

# THE INSTITUTE FOR INTEGRATED RURAL TOURISM

Leadership

Research

Support



Telling the story of rural life patterns through the  
tourism experience.



# **Sustainable Tourism Through Effective Marketing**

**Presented by Todd Comen  
Mayan World Foundation  
November 2000**

# Sustainable Tourism Through Effective Marketing

- Product
  - Tangible features
    - Natural Environment & Fragile Ecosystems
    - Human Communities
    - Built facilities and attractions
- Marketing
  - Consumers
  - Branding and image creation
  - Pipeline to target customers
- Service
  - Intangible experiences delivered by the host

# New England

Maine

Vermont

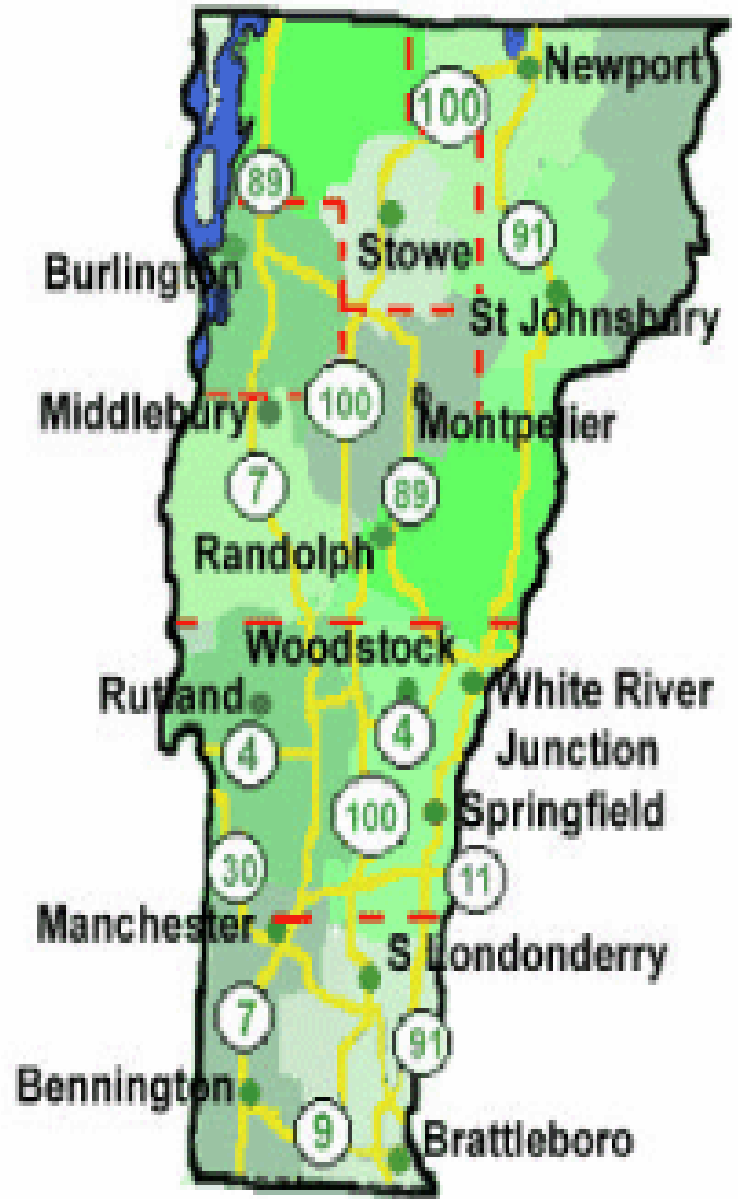
New Hampshire

Massachusetts

Rhode Island

Connecticut

PJZ



# Vermont's image in the minds of consumers. 100 years of building relationships

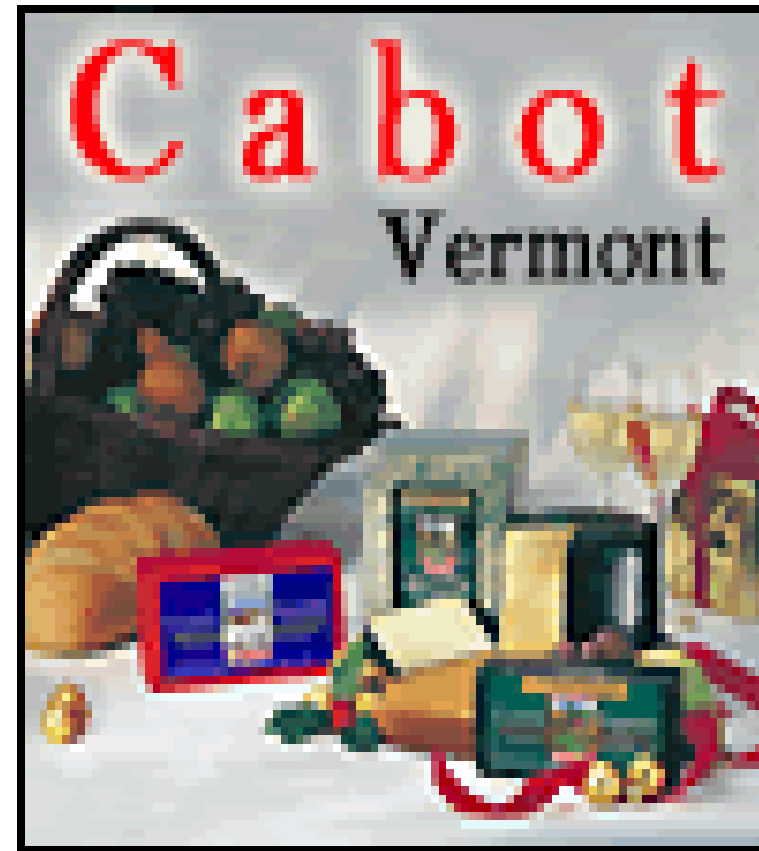
- Peaceful
- Quiet villages
- Natural
- Relaxing
- Rural
- Beautiful
- Historical



Photo courtesy of Steve Allen

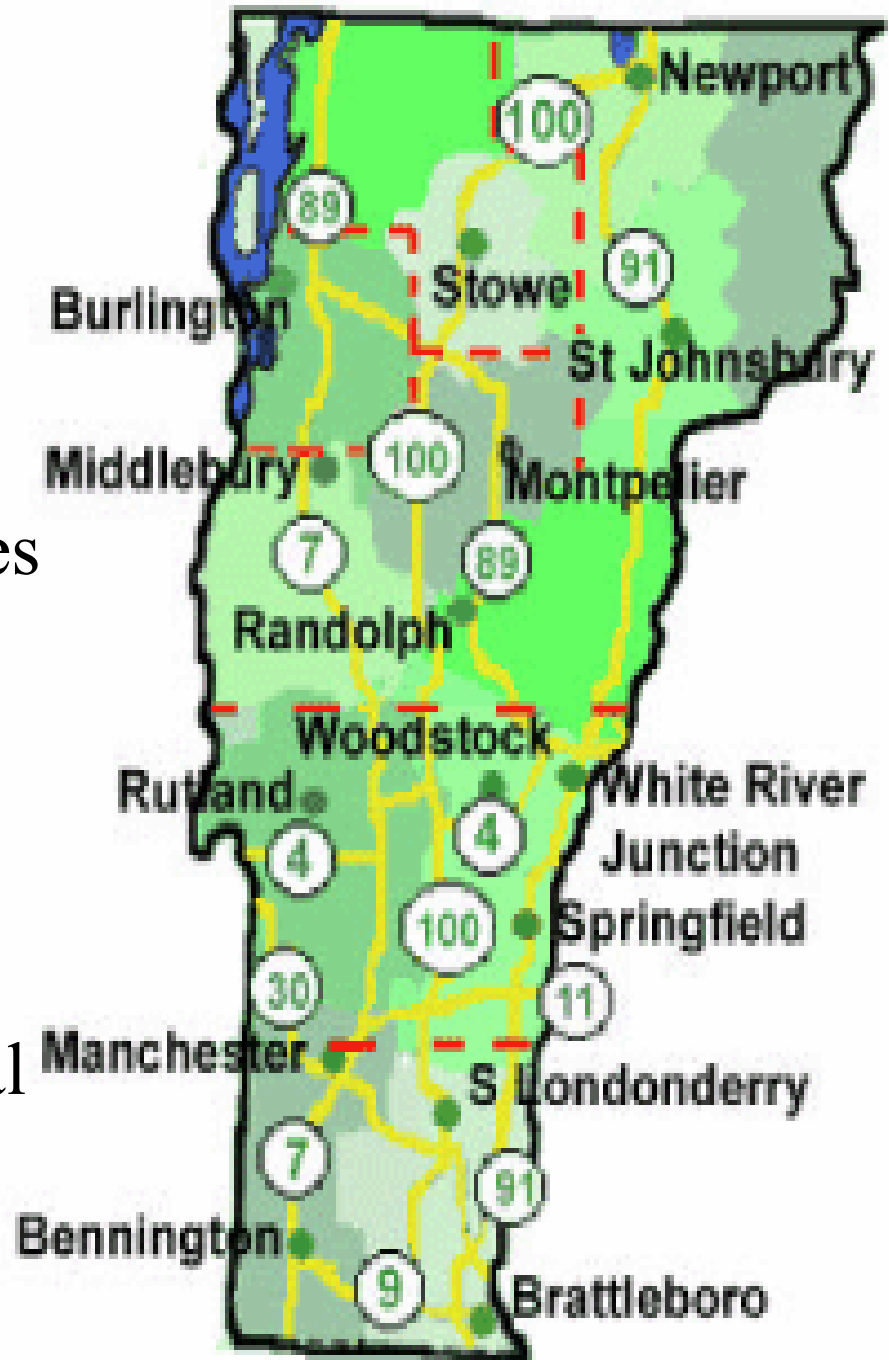
# Marketing Focused on Core Attributes

- Big Five Vermont Attributes
  - Agricultural Heritage
  - Cultural Heritage
  - Natural Heritage
  - Outdoor Recreation
  - Vermont Specialty Products



# Regional Marketing Organizations Tell Their Story

- Vermont divided into regions
- Each region creates lure pieces representing their attractions, packages, tourism product
- State funds design, printing, and promotions
- State develops the pipeline to the consumer through external sources.



# **Methods to attract customers to the regions of Vermont focus on place and stories of people**

- **Vermont Life Magazine**
- **Direct Mail Campaigns with Brochures**
- **Web site**
- **1-800-Vermont**
- **Travel Trade Shows**
- **Advertising in Major Eastern Cities**
  - **Travel section of newspapers**
  - **Travel and Contemporary Magazines**
  - **Television during peak seasons**

# Information Source and Advertising Analysis

- Friend or co-worker 53.3%
- Advertising 20.7%
- A Magazine Article 19.3%
- A Newspaper Article 14.4%
- 1-800 Vermont 10.6%
- The Internet 9.5%
- A Travel Agent 8.4%

# **Service Enhances Visitor Experience**

- **Key Customer Requirements**
  - **Physical Safety and Security**
  - **Food Safety and Sanitation**
  - **Information that matches needs**
  - **Anticipation of guest needs**
  - **Individual level of comfort**
  - **Caring and genuine friendliness**

# Service Quality Leads to Good Numbers

- People are satisfied when they have an emotional connection with the product.
- In 1998, 55% of Vermont visitors made more than one trip, the median number of trips was two.
- 66% of Vermont visitors came to Vermont more than once in the past five years. 35% have visited more than five times in the past five years.

# Challenges to Sustaining Tourism

- Consistent service and product quality
- Reduce reliance on anchor resort destinations
- Disperse tourists throughout regions
- Protect fragile ecosystems from overcrowding
- Reinvigorate the working landscape and farms
- Minimize urban sprawl into rural areas
- Protect historic structures such as barns
- Support local farmers and local products

# Defining the Market

- “The new tourist”.
  - more mature and more experienced
  - individual or small group trips
  - variety and unique vacation experiences
  - enriching, authentic and educational experience
  - high level of concern for conservation
  - customized vacations integrating spontaneity, novelty, and safe adventure
  - sophisticated, demanding a high quality product
  - willing to pay more

# Travel behavior of this market segment

- average stay of between 13 and 21 nights
- spends between \$1,500 and \$3,500 on international vacations per person
- prefers rustic and simple accommodations for an ecotour
- prefers experiential learning to formal learning while on vacation

# Other defining characteristics of the “new tourist”

- Quality Conscious
- Special interests                      Environmentally aware
- Seek authenticity                      Spontaneous
- Risk takers                              Nature lovers
- Urban/Suburban                      Physically active
- Mentally active                      Health conscious
- Seek handmade                      Want to be different
- Adventurous

# Searching For Market Segment

- Pam Wight, a noted ecotourism researcher described the difference between the “experienced ecotourist and the general consumer interested in ecotourism.”

# The experienced ecotraveler is more likely to:

- select uncrowded wilderness
- new experiences rather than revisit familiar places
- exotic oriented
- high level of risk and adventure
- comfort is not a requirement

# General Consumer Interested in Ecotourism: Ideal Customer For Integrated Rural Tourism

- Study and learn
- Nature and culture
- Revisit familiar places
- Comfortable surroundings
- People oriented

# Marketing Strategies

- Market development
  - Identify and capture new markets
- Market penetration
  - Access new customers in same market segment
- Single line with numerous hooks
  - high per person cost
  - high capture rate
- Cast a wide net
  - low per person cost
  - high percentage of rejects

# Single line with numerous hooks

- Hooking customers with marketing mix
  - friends or family High Credibility
  - presentations and exhibits
  - third party articles
  - travel guides
  - web sites
  - television shows
  - television ads
  - newspaper ads
  - magazine ads Low Credibility

# Visitor Cycle

- Pre-arrival
  - Marketing materials & Decision making process
- Arrival-customer is hooked! Service time!
  - Greeting and trust established
- Occupancy
  - Immersion in the vacation experience
- Departure
  - Farewell and return to reality
- Post visit follow-up
  - Maintaining the relationship

# Occupancy Stage

Consumers buy product attributes but experience the product through the service delivery process.

- During the Occupancy Stage, the service provider has the most opportunity to gain a customer for life or to lose a customer forever.
- Gaining a customer for life results in reduced marketing costs per customer through referrals and return customers.
- Losing a customer forever results in greater marketing costs per customer.

# Service Characteristics

Service quality is more important than product quality in satisfying visitors

- Service is intangible
- Service is a feeling
- Service is difficult to measure
- Service is a perceived value
- Service is a result of caring
- Service results from positive personal interactions and sincerity.

# Delivering Quality Service

- Develop a customer focus work ethic
- Conduct orientation and training
- Make service a philosophy of the organization
- Understand customer needs and expectations
- Monitor customer satisfaction
- Management systems focused on customer

# Post travel stage

- Keeping customers
  - Build a long term relationships with customers
  - Maintain a data base with customer information
  - Publish periodic newsletters
  - Send random announcements of new offerings
  - Highlight people and place, not exotic attributes
  - Build a club like atmosphere
  - Share database with partners to increase demand for the region and for thematic products

# Role of Government

- Country image development
- Product development assistance
- Work with inbound operators to encourage dispersion of tourism throughout country.
- Encourage community involvement
- Provide training and education opportunities
- Encourage low interest financing schemes
- Marketing pipeline to outbound operators and direct to consumers.
- Encourage and support partnerships

# Role of NGO's

- Provide training and educational opportunities
- Provide assistance in association management
- Encourage diversification of tourism economy
- Assist in product development activities
- Provide financial planning and management assistance to tourism enterprises.
- Conduct assessment of proposed projects with attention to environmental, sociocultural, and economic impact.