words play a significant role. With Glacier National Park being one of the most recognized icons in North America, Kalispell's branding and marketing should tie to the Park and the wealth of experiences available within close proximity. However, it is important to keep in mind that visitors aren't looking for communities; they are looking for activities—things that make a special trip worthwhile.

### Kalispell's Key Messages

- Kalispell is in the heart of the magnificent Rocky Mountains, in the northwest corner of Montana and about an hour south of the Canadian border. It is situated in the center of the Flathead Valley with the rugged grandeur of Glacier National Park a half-hour to the east and Flathead Lake, the largest natural freshwater lake west of the Mississippi and one of the purest anywhere, only 15 minutes to the south. Encompassing the valley is the Flathead National Forest—2.3 million acres of federally protected public land that is home to abundant wildlife, wild & scenic river systems and a variety of outdoor experiences.
- Kalispell is a premier year-round destination with a relatively mild climate due to the high mountains to the east and west which protect Kalispell from harsh extremes and the Flathead Valley's many lakes and rivers that also help to moderate temperatures in winter and summer. The weather ranges from moderately dry summers with typical daytime temperatures in the 80s (Fahrenheit), warm and colorful autumn days, and winter temperatures in the 20s and 30s with plenty of snow for winter recreating: skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, snowmobiling and ice fishing. In the spring daffodils dot the valley while fresh snow dusts the surrounding peaks—an extraordinary season when people can ski and golf in the same day!
- Kalispell's recreation opportunities are virtually limitless, and are on par with any other destination and include skiing, hiking, fishing, rafting, golfing, and much more
- Kalispell's arts/culture scene has long been a key attraction and continues to grow
- Kalispell's dining and nightlife has experienced tremendous growth
- Kalispell has convenient access via non-stop flights from Seattle, Salt Lake City, Las Vegas, Minneapolis/Saint Paul, Chicago (seasonal), Denver (seasonal)
- Kalispell has an outstanding medical center providing superior healthcare services and some of the most advanced procedures available in the United States. This availability, plus Kalispell's activities, attractions and resources, makes the region a key player in the medical-tourism industry
- The Kalispell Visitor & Convention Bureau is the leading resource for visitors and the authority for Kalispell information. Calls to action include: [www.DiscoverKalispell.com](http://www.DiscoverKalispell.com), 1-888-888-2308 and a stop by the downtown visitor center.



## Target Audiences

### Demographics for Kalispell's Primary Target Market

#### Family Travelers

- Age: 30-45
- HHI \$40-60K
- With children (typically ages 6-17)
- Visits mountain destinations in the winter and summer
- More likely to travel during holiday, spring break or summer time periods
- Looking for soft adventure including children's activities
- Enjoy outdoor activities, hands on experience and tend to visit national and state parks, historic trails, museums and nature areas.
- Looking for a 'value' in their experience not only economically, but also emotionally and spiritually.

Traditional Family travelers are motivated by several emotions – with guilt being the number one. They work so hard, and there never seems to be enough time to spend with their family. They see a vacation as an opportunity to make up lost time; to experience things with their kids and spouse that become defining chapters in their family story. They think theme parks are a bit too plastic and way too expensive. They like the natural aspect of Montana, the educational component, the fresh air, but most of all they're looking for moments; small interactions within the family that define their commitment and love for each other.

During these challenging economic times, these families are also looking for the best value. Kalispell offers affordable lodging, restaurants, and attractions. Additionally, Glacier National Park offers one of the greatest values in attractions with a seven-day pass (for a carload) at just \$25.00.

These families also want high-value experiences. They want to create memories and family traditions, and to satisfy the spirit of adventure that comes from shared experience. Individually, people come to places like Glacier for the rejuvenation and restoration of soul and spirit.

#### Active Mature Travelers

- Adults 55-64
- High net worth
- Travels 5+ times per year
- Youthful and exuberant lifestyles
- Spend more on travel
- Not hindered by children
- Take longer and more vacations
- Often seek alternative lodging choices such as Bed & Breakfasts, Lodges and Vacation Rentals.

These travelers enjoy visiting historic sites and soft adventures. They travel in shoulder seasons and are drawn to safe communities. They participate primarily in sightseeing, photography, wildlife viewing and food experiences such as farmers markets. Currently, the majority of leisure travelers are boomers. They began turning 60 in 2006, and thirty-four percent are already grandparents. Just as this generation is poised to change health care and retirement, they are also changing the way older Americans spend their vacation time. As this generation prides themselves on being more youthful than their parents, this results in their spending more travel money, engaging in outdoor activities, and taking longer vacations. As a generation that saw the growth of environmental awareness from vision to practicality, most would consider themselves to be geotourists.

## **Geotourists**

- Age 18-49 (54% women; 8% students)
- HHI - 88% (6.1 million households) have annual incomes over \$75,000; 17% of households earn \$100,000+.
- Travel 5.5 times or more per year for pleasure (44% with 7.9 annual trips).
- Participate in outdoor recreation more than any other segment.
- More than 25% reside in the nearby Pacific region, and 10% live in the Mountain region;
- Half (51%) live in large cities or urban areas, 22% live in a city of 500,000 to 2 million.

The Geo-traveler is concerned with preserving a destination's geographic character—the entire combination of natural and human attributes that make one place distinct from another. They are interested in both the cultural and environmental and their individual economies and lifestyles. These travelers can be described as: creative, curious, connected, engaged, and adventurous.

## **Geo-travelers**

- Are looking for experiences that allow for connection and exchange and aim for quality and not quantity.
- Have a travel 'manifesto' typified by these values: immerse yourself in the culture, go off the beaten path, get out of your comfort zone, allow for spontaneity, take a risk, pay attention, "Go Now."
- Seek out businesses that emphasize the character of the locale. Are driven by respect and support.
- Get beyond the surface and have rich, life-changing travel experiences.

## **Conventions, Group Leaders and Tour Operators**

Conventions and group meetings are a boon to the local economy due to increased sales of room nights and a large increase in general spending by convention attendees. Conventions boost a community's tourism profile, which can lead to increases in non-convention visitors and tourism dollars.

This market includes two separate sectors

- **Business and Organizational Conventions.** Participants tend to spend more money and stay longer than the average visitor and they frequently combine business with pleasure by bringing family and friends with them. Additionally, they tend to select more

“off-peak” times to be able to contract the best rates and that benefits our shoulder and winter seasons.

- **Group and Tour Operators.** Who have clientele with an interest in nature and outdoor-related tours and the Rocky Mountain West (Montana, Wyoming, Idaho and Utah). Their ability to provide “word-of-mouth” advertising within their own organizations and disseminate information is prime reason for attracting them.

## **Canadians**

During the 2010 Calgary 50+ Living Show KCVB found that there are distinct groups in regards to Albertans’ knowledge of Kalispell:

- Those that come down here regularly (they usually own a place, consider northwest Montana to be their backyard)
- A second group that haven’t been here for 8+ years and were surprised of the increase in shopping, lodging, dining and activity opportunities. Pleased to know that Flathead Valley icons such as Moose’s Saloon still existed. Some thought Great Falls offered a wider variety of shopping and activities. This can be counteracted by letting them know that although the drive to Kalispell is an hour longer the shopping is equal or better than Great Falls and once they are done shopping Kalispell has much more to offer. Also the Port of Entry at Roosville is much easier to pass through than the very high traffic Sweetgrass crossing for Great Falls.
- Those that have never been down here, thought it was much further away than it is and were amazed at everything we had to offer.

HHI is the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index—a commonly accepted measure of market concentration.

It is calculated by squaring the market share of each entity competing in a market, and then summing the resulting numbers. The HHI number can range from close to zero to 10,000.

## Allocate Resources According to Target Markets

Trying to appeal to everyone is a common mistake made in marketing. Target marketing, which focuses on a particular segment or segments of the market, allows for more effective marketing and better use of resources. With Glacier National Park being one of the most recognized icons in North America, Kalispell's branding and marketing should tie to the Park and to Flathead Lake but allocate resources according to the geographical areas from which tourists come.

### Primary Market

#### 50 percent of Marketing Budget/Endeavor

- Short drive (4+/- hours)
  - ID, eastern WA
  - Canada – eastern B.C., Lethbridge, Calgary
- Previous Flathead Valley visitors

### Secondary Market

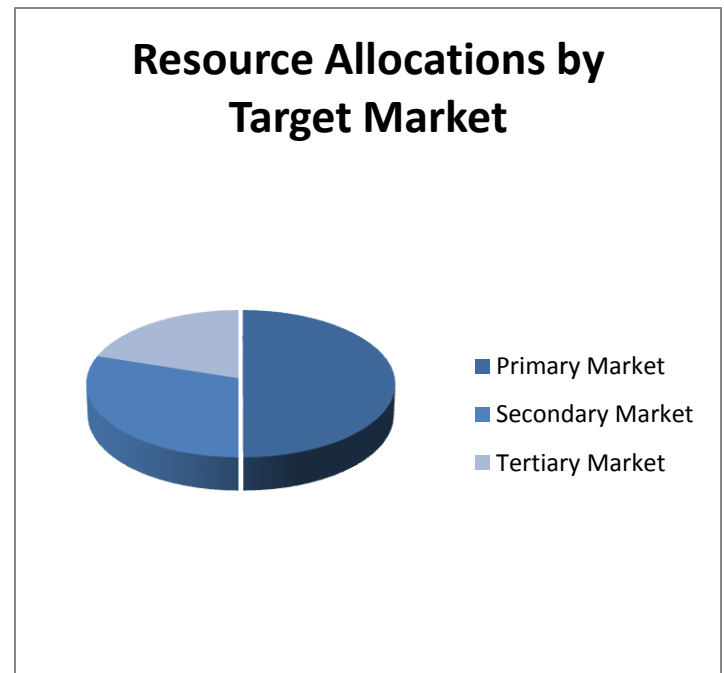
#### 30 percent of Marketing Budget/Endeavor

- Longer drive (10+/- hours)
  - Western Washington, North Dakota, Oregon & northern Nevada
- Direct flight: Seattle, Salt Lake City, Denver (seasonal), Las Vegas, Chicago (seasonal), Minneapolis
- Amtrak Customers

### Tertiary Market

#### 20 Percent of Marketing Budget/Endeavor

- National
  - Specific states including MN, TX, AZ, CA, FL, NY, GA, CO, UT
  - Regional markets: NE, SW, SE
- International
  - U.K., Germany, France, Italy, Scandinavia, Australia—indirectly through involvement with RMI, Glacier Country, and Montana Office of Tourism programs
  - Japan and China – indirectly through involvement with the State of Montana programs and pass through from Alberta's marketing.



## Target Market Strategies

### Packaging Experience Options

KCVB's tourism marketing campaign will include the development of sample itineraries and packages offering flexible selections based on travelers' vacation preferences. These packages can offer activities and options for visitors who want learning experiences, activity-based experiences, shopping, relaxation or family bonding. Each tourist has a different vision, so the more experience options that are created, the greater the chance of connecting with more potential visitors. These experience options can be marketed through the KCVB website, targeted print and e-brochures and social media.

### Experience Options

Packaging opportunities that bundle lodging and other offerings can be targeted to:

- **Outdoor recreation and sports enthusiasts**

Adventure tourism is the fastest-growing segment of the travel-and-tourism industry. The industry has increased steadily, between eight percent and ten percent annually since the 1960s, according to *Entrepreneur* magazine. According to TIA, 73.5 million U.S. adult travelers have participated in outdoor-adventure vacations at some time during their lives. Families, social clubs, ski clubs and ski councils who come to Kalispell for the purpose of skiing and winter sports at Whitefish Mountain Resort and Blacktail Mountain Ski Area are often comprised of influencers who provide can great word-of-mouth, viral buzz about the area. In addition, having a presence at consumer shows in target markets will increase awareness of the area as a year-round outdoor adventure destination. While outdoor recreation and sports enthusiasts are interested in being active and adventurous during their vacations, they also want (and expect) certain creature comforts, such as upscale accommodations and fine dining.

- **Leisure travelers: individuals, couples, retirees, families**

When planning and selling trips to the leisure traveler, it's important to not only sell the location and where they might stay, but more so the experience. The leisure traveler does not buy a hotel stay, but a vacation experience and happy memories. Leisure traveler packages need to offer competitive pricing as well as value-added inclusions that will heighten their overall trip.

- **Shoppers**

Lower prices in the United States have long made it worthwhile for Canadians to venture across the border for big-ticket items. Even after declaring their purchases at the border and paying duties and taxes the value is still strong. Clothing and small electronics such as MP3 players and digital cameras are easy to transport across the border. But larger, costlier items such as flat-screen TVs and laptops are also popular purchases since the same products can cost twice as much in Canada. After 48 hours in the United States, Canadian residents can import \$400.00 CDN worth of goods duty free and they can claim a \$750.00 CDN exemption anytime they have been out of Canada for at least 7 days. (The rule limiting this to one time per year has been lifted). KCVB plans to promote shopping trips in Canada that align with their holidays and work with local

retailers and hotels to assure that information is available to the Canadian visitor regarding money exchange, duty free rules, etc.

On a more localized level, an opportunity exists to create a brand-within-a-brand, by advertising Kalispell as the shopping center for all of Flathead Valley. Not all tourism marketing needs to be “sexy”. This is a case where some nuts and bolts publicity about the shopping available in the center of Flathead Valley will drive more people to Kalispell. The key is selling them on the other amenities Kalispell has to offer so they will be inclined to select it as their primary location during future travel.

- **People interested in Culture, History, Music**

Cultural Tourism can be broadly defined to include arts, entertainment, museums, historical buildings, galleries, streetscapes, dining and even shopping. The key is creating a meaningful visitor experience that is worth their time and money. A successful Cultural Tourism program is based on: creative and collaborative partnerships between the arts, history, and other tourism-related industries creating packaging that takes into consideration a visitor's desire to cram multiple experiences, unique to the location, into a short period of time. Inclusion of museums and museum stores in travel packages sold online by a wide variety of resources results in exceptional online exposure at little or no cost.

- **Conventions (smaller venues) / Group / Retreats**

Marketing Kalispell to groups, organizations and businesses that sponsor conventions requires creating comprehensive information packages that focus on meeting spaces, hotel availability, catering options, local activities and entertainment options. These packages can be distributed through website requests, targeted direct mail campaigns, the visitor center, during FAM tours and at trade shows. The KCVB will offer customized convention planning services to help lure groups up to 200 people. This personalized service can assist groups with unique requirements such as multiple meeting space facilities, ground transportation issues and activity planning. If the activities and location options are properly positioned the number of family members and guests that accompany the convention attendee will increase.

- **Medical Tourism**

The worldwide, medical tourism is a \$5-6 billion industry. According to The Healthcare Business Market Research Handbook by Richard K. Miller & Associates, annual revenue in the United States equals \$1 billion. Medical tourists travel for excellent patient care, spending money on lodging, hospitality or shopping during his or her stay. Kalispell is home to outstanding medical offerings providing superior healthcare services and some of the most advanced procedures available in the United States. This availability, plus Kalispell's activities, attractions and resources, makes the region a key player in the medical-tourism industry. KCVB will work cooperatively with KRMC and NV Hospital to seek out opportunities for coop marketing. Although not a strategy the KCVB will focus on directly it does provide co-op opportunities particularly when advertising in Alberta.

- **Corporate/ Business**

Value remains the top consideration driving individual business travel. The group market is also responding to destinations that have solid reputations for providing quality facilities, services and amenities as well as proficiency in green and sustainability issues and social responsibility initiatives.

## Marketing Tools

With KCVB target markets in mind Olson Communications assessed the advantages and disadvantages of various forms of marketing and advertising media, evaluating the possible delivery mechanisms and considering the pros and cons of each—taking into account how well suited each is to conveying KCVB key messages and its likelihood of achieving cost-effective reach and frequency relative to the target markets.

### Newspaper Advertising

#### Advantages

- High reach
- High geographic concentration
- Good frequency
- Tangibility
- Short lead times
- Relatively low cost
- Ability to communicate detailed information

### Magazine Advertising

#### Advantages

- Tangibility
- High audience selectivity
- Good reproduction quality
- Long life span and good pass-along rate
- Prestige and credibility
- Ability to communicate detailed information

### Radio

#### Advantages

- Relatively low cost
- Audience selectivity
- High frequency
- Short lead times

### Television

#### Advantages

- Potentially high reach
- High persuasive impact
- Uniform national coverage

#### Disadvantages

- Limited readership; mostly delivered only to subscribers and subscriber bases are declining
- High waste factor and inability to target
- Limitations on creative format
- Relatively poor reproduction quality
- Clutter
- Short life span
- High cost of national coverage

#### Disadvantages

- Limitations on creative format
- Clutter
- Low reach
- Low frequency
- Long lead times
- Relatively expensive
- Some difficulties in geographic target

#### Disadvantages

- No visual communications
- Inability to transmit complex messages or detailed information
- Short life span
- Shared attention

#### Disadvantages

- High total cost
- Short life span
- Inability to transmit detailed information
- Inability (in Montana) to target to selected geographic and demographic regions



### **Direct Mail**

#### **Advantages**

- Audience selectivity
- Highly flexible and able to be personalized
- Ability to measure responses
- Low Cost
- Tangibility
- Short lead times

### **Rack Cards**

#### **Advantages**

- Targeted to tourists
- Low Cost
- Tangibility
- Short lead times

### **Other Printed Collateral**

#### **Advantages**

- Highly flexible and able to be personalized
- Tangible
- Attractive, eye-appealing
- People learn better with visuals

### **Outdoor/Transit (Billboards, posters, painted bulletins)**

#### **Advantages**

- High reach and good frequency
- Geographic selectivity
- Long life span
- Large size

#### **Disadvantages**

- Junk mail syndrome and high discard rate
- Relatively high total cost
- Some limitations on creative format (due to mailing regulations)

#### **Disadvantages**

- No selectivity as to who receives information
- High discard rate
- Setting up and maintaining distribution channels can be a hassle

#### **Disadvantages**

- Can be costly
- Requires lead time
- Distribution can be a challenge

#### **Disadvantages**

- Inability to target; limited messaging
- No selectivity as to who receives information
- Available locations may not apply
- Can be expensive
- Requires lead time

### **Websites/Internet Marketing**

#### **Advantages**

- Low cost promotional strategy
- Not limited to a particular location
- Reaches target market easily and quickly
- Provides for repository of information
- Allows for interactivity

### **Electronic/Social Media**

#### **Advantages**

- Reaches customers that traditional marketing misses.
- Builds brand awareness and brand loyalty.
- Boosts your reputation and builds relationships
- Reveals information about target audiences
- Cost-efficient

#### **Disadvantages**

- Requires other marketing to drive people to the website
- Does not necessarily build trust or relationships
- People are overloaded with information – especially on the Internet
- Requires ongoing maintenance and SEO support

#### **Disadvantages**

- Time-intensive
- Not much control of marketing messages
- Return on investment is delayed

## Marketing Tactics

In order to effectively maximize visitor expenditures and bring the highest return on investment, KCVB's marketing tactics should incorporate a mix of traditional marketing efforts, co-op partnerships and non-traditional efforts. Delivering the greatest return on each dollar spent and achieving the greatest number of responses and/or impressions for the least amount of money can best be accomplished by migrating away from traditional print media to online and non-traditional efforts (i.e. social media, blogging, e-marketing) and incorporating public/community relations. Leveraging DiscoverKalispell.com (or a new URL) as the KCVB's primary means of marketing communication will reduce the amount of money spent on throw-away collateral and advertising.

### Online

Online travel planning is experiencing explosive growth. Ninety-three million U.S. reported using the internet for travel planning purposes in 2010 with 76 percent of online travelers planning leisure trips online and 87 percent of consumers who take high-end vacations using the internet to some capacity in making their travel arrangements. More than 90 percent of travelers use the internet to search for travel content, compare prices, and make online travel transactions. Of these

- 60 percent explore travel destinations
- 75 percent purchase airline tickets
- 70 percent make hotel reservations
- 40 percent book car rentals
- 30 percent research travel agents and tour operators

Encompassing email, social media, search engine marketing, online advertising and more, online channels offers measurable and cost-effective marketing. It is essential that KCVB create an independent internet visibility. And the recommended strategy is not only to launch an independent website but to use it as the primary marketing tool and the number one method of marketing communications for both consumer marketing and convention/group business development.

### Tactics

- Use the website as KCVB's primary marketing tool
- Develop an online "Discover Kalispell" Guide including sample itineraries with printable PDF option
- Feature packages, deals, discounts and promotions to increase value to visitors and build a pre-qualified database
- Develop an online calendar of events
- Offer messaging partner placements
- Be aggressive in Search Engine Optimization to be at the top of search results and drive traffic to the site

## Website Development Guidelines

To be effective websites require good planning and good technology as well as continual monitoring and maintenance. Ten key focus areas KCVB will consider in its website development include

1. Integrating the website design and messages with the overall branding and marketing approach.
2. Keeping the site focused on the target-markets and end-users and speak to those audiences.
3. Coordinating the website content with the marketing campaign's offline materials and keep the site consistent with overall branding, style guide, color usage, font selection and other graphic standards. The website doesn't have to exactly match print collateral and vice versa—it simply needs to be aligned and compatible.
4. Keeping content and navigation simple with a menu structure that is consistent with industry standards:
  - Local menus (for a page or section) on the left
  - Global menus (overall site navigation) at the top and/or bottom of each page, keep as much information “above the fold” (above the cutoff point at the bottom of a monitor),
5. Keeping text blocks short—two to three sentences at maximum; build in white space; include links to locations where additional information can be gleaned rather than trying to tell the whole marketing story on the website.
6. Thinking globally. Avoiding content with acronyms and colloquialisms that may not be understood by others who may not speak the same language or understand our industry.
7. Setting up the navigation so that viewers can get to their desired content areas on the site with one or two mouse clicks.
8. Paying attention to load times. Avoid bogging the site down with too many graphics, flash presentations, plug-ins, GIFs, etc. If load time is more than 12-18 seconds the searcher may click off.
9. Optimizing for Search Engines by identifying 8-12 keywords that people will use in trying to find your informational content and incorporate these keywords in the site's text. Regularly check the log server raw files to see how and from where people accessed your site, where they navigated to on the web site and other information that can be revealed about those who browse.
10. Developing the site to support sales functions and information sharing even though they may not be factors initially

## **Search Optimization Strategy**

The reality is that websites have no value until people view them. Driving people to websites by external means such as advertising can be very costly. Public relations placements help, but the majority of website users will initiate their own searches and review only the sites that appear as a result of those searches. KCVB will employ SEO strategies to keep its site at the top of the listings by:

- Engaging an SEO expert
- Creating linkages with other content similar sites.
- Developing the internal structure of the website to enhance organic search listings
- Purchasing appropriate and effective AdWords and keyword searches on the top search engines
- Evaluating consumer usage through website analytics
- Incorporating select sponsored listings
- Implementing online marketing strategies such as search engine marketing, pay-per-click advertising and optimized press releases. These tactics play a vital role in the site's ability to gain high, first-place rankings in the major search engines, driving traffic to the site.

## **Online Promotions**

- Kalispell's "experience options" will be marketed through the website, e-marketing to the opt-in database and targeted pamphlets. Offering sample itineraries targeted to specified interests helps potential clients bond with Kalispell's tourism options and choose to spend their vacation here.

## **E-marketing**

- KCVB will generate and distribute quarterly emails to the DiscoverKalispell.com opt-in database featuring highlights of that season, "experience options," and other promotions and discounts

## **Social Media**

Social media is playing an increasingly significant role in branding, positioning and promotion. Internet and mobile-based tools, which are referred to as "user-generated content" or "consumer-generated media," are used for sharing and discussing information. Sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, Digg and thousands of blogs along with the ease of posting video online make it possible to connect with target audiences on a one-on-one basis.

Because social media can be time intensive and does not necessarily allow for careful control of messaging, content or distribution, KCVB's approach to social media will be structured to minimize time requirements and the possibility of postings of unsolicited, undesirable content.

## **Social Media Tactics**

- Developing a “face page” on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter and using these social sites as a way to create buzz by posting tweets and video and perhaps promoting contests
- Making entries on selective blogs that provide information to specific sectors of the target market.
- Posting video vignettes covering a variety of topics and subject matter ranging from mountain biking and skiing, to dining and art walks. KCVB can solicit submittals via public announcements, contests and other means.

## **Additional Tactics**

If budget becomes available KCVB may

- Pay for a presence on prominent websites that have a high viewer rating for people seeking information about travel to Glacier National Park, Flathead Lake and northwestern Montana.
- Leverage the power of search engine pay-per-clicks on Google, Bing, Yahoo, and alternative search engine sites such as Kanoodle,
- Introduce a mobile version of the website that can be accessed by those who use smart phones for their information access.
- Launch a behavioral and geo-targeted banner ad campaign utilizing a third party network provider with access to hundreds of top web sites.

## Collateral

KCVB's collateral program serves three purposes:

1. Acts as the primary lead fulfillment material for respondents to advertising, online marketing and public relations
2. Drives visits to the destination and to the KCVB website by getting information in front of potential visitors
3. Improves the visitor experience in Kalispell by providing a guide to amenities/services once they are here

Planning the design, production and distribution of printed collateral has traditionally been a large part of most tourism marketing programs—one that requires a large budget. Materials such as brochures, posters, and postcards, if attractively designed and broadly distributed, provide tremendous exposure in front of the tourism consumer, and provide support in the business-to-business realm as marketing tools for conventions and tour operators. While printed collateral and advertising—in spite of their high costs—continue to have a value in tourism marketing generally, investing heavily in printed collateral is not a prudent use of Kalispell Visitor and Convention Bureau funds. Downloadable e-collateral pieces are better choices. They are consistent with the move to “green” approaches and are more affordable and flexible.

Once the creative development is complete, distributing brochures, fact sheets and other collateral via email and internet is nearly cost-free. This collateral can be provided as PDF files in response to requests for information or as imbedded HTML messages and distributed via email blasts to target mailing lists and also provided on DVDs to media, tour operators, etc.

### Tactics

- Consistently and visually convey the Kalispell brand
- Provide updated, useful information to the potential visitor as well as the visitor in Kalispell
- Direct visitors to the website for more detailed vacation planning information on the destination and other resources
- Provide a call to action in all materials, driving requests through the KCVB Web site, business reply cards, e-mail or toll-free calls.

### Collateral Development

- Discover Kalispell Visitor Guide  
A Kalispell-focused guide will provide community-specific tourism information, increase website traffic, provide a directory of Kalispell services, and serve as a fulfillment piece. While this will be primarily developed as an online resource a printed version needs to be developed for use at trade shows, the Visitor Center and to fulfill requests that come in from the 800 number, website and publicity.

Rather than mimicking the format used by most visitors guides—an 8.5 x 11-inch full-color glossy brochure, KCVB has an opportunity to distinguish itself and reinforce the Experience Options that KCVB is tailoring to its target markets by developing individual sheets or cards



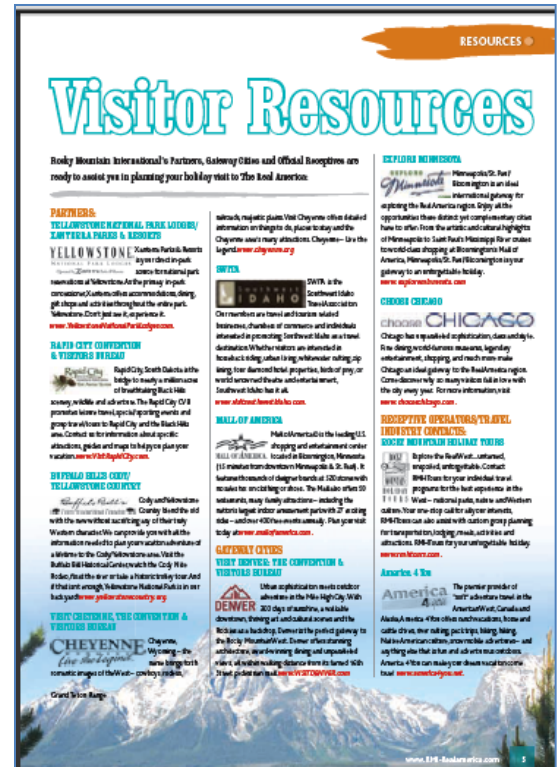
on each of the featured itineraries as well as supplement sheets or cards that describe activities, shopping, dining and entertainment. These can be packaged in a variety of ways—for example in a folder with tiered tab cuts.

- An area map showing Kalispell's central location in the Flathead Valley as well as inset of the downtown area has already been developed. This can be expanded in the future to include directory locators for lodging, dining and activities.
- An Adventure Map which is basically a map-folded brochure can be produced to feature on outdoor adventures as well as camping and hiking/biking trails
- Kalispell brand message postcards can be offered to regional hospitality and cultural venues for free distribution and they can also be mailed to selected zip codes in selected sectors of the targeted mailing list
- Rack cards are a proven and viable way to promote and advertise to travelers and vacationers with a relative low cost. The challenge is that when people approach a display full of rack card they most often reach for the pieces that catch their eye and make it easy to get to the information they seek. Creating an effective rack card requires having a compelling "headline," paring the core messages down to 5 or 6 strong bullet points, and incorporating strong visuals. Regardless of how Kalispell is ultimately branded, the top of both the front and back of its rack card should convey the message that it offers the shopping and modern amenities that are not available elsewhere. The area of the rack card that shows above the shelving is often the only thing a prospective customer will see when reaching for a card. We also recommend inclusion of a map, the phone number where additional information can be obtained, and a website URL. Distribution is key. Rack card distribution and refill programs are available on a fee basis as well as fee-free locations. KCVB will also develop cooperative arrangements with the airport/community/regional partners to incorporate the rack cards in their locations in exchange for the positioning of their materials at the Visitor Center.

## Advertising

Advertising requires a substantial budget commitment. In the beginning stages of the KCVB marketing program advertising will be limited in volume and highly targeted. Initial tactics include

- Contracting for paid advertising in the Montana Office of Tourism, Glacier Country, Whitefish CVB and other regional travel planners
- Running seasonal campaigns, advertising primarily within short drive and direct flight markets
- Seeking coop placements with partners
- Buying a listing on the RMI Guide Visitor Resource page



## Public Relations

When used to maximum effectiveness Public Relations is the most cost-efficient and credible means to communicate to local, regional and national target audiences. Public relations can achieve placement in major, national publications and broadcasts, often with more detail than a single advertisement.

A professionally-supported public relations campaign can help

- Generate awareness of the Kalispell brand
- Generate national feature editorial coverage specific to Kalispell
- Position Kalispell among the west's top year-round recreation and leisure destinations.
- Encourage media coverage in target markets through target media
- Educate the travel trade media about breadth, scope and diversity of Kalispell's offerings and its place as the shopping/medical/cultural center of Flathead Valley
- Convince travel trade media to position Kalispell as an ideal small meetings and Foreign Independent Traveler (FIT) destination
- Stimulate traveler engagement on a year-round basis, with particular emphasis on the spring, fall and winter seasons where the opportunity for growth is greatest.

## Tactics

- Develop and distribute a press kit. These kits will be available as a CD-ROM or DVD-ROM, and will include press releases, fact sheets and visuals that are specific to Kalispell. Materials will also be available in the online pressroom at [www.DiscoverKalispell.com](http://www.DiscoverKalispell.com). Additional distribution will take place in the form of an HTML cover letter e-mail to media, with links directly to specific press releases online. Individual follow-up would take place to a prioritized group of media.
- Distribute regular press releases (monthly) covering a range of topics from quarterly event calendars to new services/amenities to major news announcements. Press releases will be distributed regionally or nationally depending on the nature and scope of the press release content.
- Conduct on-going Media Relations for the specific purpose of generating interest in and obtaining editorial coverage for Kalispell. On-going media relations efforts will also include follow-up, proactive pitching, distribution of informational materials, etc.
- Distribute story ideas that focus on Kalispell's experience options, seasonal highlights and themed promotions
- Participate in RMI, Glacier Country and the State of Montana familiarization tours
- Participate in Glacier Country press trips
- Schedule market-specific media visits targeting key direct flight market. This will involve flying to and conducting face-to-face meetings with key travel editors at newspapers and

magazines in primary markets including Salt Lake City, Chicago, Denver, Las Vegas, Seattle and Minneapolis. The message will vary with the publication, but will primarily focus on lifestyle—KalisPELL's unique blend of recreation, location and visitor offerings.

## **Public Relations Targets**

Primary Targets include

- Regional and national media
- Publications that focus on travel, lifestyle, arts and culture
- Publications that focus on outdoor recreation / activities / adventure
- Publications that focus on recreational niches (biking, ski/snowboard, fishing, etc.)
- Airline in-flight magazines
- Auto club publications (i.e. AAA)
- Lifestyle niches (retirement, reunions, etc)
- Travel guidebooks
- Internet travel resources
- Travel-specific television media

## Conventions and Meetings

As previously noted conventions and group meetings could be a boon to the local economy due to increased sales of room nights and a large increase in general spending by convention attendees. Participants tend to spend more money and stay longer than the average visitor and they frequently combine business with pleasure by bringing family and friends with them. Additionally, they tend to select more “off-peak” times to be able to contract the best rates and that benefits our shoulder and winter seasons. The challenge is positioning Kalispell within the highly competitive convention industry as a premier western meeting destination for smaller groups.

### Tactics

- Create a marketing kit for planners with a general overview of the destination, information about attractions, logos, photos, video, etc.
- Work with lodging partners to develop a “concierge service” for meeting planners that will overcome the obstacles of housing people and possibly conducting meetings in different facilities
- Develop specific and well defined key messages targeted at meeting planners that reinforce the connection between Kalispell, Glacier National Park, Flathead Lake and the abundance of outdoor recreation and adventure opportunities in northwest Montana
- Tailor marketing messages to highlight regional strengths such as affordability and address misperceptions about the area (i.e., too cold in the winter, limited air service, insufficient convention facilities, etc.)
- Communicate key messages in an integrated effort utilizing advertising, Internet marketing, social media and public relations
- Generate positive media coverage about Kalispell in news outlets targeted at meeting planners ensuring key messages are conveyed to meetings and conventions news outlets.
- Invite Meetings and Conventions (M&C) media to visit the destination during group FAMs
- Update M&C news outlets with news of convention wins and news from conventions taking place in Kalispell
- Post all meetings scheduled and post positive comments from attendees on the KCVB website
- “Mine” for prospects by reviewing lists of conventions and meetings previously held in locations such as Missoula, Great Falls, Helena, Bozeman, Big Sky, Billings, Spokane, Coeur d’Alene, Jackson Hole, Rapid City, Minot and make personal outreach to these groups. It is very likely that they hold meetings on a regular basis and may be looking for a site for a future event.
- Access the State of Montana Governor’s invitation program

## Direct Marketing

Direct marketing allows facilitates proactive outreach and leverages relationships with industry partners.

### Promotions

Promotions including group discounts, coupons, off-season specials and free items entice tourists. KCVB will work with multiple attractions to create packages and discounts designed to draw value-conscious customers. Example: a targeted mailing to skiers with special package rates on lodging via hotel partners and dining promotions through a credit or charge card company. The cooperative relationship among the museums and other attractions in Kalispell will facilitate development of package discounts. KCVB will work with its cultural partners to encourage the development of discounted entrance fees if visitors purchase at least two activities. Comprehensive approaches to promotion will include bundling lodging, food and activities into savings packages that target families, seniors, adventure travelers and others. The increase in visitors can offset discounts and can increase tourists choosing Kalispell offer over rival locations.

### Relationship Marketing

KCVB will also engage with its lodging partners to enhance Relationship Marketing—a marketing strategy in which an organization develops a relationship with its clients in order to assure their continued loyalty. In the tourism industry, relationship marketing refers to developing a detailed understanding of what visitors want and working to fulfill these wants. It is prevalent in resort marketing, where repeat customers are relatively common and there are more opportunities to communicate with the client.

When a hotel provides feedback cards to customers, it is engaging in basic relationship marketing. The card tells the customer that his/her opinion concerning the running of the hotel is valuable to the management and will be taken into consideration. This generally makes customers feel more inclined to return, especially if the hotel tries to fix any problems that the customer had.

Some hotels also take customers' email addresses at registration so they can communicate with them in a more personal way after their stay. The fundamental concern of relationship marketing is to make customers feel they are being personally asked what they want, rather than being part of a survey.

In the 2000s, relationship marketing in the tourism industry developed a new twist, called consumercentric marketing. With this approach, the customer provides the business with personal information. This information is then used to create products tailor-made to the customer. Personalization of the product encourages the customer to come back to the business. This process involves more data monitoring, as each customer requires his/her own file, but it also encourages far more customer loyalty.

KCVB will work with its lodging partners to assess how their existing customer bases and new relationship marketing programs can be leveraged to increase visitor nights in Kalispell and expand visitor spending while in the community.

## Local Marketing

Local marketing efforts encompass a three-pronged approach to create word-of-mouth buzz about Kalispell, consisting of:

- Involving local businesses and organizations (tourism and non-tourism based) in promoting Kalispell by becoming messaging partners and its ambassadors of tourism
- Informing visitors of additional tourist events, activities and experiences once they have arrived at the destination
- Introducing Kalispell residents to the amenities and services of the Kalispell Visitor and Convention Bureau and the Kalispell Visitor Center
- Create effective signage at the alternate truck route entry points to direct visitors to Kalispell

## Tactics

- Conduct local press relations efforts in conjunction with significant events, announcements and other KCVB-related news
- Reinforce the Kalispell destination brand through sales of Kalispell name logo products at local merchandise outlets and online
- Develop a Mobile Visitor Kiosk to display and distribute visitor information at events and venues with high out-of-market visitor attendance
- Provide training for an “Ambassadors” program, to infuse the understanding of the importance of tourism in Kalispell’s economy, where to direct visitors and where resources are available



## Kalispell Visitor Center

One of the key components to improving the visitor experience once they arrive in Kalispell is the Kalispell Visitor Information Center (VIC) at the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce. The Visitor Center's goal is to be open six days a week, Monday through Saturday, year round, with the exception of three holidays (New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas). The VIC offers customer service by providing personalized service and distributing information on businesses, events and activities that are of value to visitors. A past study produced for the Montana Office of Tourism by the University of Montana reported that each visitor party that comes into an information center spends an average of an additional \$125 in that community.

### Tactics

- Provide responsive and friendly customer service
- Promote the diversity of offerings in Kalispell
- Provide referrals to local providers of goods and services
- Increase revenues and further brand awareness by selling officially-licensed Kalispell branded souvenir items

### Current and future visitor center offerings include

- Assisting walk-in visitors and provide information about the local community
- Providing information about Glacier National Park and the Flathead Valley
- Answering incoming telephone calls
- Mailing visitor information packages
- Answering information request letters and emails
- Acting as an information source for the community
- Updating the community calendar of events and posting (website and event board)
- Promoting local and regional events
- Posting informational posters
- Selling tickets for events upon request
- Maintaining a Wi-Fi hotspot and/or computer terminal for public use
- Maintaining a retail storefront to sell officially-licensed Kalispell branded souvenir items



## Montana Office of Tourism

The Montana Department of Commerce sponsored the creation of the Montana Strategic Plan for Tourism & Recreation 2008-2012. This is the fourth in a series of statewide tourism and recreation industry strategic plans. More than 1200 Montana citizens, businesses and organizations provided input for the Plan's development. The Plan is the blueprint for the state's Tourism & Recreation Partners to use in setting goals, prioritizing resources, taking action and measuring achievements. The plan provides a vision of what Montana's tourism and recreation should become over the next 5 years and how the various partners can get there by working together and individually. The plan identifies 10 goals and 85 actions to be implemented by the stakeholders

KCVB will continue to work on a regular basis with the Montana Office of Tourism on a variety of projects and programs and will also rely upon the state's efforts in some areas where KCVB resources do not allow engagement at a level sufficient to achieve results. These include but are not limited to the state's endeavors relative to

- **Convention Development Support**

The Montana Office of Tourism will support KCVB convention attraction endeavors by sending out (upon request) letters of invitation from the Governor along with travel packets that include a Vacation Planner and Highway Map to convention registrants or potential convention participants to encourage attendance and extended stays in Montana.

- **Superhost Program**

The Montana SUPERHOST Program provides affordable customer service training education to managers and front-line employees of businesses and organizations across Montana. The program is offered through a training contract with Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell. The SUPERHOST training curriculum provides information about the importance of tourism in Montana's economy, the state's tourism information and service resources.

- **Tourism Development Program**

This program is available to partners interested in coordinating and funding tourism education programs covering such areas as world and regional tourism trends, overseas and group travel, cultural tourism, consumer marketing, tourism publicity, customer service training, infrastructure development and more. Many of these topics are presented at the annual Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation organized by the Promotion Division and held each March or April.

- **Tour Promotion**

The Montana Office of Tourism aggressively promotes Montana as a destination to the international travel trade, with emphasis on the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Scandinavia and Australia. The program involves working with key tour operators, wholesalers, travel agencies and the media to establish new Montana itineraries for groups and Foreign Independent Travelers (FITs), while assisting Montana businesses in their marketing efforts overseas. The marketing program includes use of the services of specialized travel representatives on a contractual basis in cooperation with the states of Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota and Idaho.



This is accomplished by representation at key international travel trade shows, familiarization tours, cooperative advertising ventures with other states in the region, brochure and DVD distribution and ongoing personal contact with targeted tour operators, wholesalers, travel agents and media.

The program's goals are to increase awareness of Montana as a year-round vacation destination for international visitors, and to generate and distribute leads to the CVBs, regions and Montana suppliers for their follow-up purposes.

Under the Rocky Mountain International (RMI) banner of "The Real America", Montana enjoys the success of collective marketing efforts. RMI overseas offices exhibit at several "Visit USA" consumer shows as well as International Tourism Bourse (ITB) in Berlin, and World Travel Market (WTM) in London. Plans for FY11 include sales missions to Italy, the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Australia and attendance at the International Tourism Bourse in Berlin.

- **Trade Shows**

Visibility at the key international travel trade shows allows Montana to make contact with wholesalers, operators and media, and provides the opportunity to follow up on new and existing projects and ideas. The Montana Office of Tourism delegates are sometimes joined by private-sector participants. In 2010 the Montana Office of Tourism along with Glacier Country attended International Powwow in Orlando, FL, and the Go West Summit in Sacramento, CA included a post-FAM trip to Glacier Country and Whitefish.

- **Pacific Rim Outreach**

Montana Department of Commerce trade representatives in Kumamoto, Japan, and Taipei, Taiwan, market Montana's travel-related products and services to the travel trade in their respective countries under close direction from Montana Office of Tourism. Their responsibilities include contact with wholesalers, tour operators, travel agents and media to create demand for Montana's travel-related products and services. This objective is achieved through distribution of travel materials, organization of familiarization trips, translation of Montana literature and websites in Japanese and Chinese, travel trade show participation and sales calls.

- **Familiarization Tours**

Montana Office of Tourism conducts familiarization (FAM) tours to provide personal, firsthand site inspections for prospective group tour operators. By experiencing Montana, tour operators can better understand the mechanics of designing new itineraries in Montana. FAM tours for trade and media representatives as well as training and sales missions are also important components of the Rocky Mountain International Program (RMI) as well as in our Pacific Rim markets. With the assistance of Montana travel industry members, FAM tours will be conducted to provide firsthand knowledge for prospective tour operators. By experiencing Montana, operators can better understand the mechanics of designing new itineraries in the state. FAM tours will also be held for carefully selected travel journalists with the intended result of generating positive travel articles in foreign publications. Montana

will host the RMI Mega-FAM in September 2011 with Idaho. The FAM will include participants from our target markets as well as USA based receptive tour operators.

- **Direct Mail Campaign**

This specialized direct mail program provides current tour planning material to tour operators, as well as follow-up to contacts initiated during trade shows. This program also establishes and maintains a professional rapport with overseas groups and FIT travel planners. In addition, selected international tour operators have received Montana calendars as a direct mail piece to entice them to keep Montana on their minds every day of the year.

- **Domestic and International Publicity**

Montana's publicity / photography program works with all media outlets to facilitate coverage and help spread the word about the latest and greatest reasons for visiting. The goals for the publicity program include generating continuous positive editorial placement within all travel media outlets (domestic and international), including newspapers, consumer publications, travel trade media, broadcast outlets and the Web.

- **Keeping in Touch**

The Keeping in Touch publicity program utilizes email blasts to distribute story ideas and current events to the media. This includes all in-state newspapers, radio and television stations, as well as an extensive list of domestic and international contacts providing an outlet for those involved in state tourism to get the word out on new offerings (events, activities, lodging, etc.) for visitors.

- **Publicity Campaigns**

In coordination with the state's tourism regions and CVBs, and various public and private tourism industry suppliers / partners publicity relations tactics are integrated into consumer marketing campaigns to help support and generate greater results from Montana's advertising efforts. The publicity office also conducts media missions or themed media events in key national markets (New York, Los Angeles, Denver/Boulder) to increase awareness of Montana's diverse travel product and to pitch targeted story placement.

- **Press Trips and Publicity/Photography Assistance**

The publicity office works with the regions/CVBs to develop and implement group press trips (with a minimum goal of one trip per region per year), as well as individual press visits, with the objective being to generate positive editorial placement on the state. Both financial and logistical help is provided by the Montana Office of Tourism to qualified journalists, editors, producers and broadcasters.

- **Photography and Video Distribution**

The Montana Office of Tourism serves as a resource for video footage, digital images and slides that the media can use free of charge to support travel-related articles and broadcast productions. These images are also available for use by the regions, CVBs, chambers, nonprofits and state / federal government entities, all for the primary purpose of promoting tourism.

## Summary

The Kalispell Convention & Visitor Bureau (KCVB) is proud and privileged to provide leadership for the promotion of Kalispell as a premier year-round destination for all visitors.

**KCVB's principal objective** as an organization is to increase tourism to Kalispell generating growth in the volume of occupied lodging room nights.

The **objective of the 2011 KCVB Branding and Marketing Strategy** is to position Kalispell as a visitor destination that will help us grow conventions, meetings, and increase leisure visitations.

The **targeted outcomes for the 2011 KCVB Branding and Marketing Strategy** are modest in number but large in scale:

- To drive the branding of Kalispell in a manner that distinguishes it from other Glacier Country venues and tourist destinations of all types
- Position Kalispell as safe, friendly city with many amenities, that is well located at the center of some of the nation's most spectacular vistas—Glacier National Park and Flathead Lake
- Increase Kalispell lodging room occupancy during shoulder seasons (October – May)
- Expand Kalispell's convention and meeting activity
- Work to develop effective events and activity packages to increase Kalispell's tourism activity in the fall, winter and spring seasons



## Acknowledgements

Kalispell Convention and Visitor Bureau and Olson Communications would like to thank the following individuals for their time, energy and feedback during this process:

Bob Blickenstaff, Board Member, Glacier Symphony  
Gib Bissell, Owner/Manager, Aero Inn and TBID Member  
Lisa Brown, Manager, Red Lion Inn and TBID Member  
Mark Campbell, Director, Flathead County Fairgrounds  
Pam Carbonari, Kalispell Business Improvement District & Kalispell Downtown Association  
Janet Clark, Owner/Manager, Kalispell Grand Hotel and TBID Member  
Kellie Danielson, Director, Montana West Economic Development  
Jon Fetveit, Owner, Hilltop Inn, TBID Member and Board Chair for Kalispell Business Improvement District  
Lori Fisher, Manager, Hampton Inn, and TBID Member  
Ted Hirsch, Senior Executive Director, Kalispell Regional Medical Center  
Michael Kofford, Director, Conrad Mansion  
Kent Lembke, Manager, Glacier Ridge Suites and TBID Member  
Cindi Martin, Director, Glacier Park International Airport  
Jan Metzmaker, Director, Whitefish Convention and Visitor Bureau  
Alicia Thompson, Director of Marketing and Business Relations, Glacier Park, Inc.  
Katharine Thompson, Community Development Manager, City of Kalispell  
Alan Satterlee, Director, Glacier Symphony and Chorale  
Bryan Scott, Manager, Outlaw Inn and TBID Member  
Chris Walters, Manager, Hilton Garden Inn and TBID Member  
Joe Unterreiner, President/CEO, Kalispell Chamber of Commerce  
Amy Vanderbilt, Public Affairs Officer, Glacier National Park, NPS  
Jan Watkins, Tourism Sales Manager, Glacier Country Regional Tourism Office

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