

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Strategic Marketing Plan 2013

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1. Executive Summary

The Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association is the destination marketing organization (DMO) that serves the City of Parksville, the Town of Qualicum Beach, and the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) communities of Nanoose Bay, Coombs, Errington, Hilliers, Whiskey Creek, French Creek, Qualicum Bay, Bowser, and Deep Bay. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism is a stakeholder-based organization lead by a volunteer Board of Directors that has been operating formally since 1997. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism is funded primarily by the 2% Additional Hotel Room Tax / Municipal Regional District Tax (AHRT / MRDT) that is collected by properties in Parksville, Qualicum Beach, and in applicable areas of the RDN.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism has traditionally targeted families from British Columbia's Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island for summer-style vacations with an eye to continually extend our peak season further into the Spring and Fall. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism has worked to grow the shoulder and off-seasons by targeting groups / meeting planners and sports events.

The Parksville and Qualicum Beach region has numerous advantages over our main competitors including ease of access, product concentration, and value. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism focuses on these advantages to varying degrees in all of our primary markets: Groups Sports & Meetings / Sports; Summer Season Leisure; and Shoulder / Off-Season Leisure.

Continued economic uncertainty in 2013, removal of the Harmonized Sales Tax in British Columbia, introduction of the new Destination BC provincial DMO, and ongoing negative perceptions of BC Ferries in the Lower Mainland will undoubtedly affect Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism has consistently used research to develop successful shoulder and off-season campaigns promoting specials. The organization escalated these efforts with the community branding initiative that was conducted in 2012. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism is in a better position than ever before to further target visitors based on their emotional connections to travel and their values by leveraging the Canadian Tourism Commission's (CTC) "Explorer Quotient" (EQ) and conducting corresponding primary research with both visitors and stakeholders.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism recognizes the need to work within the community to ensure the new brand and the EQ are being utilized by our stakeholders to the fullest extent. The organization's outreach will be especially important to ease the potential concerns of Lighthouse Country, Nanoose Bay, and Arrowsmith Coombs Country stakeholders regarding the new brand's focus on the place names of Parksville Qualicum Beach. Ongoing training sessions and support that is easily accessible to stakeholders throughout the region will bring a new facet to Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's efforts in 2013 and beyond.

2. Situation Analysis

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's new brand and EQ resources will allow it to further differentiate the region to key markets of the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island.

As the region does not receive a relatively large amount of visitation from the US, many of the issues that plague other destinations are not felt as heavily in Parksville Qualicum Beach. However, as other Vancouver Island and British Columbia destinations that have relied on US visitation look closer to home, they are creating more advertising noise in the marketplace that must be detrimental to Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's efforts. It was previously felt that this would have a minimal effect on the Parksville and Qualicum Beach region due to strong value-based differentiation from Victoria, Whistler, and Vancouver. Unfortunately, extremely low rates offered in these markets continued to minimize our region's value proposition in 2012 – especially when our region reported the second highest average rate in BC (behind other Vancouver Island) in July and August 2012 (PKF Trends).

The last minute travel trend is challenging the industry on many levels including staffing and pricing levels. This trend is not likely to diminish so destinations must learn to work with the last minute traveler rather than against. Continued targeting of Vancouver Island and Lower Mainland visitors is a must in order to earn business.

Economic uncertainty further emphasizes Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's need to focus on its strength in close-in markets, especially Vancouver Island, and to react to opportunities and threats when required.

2.1. Environment

The following information provides an overview of the external environment affecting the Vancouver Island and BC tourism industry. The external environment is difficult to influence or control. It is the attempt to capitalize, through controllable marketing programs, the demands and trends noticed in the market. Analyzing these factors helps highlight long-term marketing opportunities and threats.

Social and Cultural Factors

From a consumer perspective there are certain factors that affect consideration and choice of destination for travel experience:

1. Continued global economic uncertainty.
2. Time / busy personal and professional schedules.
3. Convenience - competing against attractive all-inclusive packages, direct flights vs. driving conditions.
4. Negative publicity and rising costs of BC Ferries deter Lower Mainland residents from visiting. There are a limited number of options for people to get from the ferry terminal to Parksville Qualicum Beach. BC Ferries is part of the vacation experience.
5. Past experience - many BC residents have traveled the province extensively
6. Word of mouth, reviews, and bragging rights.

Increased Consumer Debt Load & Frugality Trends

1. More people own their own homes, a function of lower interest rates over past few years.
2. Real estate prices have been higher in BC than other provinces combined with high income.
3. Spending on home improvement and more time in own backyard.
4. The recovering economy has lead to frugality being trendy.

Time Compressed

1. Fewer people take full vacation time opting for frequent shorter vacations.
2. People are busy in both work and home life with more responsibilities and greater connectivity. They are always connected to work with cell phones, Blackberries, and Internet leaving little time to 'unplug'. "Not only are some Canadians not taking their full allotted holiday time, those who do manage to take time off often can't turn off completely", reveals an Expedia.ca survey. "Whether they lug their laptop to the beach or stay plugged in via voice mail and e-mail, there's a growing trend to staying in touch."

The exponential growth of social media has encouraged people to check-in, tweet, blog, and update during vacation to keep friends and family current. This makes it even easier to send that quick work-related email and the cycle continues.

Economic and Business Conditions

Global economic uncertainty continues to be top of mind and BC is not immune from its effects.

For some people travel is an essential part of their lives, while for others it is something that can be passed over for other material goods.

The Canadian dollar also impacts consumers' choices. The strong Canadian dollar has resulted in more travel to the US and American travelers staying home. It also encourages winter long-stay visitors to return to the US. A strong Loonie normally accompanies high fuel prices as the Canadian economy is so closely tied to natural resource market strength. Rising fuel prices are proven to keep people travelling closer to home.

Destinations that relied on US visitors are becoming more cost-competitive with effort to attract regional visitors - this is especially true of Whistler and Victoria.

Financial Environment

The fiscal year for the Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association begins in January, which allows only a slight lead-time before the start of the major marketing season for summer travel. Since budgets are not officially approved until November, the upfront costs of pre-placement of advertising associated with the marketing program are often booked the fall before, consequently a cash flow conflict between funding and expenditure may exist.

Long-term planning of programs and strategy is required to effectively grow the tourism expenditures in all markets. Many of the programs developed have a multi-year approach. For instance, Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's community brand initiative required up-front costs. As these costs may be viewed as amortized over a number of years, Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism is taking a longer-term view of these markets and the development of media to reach them, but many external factors including budget allocation are not fixed on the longer-term vision of the marketing efforts.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism cannot have an accurate projection of its annual revenue until October when the summer AHRT / MRDT numbers are released. This forces staff to be ultra-conservative with spending until the end of the third quarter to avoid over-extending the budget. Conversely, if revenue is actualizing higher than expected, there is only three months left in year to promote – when visitors are not traditionally predisposed to travelling.

Uncertainty around Destination BC Community Tourism Opportunities matching funding also forces Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism to hold off on spending until support can be confirmed early in the government fiscal year.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's conservative budgeting combined with higher than anticipated AHRT / MRDT revenues have allowed the organization to weather the economic storm better than what was expected.

Political Issues

1. Evolving tourism structure, organization, responsibilities, and funding on both a local and provincial level.
2. Government priorities such as the Harmonized Sales Tax and Destination BC reorganization are impacting tourism marketing programs and tourism industry.
3. There are concerns that government support for tourism (through the AHRT / MRDT) might weaken and that industry might need a well coordinated lobbying program.
4. The "Brentwood-Gate" instance of intense media coverage surrounding a government meeting at a resort resulted in an instantaneous decrease in spending by this market – Parksville Qualicum Beach's largest off-season generator.

Laws and Regulations

1. Building trust and credibility with consumers.
2. Heightened awareness by consumers of privacy and security issues.
3. Email spam results in increased consumer annoyance.
4. Privacy legislation has an impact on marketing to consumers.
5. Changes to enforcement of blood alcohol level has impacted visitor spending.

Media Environment

The media environment is fragmented with multiple stations, satellite, etc. Consumers have more choices to watch the same program. Determining the best mix of media channels is becoming more and more time intensive and requiring more research. It also requires more of a niche product approach as more outlets become very focused on specific topics.

As media channels evolve – particularly on-line and social media – and traditional print media declines, this is making it harder to offer traditional DMO coop initiatives.

As Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism becomes more focused on segmentation, this may lead to more opportunities to create more targeted messages within these fragmented media. The EQ will guide Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's decision-making around appropriate media selection for traveler types.

Because of the affluence and size of the Lower Mainland market, other organizations target residents for their products and services through media. This affects Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's share of voice in the market.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's strength in social media and other online marketing channels gives it a competitive advantage over the majority of destinations that are targeting our primary geographical markets. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will continue to invest time and resources on social media and other online opportunities in 2013 and continue capitalizing on its strengths in these channels.

2.2. The Organization

The Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association is a stakeholder-based non-profit destination marketing organization that serves the City of Parksville, the Town of Qualicum Beach, and the Regional District of Nanaimo communities of Nanoose Bay, Coombs, Errington, Hilliers, Whiskey Creek, French Creek, Qualicum Bay, Bowser, and Deep Bay. As Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's mandate is strictly external marketing, it is complemented by the Parksville and District as well as the Qualicum Beach Chambers of Commerce who operate the local visitor information centres. The following are Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's Vision and Mission statements:

Vision

To promote and enhance Parksville Qualicum Beach as a world-renowned all season tourism destination.

Mission

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism shall successfully market the region externally to strengthen economic viability for the stakeholders and the communities we serve.

2.2.1. History

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism was established in 1997 originally as the Parksville-Qualicum Beach Tourism Association and changed its name shortly afterwards to address the fact that the organization represents more than just Parksville and Qualicum Beach. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's founders recognized that, in order to properly develop and implement a professional and successful regional marketing plan, the organization would need stable, long term financing. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism was also aware that our local governments, due in large part to the high percentage of their revenues from the residential tax base, were, unlike other jurisdictions on the Island, unable to financially support tourism marketing in some direct form.

The result was Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's "Fair Funding Formula" that is a model for many jurisdictions throughout British Columbia. This formula consists of membership dues, publication sales revenue, and cooperative marketing with our stakeholders plus implementation of an Additional Hotel Room Tax (AHRT, now known officially as the Municipal Regional District Tax or MRDT).

The accommodation sector showed its faith in Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's plans by agreeing to what was originally a 1% AHRT. It has been in place in the City of Parksville and the Town of Qualicum Beach for 5 years and, as of February 1, 2005, it was raised in these jurisdictions to 2%, the maximum

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allowed under the Provincial Act. The 2% AHRT was implemented in November, 2005 in Electoral Areas E, F, G and H of the Regional District of Nanaimo.

The accommodation sector, when considering the additional hotel room tax (AHRT) proposal, indicated a strong sense that they were carrying an unfair portion of the cost of tourism promotion. They pay the highest membership dues, have to collect the AHRT, and deal with their guests' questions about it, while over 75% of every tourist dollar is spent outside their facilities. They felt that every business should be contributing in some way as all were benefiting from our success.

To answer these concerns and deliver on the promise of a fair funding formula, Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism approached the respective business communities with the idea of a \$20 increase to their business license specifically for external tourism promotion. They strongly supported the idea and it was instituted in 1998. The City of Parksville has since discontinued this support but the Town of Qualicum Beach remains an investor in the manner.

Research conducted in 2007 as part of Tourism BC's "Community Tourism Foundations" program pointed to the weakness of the term "Oceanside" in our primary target markets with less than 1% of the sample being able to attribute it to the Parksville Qualicum Beach region. Oceanside Tourism swiftly changed its logo and marketing focus to promoting our geographical place names but chose not to change the name of the association at that time.

With the support of its municipal and regional district partners, Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism became an "eligible entity" under the Hotel Tax Act in 2009. This allows Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism to receive AHRT funding directly from the Province rather than flowing through the municipalities and regional district.

Sport tourism development began in late 2010 as a result of Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism re-structuring its Groups (meetings and small conferences) strategy in order to meet the needs of this emerging opportunity. An in-house Sales Director position was developed to replace the Vancouver-based contractor that had been in place since 2006.

Staff turnover in late 2010 combined with the organization's impending change from annual membership to an "a la carte" stakeholder model encouraged Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism to re-structure its operational approach in 2011 for 2012 and beyond. This included hiring a Marketing Coordinator with a split mandate of stakeholder program development and social media / online management.

Destination / community branding was the focus of effort in 2012. The Community Brand Team was established with representatives from all relevant stakeholder groups and communities to ensure objectivity and transparency throughout the project. Investment in the Canadian Tourism Commission's

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Explorer Quotient (EQ) formed the foundation of the research effort that included primary research with both visitors and local residents / stakeholders.

Brand research findings once again pointed to the disconnection between the term Oceanside and the place names of Parksville and Qualicum Beach. As a result, association stakeholders voted in October to change the organization's name from Oceanside Tourism to Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism.

2.2.2. Organization Services

1. Groups Sports & Meetings marketing, with an emphasis on relationship building to maximize region-wide impact while generating short-term business for our stakeholders.
2. Independent / leisure travel marketing, with an emphasis on consumer marketing and developing social media and online marketing programs.
3. Media relations, with an emphasis on developing proactive strategies to capitalize on opportunities in small market / regional media.
4. Stakeholder services, emphasize keeping stakeholders engaged while developing relevant marketing programs for all sectors.

2.3. SWOT Analysis (as identified at Board Strategic Planning Session)

Strengths

- The new brand has been well researched and grounded in visitor insights. The brand attributes, promise, essence, identity and creative expressing is clear and compelling.
- There is strong internal support for the new brand – from the board and from the multi-stakeholder branding committee.
- Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism provides significant value to its members through an a la carte stakeholder model delivered through a range of marketing opportunities. The association is considered to be “reasonably well-funded”.
- There is a strong understanding of the tourism market and the association has demonstrated the ability to stay current. This is supported by a willingness to adapt to change.
- Additional strengths include:
 - A strong and committed board
 - A strong Executive Director and team
 - Good relationships with the Chambers of Commerce and municipalities
 - The diversity of stakeholders represented on the board.

Weaknesses

- While the association provides value to members, it is not always as easy to demonstrate the value.
- The demonstration of value is compounded by the difficulty of being relevant to the diversity of stakeholders and business sectors in the

region. This includes the challenge of meaningful stakeholder engagement.

- The capacity of the association for additional work is extremely limited – both staff size and capacity. With a volunteer board, the vast majority of initiatives fall to the ED and team.
- Additional weaknesses that are less of a concern include:
 - The difficulty making decisions in a timely manner.
 - Investing in too many initiatives (particularly given the capacity weakness outlined above).

Opportunities

- There is increased awareness of and interest in tourism in the community as a result of the branding initiative.
- The visit friends and relatives (VFR) market is large and strong.
- Local residents and businesses potentially are strong proponents of tourism. They represent an untapped marketing channel.
- There are increased opportunities for tourism partnerships, including a strong Vancouver Island DMO community.
- The association has new, clear target audience profiles (three primary Explorer Quotient (EQ) segments, based on the Canadian Tourism Commission segmentation).

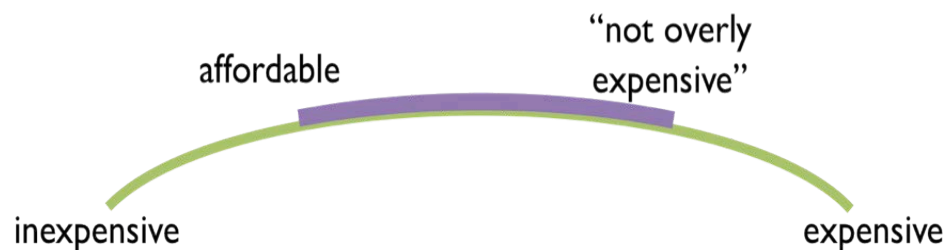
Threats

- Lack of engagement with outlying communities. The “Parksville Qualicum Beach” branding could worsen the relationship.
- There are very high expectations in the community for Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association to engage with them.
- There remains some uncertainty in the funding model, particularly in the current political climate. This could challenge the relevancy of a DMO.
- Additional threats to the tourism environment were also identified:
 - There are stronger tourism destinations on Vancouver Island (Victoria and Tofino).
 - The cost and perceptions of BC Ferries, particularly among the short haul market.
- Tourism infrastructure is weak:
 - Retail sector does not cater to visitors.
 - Inadequate public transportation and connections to ferries and airports.
 - Tourism industry is generally not export-ready.
 - Majority of tourism businesses are small "mom & pop" operations with small budgets, limited marketing experience, and reluctance to embrace new marketing channels.

3. Market Analysis

3.1.1. Value Proposition

Affordability



The Parksville and Qualicum Beach region overall is seen as moderately affordable destination for family summer vacations, winter long-stays, quiet off-season getaways, and meetings/small conferences. Attractions and activities are reasonably priced, perhaps even too reasonably.

Accommodation ranges from budget motels to luxury spa resorts but, even at the high-end of the scale, rates have traditionally been lower than comparable products in other destinations – this changed somewhat in 2011 and continued through 2012 with lower rates offered in Whistler and Victoria. According to PKF Consulting’s 2011 Trends report, Parksville Qualicum Beach had the highest rates in BC following Metro Vancouver, Whistler, and “Other Vancouver Island” which we attribute to Tofino.

3.1.2. Competitive Edge

Competitive positioning



How visitors see PQB



Assets

- Endless Beaches
- Kid-friendly
- Falls
- Parks
- Quaint
- Big Trees

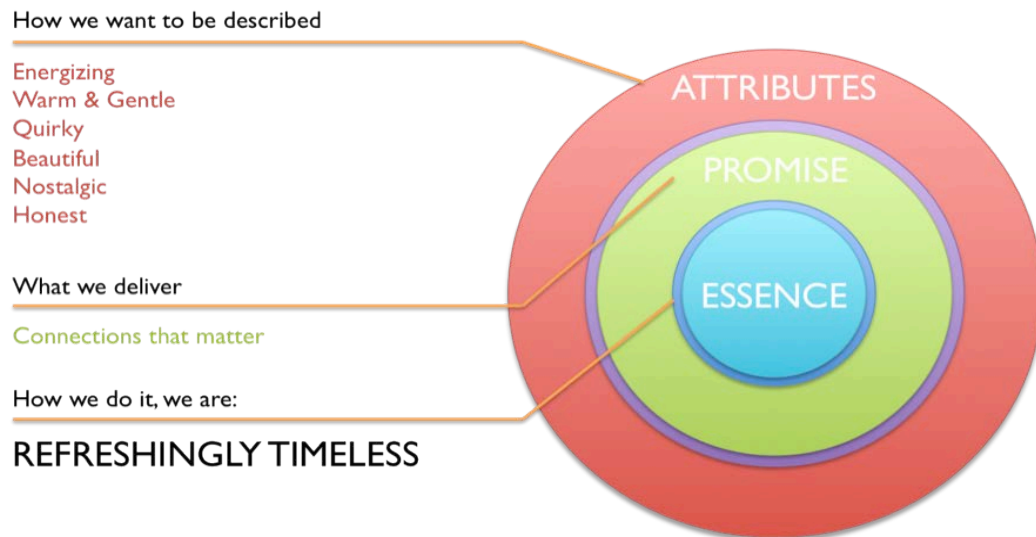
Differentiators

- Mountains
- Caves
- Forests
- Coombs
- Markets
- Festivals

3.1. Brand Model

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism embarked upon the most significant research program of its history as part of its community branding initiative. The organization retained Stormy Lake Consulting to conduct extensive visitor and stakeholder research to develop a brand model integrated with the segments outlined in the Canadian Tourism Commission's Explorer Quotient.

Brand model



3.2. Market Opportunity Types

Groups Sports & Meetings Market

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's primary market opportunity for the Groups Sports & Meetings Market is to pursue a market development strategy as it does not require significant product or service alteration on the part of our stakeholders. As the Parksville Qualicum Beach region has only recently been actively promoted as a Groups Sports & Meetings destination and is also new to a coordinated sport effort, we are essentially directing our present products to these markets.

IT / Leisure Market

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism has traditionally undertaken a market penetration strategy for the IT / Leisure Market by directing our present products to our present market to achieve higher sales, higher percent of the market potential, and more frequent use. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism has followed this strategy by progressively implementing a more aggressive marketing mix focusing mostly on increasing investment in online / social media marketing and

media relations. Most of this effort was initially directed to the summer months and has gradually been pushed to the shoulder seasons.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism has impacted the winter / off-season IT / Leisure market by pursuing a hybrid of the market penetration and product development strategies. This has been accomplished by promoting our present products to our present markets in a drastically different context in order to make them feel like the product itself is either new or improved. The winter / off-seasons are now receiving more promotion than ever before via media and seasonal specials.

3.3. Marketing Strategy Rationale

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism must pursue a multiple target market strategy in order to address both the current seasonal nature of our industry and the inventory growth that has affected year-round occupancies. Although the region continues to be a favourite destination for Cultural Explorers, Free Spirits, and Authentic Experiencers, we must not take this for granted and assume that summer will take care of itself.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism must embark on a dedicated and significant effort to increase shoulder / off-season meetings, sport tourism, and long-stays along with Cultural Explorer and Authentic Experiencer leisure visitation.

4. Groups Sports & Meetings Marketing Strategy

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's Groups Sports & Meetings marketing strategy positions the region as a beautiful retreat destination offering high value, easy and affordable access, central Vancouver Island location, and amenities equal to larger centres.

Emphasis has been on personal and direct selling with Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's Sales Director. Other aspects of Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's Groups Sports & Meetings / Sport promotional strategy include trade shows / marketplaces, advertising, and public relations.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism launched the Group Travel Assistance Fund incentive in 2008 to encourage Vancouver Island Conference Centre groups to consider Parksville Qualicum Beach hotels.

Due to economic uncertainties, the meetings market on Vancouver Island has not seen the large quantity of groups as per previous years. This is due to many factors including online conferencing, cut budgets, and particularly the perceived high cost of travel from Vancouver to Vancouver Island. The meetings market has seen a decline in large group meetings of 150+ delegates.

After conversing with many of Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's hotel stakeholders it was decided that the groups market needed stimulation and incentives in order to improve perceptions of Vancouver Island as an affordable and easily accessible meeting destination. Thus, offering discounts and sharing the cost of BC Ferry transportation the PQB Meet Here Allowance (MHA) was born.

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MHA eligibility follows loose guidelines based on a minimum two-night stay with fifty room nights in regional accommodations based on new group business to Parksville and Qualicum Beach. Hotel stakeholders who wish to take part in the program will pay for the group to travel one way on BC Ferries and Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will cover the second portion of travel for the group. The Sales Director will consider each eligible application on a one on one basis with the partnering hotel to ensure the program is fostering new or incremental business to the region.

The MHA will be complemented by a new initiative for Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism to effectively become a BC Ferries wholesale distributor. This will allow Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism to pass along discounts to accommodation partners so they may entice business by offering more value than other Island destinations. This program will also bring the cost of the MHA down for both Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism and its stakeholders.

An Island-based equivalent program will be put into place as well to provide incentive to Vancouver Island based groups to travel to the Parksville Qualicum Beach region at a reduced rate.

Groups and Sport tourism marketing requires behind the scenes local development work as well as sales skills and building on existing relationships with corporations, government and sporting organizations. The key to developing a sport tourism strategy is to foster collaborated relationships with regional, municipal, community and grass-roots sport organizations. Coordinating communication efforts with Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's stakeholders, Regional District of Nanaimo Parks & Recreation, District 69 Recreation Commission and the community at large is crucial to ensuring growth within sport tourism.

4.1. Groups Sports & Meetings Target Market

Geographically, Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's proactive target markets consist of Vancouver and Victoria / Vancouver Island. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will primarily react to opportunities from other geo-markets. Segments include the association, corporate, government, first nations, and sport markets including training camps, sport executive meetings, location scouting, and sport hosting events.

4.1.1. Role of the Brand in Groups Sports & Meetings Market

The “Refreshingly Timeless” attitude will help Groups Sports & Meetings visitors realize connections that matter to them. This is ideal for corporate retreats and conferences as attendees will leave refreshed, unrushed, and having made or renewed connections that will make a difference to them.

The brand is also ideal for sports events. Attendees will have an experience that is unique, uplifting, and which gives them (and their families) time to enjoy the connective qualities of sports.

The new brand model will:

- Connect the experiential and symbolic elements of the Groups Sports & Meetings decision-making process.
- More clearly differentiate the destination from others (with similar facilities).
- More clearly link Groups Sports & Meetings to leisure tourism.
- More clearly link Groups Sports & Meetings tourism to the community.

The new brand model will not:

- Overcome a facilities deficit for a specific group or event.
- Solve local communications challenges.
- Make the area more accessible, but it might make people more willing to make the extra effort to get here.

4.1.2. Market Needs

Parksville Qualicum Beach's Groups Sports & Meetings product satisfies the following buyer needs:

1. To get away from the everyday business environment to allow team members to concentrate and be creative without the distractions of larger centres.
2. To reward staff with beautiful settings and amenities.
3. To find a safe, refreshing, and unique Vancouver Island function destination other than the standard Victoria or Nanaimo locations.
4. To find a central Vancouver Island destination that allows affordable easy access for participants to boost attendance/participation and save travel time.
5. To find a Vancouver Island function destination that offers a range of accommodation styles and prices that all potential participants can afford.
6. To access a strong local volunteer base that's eager to get involved and make events happen.
7. To offer hosting incentives such as free parking, and Meet Here Allowance (MHA) funding that offsets the costs of BC Ferry travel.

4.2. Positioning Statement

For meeting and tournament planners looking to break routine and escape the chaos of the city, a Parksville Qualicum Beach retreat fosters concentration and creativity. Unlike other Vancouver Island destinations, Parksville Qualicum Beach offers a central location and a wide range of accommodation and facilities to suit any budget.

4.3. Marketing Objectives

1. Target an increase in accommodation group spending from October to June by 5%.
2. Generate 25 highly qualified leads.
3. Develop a Parksville Qualicum Beach Sport Tourism brand that is recognized outside as a premier regional sport event host destination.
4. Assist local sport clubs and organizations in their pursuit of hosting sport events with development and maintenance of a free Sport Events Kit.

4.4. Groups Sports & Meetings Marketing Mix

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's Groups Sports & Meetings marketing mix includes:

1. Product
2. Partnerships
3. Pricing
4. Promotion

4.4.1. Product

Parksville Qualicum Beach's Groups Sports & Meetings product features the following:

1. Three municipal venues that are the largest facilities in the region.
2. The largest hotel meeting space available north of Victoria.
3. The highest concentration of golf on the Island with seven courses to choose from.
4. Sport facilities suitable for regional events.
5. Unique venues and team building activities such as Milner Gardens and Horne Lake Caves, and VIU Deep Bay Shell Fish Research Centre.
6. Wide variety of accommodation suitable for any budget. This is important as the region often acts as a bedroom community for Port Alberni and Nanaimo when major sporting events occur.
7. Community cooperation that allows for national and international sport hosting opportunities such as U17 Hockey, U18 Women's Hockey, BC Senior Games etc.

8. Unique west coast wilderness that allows for the creation of a distinctive Island sport event such as Vancouver Island Iron Man or Vancouver Island Bike Race.

4.4.2. Partnership

Partnership Goals and Objectives

1. To be recognized by stakeholders as the “first stop” source for meetings and sport marketing support.
2. Work with individual properties to develop relevant opportunities that can be partnered with Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism or cooperatively with other stakeholders.
3. To work with Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism stakeholders on proposals for region-wide conference and sport event opportunities.
4. To offer cooperative advertising opportunities.
5. To partner with Island sport organizations to develop new grassroots sport events and grow existing sport for regional and provincial events.

Selected Partners

1. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism stakeholders.
2. Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Parks and Recreation.
3. District 69 Recreation Commission.
4. Vancouver Island Conference Centre.
5. Provincial and to a lesser degree National sport organizations.
6. BC Sport Tourism Network.
7. Island Professional Event Network (IPEN).
8. Parksville Qualicum Beach and Vancouver Island Sport Tourism Council.

Skill Requirements and resources

1. Sport tourism marketing requires behind the scenes local community, Council and RDN buy-in and significant development work as well as sales skills and building existing relationships with sporting organizations.
2. Budget and committee time donated to develop and implement the strategy created for the community through Destination BC’s Advanced Sport Tourism Workshop.

Communication and Evaluation with Partners

1. Monthly meetings with Groups committee.
2. Familiarization tours to local facilities.
3. Regular meetings with major partners.
4. Quarterly meetings with Vancouver Island Sport Tourism Council.

5. Quarterly meetings with Parksville Qualicum Beach Sport Tourism Council.

4.4.3. Pricing

Pricing Objectives

1. To communicate the high value of meeting in Parksville Qualicum Beach versus other Island and Lower Mainland destinations.
2. To provide meeting / tournament planners with a variety of price points for both venues and accommodations.
3. To communicate to VICC groups that Parksville Qualicum Beach resorts are affordable especially considering Group Travel Assistance Fund (GTAF) support.
4. To communicate to Lower Mainland groups that Parksville Qualicum Beach resorts are affordable especially considering Meet Here Allowance (MHA) support.

4.4.4. Promotion/Communication

Promotion Objectives

1. To benchmark GTAF interest and conversion.
2. To benchmark MHA interest and conversion.
3. To benchmark results of trade shows and sales missions.

Message Themes

1. Retreat to the Parksville and Qualicum Beach region where your team can leave the city's distractions behind and focus on the task at hand.
2. The Parksville Qualicum Beach region offers amenities equal to those of centres many times its size.
3. The Meet Here Allowance makes Parksville Qualicum Beach an affordable alternative to Mainland / Interior meeting destinations.
4. Parksville, Qualicum Beach accommodations are central to large events held in other mid-Island communities.

Promotion Blend

Personal Selling

1. Sales Director makes sales calls and attends trade shows / market places (CSAE, MPI, Tete a Tete, Two Nations Clipper Show, IncentiveWorks) along with interested Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism stakeholders.
2. Leads are circulated to partners for proposal submission / collection by the Sales Director.

3. The Sales Director will be responsible for handling leads from inception to signing business and beyond in order to maintain communication and continuity.
4. Joint sales missions with stakeholders to target markets such as Vancouver, Victoria, and potential markets such as Seattle.
5. Committed involvement to develop relationships in the Island Professional Event Network, Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce, Greater Seattle Business Association, and Parksville Qualicum Beach Sport Tourism Council.

Advertising

1. Dedicated "Meet Here" website.
2. Participation in Tourism Vancouver Island programs when applicable.
3. MPI and CSAE directory listings.
4. Meeting Places, Ignite, CSAE, The Planner, Ensemble Vacations publications.
5. Hosting BC, CSTA, and other sport tourism websites as applicable.

Sales Promotion

1. Direct mail campaigns to contact database.
2. Vancouver Island Sport Tourism Council & Newsletter.

5. IT / Leisure Marketing Strategy

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's IT / Leisure marketing strategy stands to evolve greatly in 2013 and beyond as a result of the 2012 community branding initiative.

Emphasis is on promotion and consumer communication. Other aspects of Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's IT / Leisure marketing strategy include partnerships with Tourism Vancouver Island and other Island DMOs.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism has established both qualifiable and quantifiable objectives with a focus on benchmarking in order to ensure our efforts are measurable.

5.1. IT / Leisure Target Market

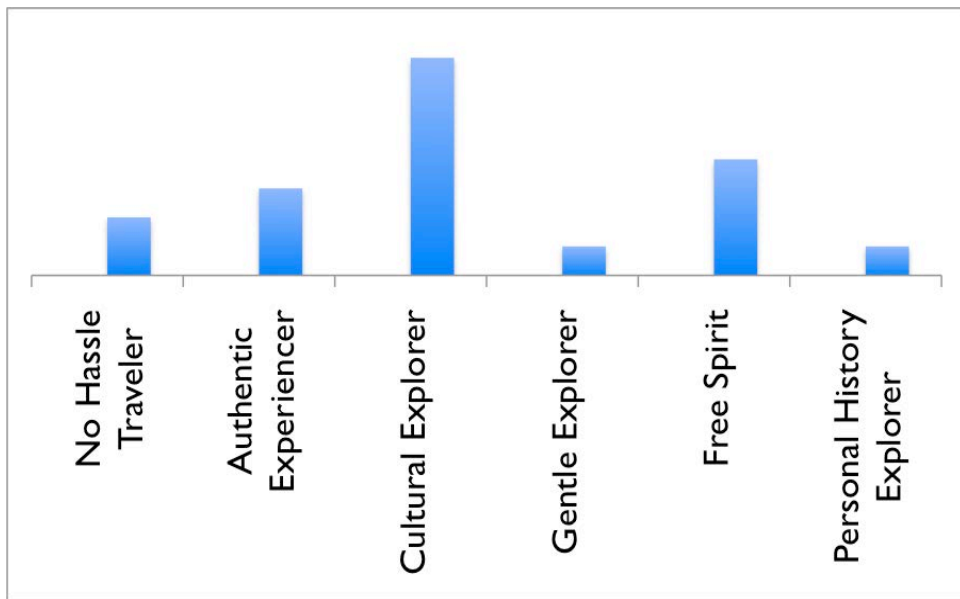
The Independent / Leisure (IT) travel is Parksville Qualicum Beach's current major market. This market has an emphasis on consumer marketing although Tourism Vancouver Island is also representing the region to leisure travel trade.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's primary IT geographical markets are Victoria and the rest of Vancouver Island, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, and the US Pacific Northwest.

5.1.1. Explorer Quotient Types

The Canadian Tourism Commission’s Explorer Quotient (EQ) reveals how different kinds of travellers view the world, and what they are truly searching for in a travel experience. As a result, we are able to closely associate each Explorer Type with a set of preferences for certain messages, tones of voice, and photographic subjects and styles.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism’s investment in the EQ allowed the organization to integrate this powerful segmentation tool into its 2012 community branding initiative visitor research. The following table outlines the breakdown of EQ types found to visit Parksville Qualicum Beach:










The Cultural Explorer is the number one segment found to visit year-round. Cultural Explorers are defined by their love of constant travel and continuous opportunities to embrace, discover and immerse themselves in the culture, people and settings of the places they visit.

The Free Spirit is most likely to visit our region in the peak summer season. Free Spirits are highly social and open-minded. Their enthusiasm for life extends to their outlook on travel. Experimental and adventurous, they bask in the best hedonistic experiences they can afford and that they can share with others.

The Authentic Experienter is the other visitor we find here primarily in the shoulder and winter seasons. Authentic Experienters are typically understated travellers looking for authentic, tangible engagement with destinations they seek, with a particular interest in understanding the history of the places they visit.

5.1.2. Market Needs & Positioning

Peak or off peak, old or young, Cultural Explorers, Authentic Experiencers and Free Spirits exhibit many of the same tendencies and the same needs when it comes to a vacation in the region. These needs have been translated into Parksville Qualicum Beach brand attributes that also form the region's positioning.

NEEDS		BRAND ATTRIBUTES
Rejuvenation		Energizing
Relaxation		Warm & Gentle
Entertainment		Quirky
Discovery		Beautiful
Reconnection		Nostalgic
Authenticity		Honest

Their Rejuvenation need:

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A break to our target audience isn't about totally zoning out and getting a tan on a beach in Mexico, it's doing something different, something quiet, but something uplifting for the soul. They need to feel a new person by the time they come to leave.

How we will respond:

We will provide them with a vacation that gives them the option to do as much or as little as they like. In an atmosphere that isn't forcing their hand at all. This way they will feel in control, and we will be described as **Energizing**.

Their **Relaxation** need:

They have a high level of time stress in their lives, they have a strong work ethic, and they probably take another kind of holiday during the year where they indulge a lot of their needs for trying something completely new. When they are in the region they need to feel like they have had a break.

How we will respond:

We will provide them with a vacation that isn't devoid of activities, as this would simply bore them, but we will give them a break that is filled with simple pleasures in an environment that is welcoming, nurturing and approachable, for them and their families. In this way, we will be described as **Warm & Gentle**.

Their **Entertainment** need:

They like unstructured travel, and unique experiences. They want to be entertained, but not in a mainstream way, they want to go back home and tell stories of the interesting sights, sounds and smells they have experienced.

How we will respond:

We will revel in our uniqueness, and the amount of fun that you can have in the region. But it's not your everyday kind of fun, it's a fun that can only be described as **Quirky**.

Their **Discovery** need:

They love to find new places and thrive in having an adventure, but adventure doesn't always have to be extreme, it will be as active or passive as the place they are in. They are delighted when they find a new trail to walk on, an incredible vista, and they revel in relating the stories of their travels to their friends and family back home. They enjoy discovering amazing villages, buildings, meals but in particular they seek natural wonder.

How we will respond:

We will provide them with a vacation full of great discoveries. And the sum of these discoveries will create a strong emotional connection for our visitors to the place. This emotional sense of wonder will mean we will be described as **Beautiful**.

Their **Reconnection** need:

They yearn for a connection to the past, and particular, to their past. Reliving moments that have made them who they are. They want to show and share these moments, and the emotions they bring, with their families.

How we will respond:

We will help them relive memories because the activities we offer, and the spirit in which we offer them is reminiscent of a better, purer time. In this way, we will be described as **Nostalgic**.

Their **Authenticity** need:

In their lives at home, so much is going on, and so much has been influenced by new technology, new activities and new influences. They want a vacation that gets back to what they know is real. They want this for themselves and for their families. "Good clean fun" is the name of the game. No x-box, no super late nights, no stress, no worries, just quality time.

How we will respond:

We offer "good clean fun" in abundance. We can credibly offer this in a way that is non-patronizing. We are real, we are open, and we are **Honest**. And as the overall tourism body, we have the opportunity to be credible in this.

5.2. Marketing Objectives

1. To apply the new brand and the EQ to all marketing efforts.
2. Help stakeholders make the new brand and the EQ work for them.
3. To overcome research findings that point to a lack of knowledge about the many activities and attractions throughout the region and how to find them.
4. To grow engagement and interaction on Twitter and Facebook.
5. To measure website performance and beat industry benchmarks.
6. To maintain first page organic search engine positioning for our primary terms.

5.3. IT / Leisure Leisure Marketing Mix

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's IT / Leisure marketing mix includes:

1. Product
2. Partnerships
3. Packaging
4. Pricing
5. Promotion

5.3.1. Product

Parksville Qualicum Beach's IT / Leisure product features the following:

1. The best beaches in BC.
2. The highest concentration of golf on the Island with seven courses to choose from.
3. Unique attractions such as Horne Lake Caves, Milner Gardens, Coombs, and the quaint shops of Qualicum Beach.
4. Wide variety of accommodation suitable for any budget.
5. Over 140 annual festivals and events.
6. Spectacular provincial parks including Cathedral Grove, Englishman and Little Qualicum River Falls, Horne Lake, and BC's most popular, Rath Trevor Beach.
7. Central Vancouver Island location perfect for daytrips.

Assets

Endless Beaches

Kid-friendly

Falls

Parks

Quaint

Big Trees

Differentiators

Mountains

Caves

Forests

Coombs

Markets

Festivals

5.3.2. Partnership

Partnership Goals and Objectives

- 1) To work with stakeholders to improve existing and create new cooperative marketing opportunities for all sectors of the industry.
- 2) To work with the Parksville and Qualicum Beach Chambers of Commerce to:
 - a. Implement the new brand / EQ at local visitor centres.
 - b. Overcome regional activity and attraction knowledge gaps.

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- 3) To work with the Parksville and Qualicum Beach Downtown Business Associations and the Lighthouse Country Business Association to align with and support their external marketing efforts.
- 4) To assist the Town of Qualicum Beach cultural plan with input and external marketing support.
- 5) To partner with Tourism Vancouver Island (TVI) whenever feasible to leverage their larger marketing budgets and credibility.
- 6) To work with Destination BC on internet strategies and participate in their Community Tourism Opportunities program if it is offered in 2013.
- 7) To partner with other Island DMOs to coop mutually beneficial programs not coordinated by TVI such as guide bulk distribution.
- 8) To enlist the support of the local community to help develop content for social media channels.

Selected Partners

1. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism stakeholders
2. Parksville and Qualicum Beach Chambers of Commerce
3. Parksville and Qualicum Beach Downtown Business Associations
4. Lighthouse Country Business Association
5. Town of Qualicum Beach, City of Parksville, Regional District of Nanaimo
6. Tourism Vancouver Island
7. Destination BC
8. Island DMOs
9. Local community residents

Communication and Evaluation with Partners

1. To develop a stakeholder communications plan to demonstrate the value of Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's new brand / EQ to their businesses.
2. Meet with Parksville and Qualicum Beach Chambers of Commerce and Business Associations monthly.
3. Participate in the City of Parksville economic development partners bi-monthly meeting.
4. Meet regularly with Town of Qualicum Beach staff to support their new cultural plan.
5. Participate in regular TVI marketing meetings and maintain relationships with TVI staff.
6. Support Destination BC programs whenever possible to show Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism is a provincial team player.
7. Liaise with Island DMOs regularly through TVI meetings and ongoing project discussion.
8. Work within the community to enlist interested contributors to social media channels.

5.3.3. Packaging

Packaging / Special Offer Program Goals and Objectives

1. To apply the EQ to the “Specials” section of the Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism website to tailor offers to our main traveler types.
2. To ensure there are at least 25 stakeholder packages / offers online at any given time.
3. To implement the BC Ferries wholesale distributor program developed with Jonview Canada that will allow Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism to pass along discounts to accommodation partners so they may increase their margins and entice visitors by offering more value than other Island destinations.

The Unique Package Experience

1. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will continue to provide stakeholders with materials and support on how to build and promote unique EQ driven packages through our system and beyond.

Selected Partners

1. Stakeholders may package aspects of their own businesses or partner with other businesses.
2. Stakeholders will be encouraged to partner with transportation providers whenever possible.

Package Components

1. Stakeholders submit packages to Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism for approval to ensure they meet the established guidelines and criteria.
2. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will make suggestions to stakeholders on how to communicate specials according to EQ segments.
3. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will encourage value-added packages rather than discounting.
4. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will also encourage stakeholders to include transportation options for packages.

Operations Plan to Book and Deliver Package

1. As Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism has no formal booking function, all packages must be booked directly through the stakeholder.

5.3.4. Pricing

Pricing Objective

1. To communicate that a Parksville Qualicum Beach holiday is affordable, especially in shoulder and off-seasons.

5.3.5. Promotion/Communication

Promotion Objectives

1. To earn new business and extend stays by ensuring promotions embrace the new brand.
2. To inform visitors of all the other fun stuff they can do during their Parksville Qualicum Beach holiday.
3. To build repeat visitation by reminding previous visitors of everything they missed last time they came.
4. To give stakeholders the opportunity to piggyback Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's efforts through website packaging and offers.

Message Themes

1. Convey the new Parksville Qualicum Beach brand.
2. Parksville Qualicum Beach is refreshingly timeless.
3. A Parksville Qualicum Beach vacation will allow visitors to make connections that matter - connections to family, nature, local culture, and themselves.
4. We will address visitors' needs by describing the area the attributes of: energizing, warm & gentle, quirky, beautiful, nostalgic, and honest.

Promotion Blend

Personal Selling

1. Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, and Seattle consumer shows.

Advertising

1. Strong presence in TVI publications and programs including the Vacation Guide and Outdoor Guide.
2. Search engine marketing, Facebook advertising, and other online media.
3. Continue BC Ferries poster promotion of seasonal specials.
4. Work with stakeholders to develop advertising opportunities relevant to their sectors.
5. Allocate funds to promote time periods when business is projected to be down with a focus on shoulder seasons.

Publicity/Public Relations

1. Dedicated support of Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's media relations contractor for media visits, publicity programs, article submission, and press releases.
2. Search engine optimization and website promotions.
3. Increased efforts dedicated to website blogs along with content curation from other sources.
4. Develop an approach to supporting Parksville Qualicum Beach messaging on tourism websites such as TripAdvisor and the new Google Field Trip.
5. Smartphone apps and mobile website to reach visitors on the go.
6. Engaging visitors through Twitter and Facebook.
7. Leverage local resident support and passion for the region to develop promotable content for visitors.

Sales Promotion

1. Direct email newsletters to opted-in consumers.
2. Mini-season stakeholder package promotion main call to action of advertising efforts.

6. Implementation

6.1. Marketing Organization

Groups Sports & Meetings Marketing

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism began developing the Groups Sports & Meetings travel market in 2005 as a shoulder and off-season strategy. Braidwood Hospitality Management was retained mid-2006 to sell Parksville Qualicum Beach as a destination for groups, meetings, incentive, and sports tourism in addition to some travel trade relations. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's Executive Director was responsible for all marketing required for sales support.

With the strategic direction change to focus more specifically on the sport tourism market, Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism ended its relationship with Braidwood in late 2009. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism hired Karyn Doerksen as its in-house Sales Director in late 2010 to become more involved with the development of this important segment.

Geographically, the Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's proactive target markets consist of Vancouver and Victoria / Vancouver Island. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will primarily react to opportunities from other geo-markets. Segments include the association, corporate, government, first nations, and sport markets including training camps, sport executive meetings, location scouting, and sport hosting events. As the Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism is still relatively new to the sport market and events are normally planned well in advance.

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Programs

- a. **Affiliations** - Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism is a member of Meeting Planners International (MPI), the Canadian Society of Association Executives (CSAE), Island Professional Event Network (IPEN), the Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance (CSTA), the BC Sport Tourism Network, and the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism has also been responsible for spearheading the Parksville Qualicum Beach Sport Tourism Council and the Vancouver Island Sport Tourism Council.
- b. **Publications** – Event and segment specific flat sheets and other collateral will be developed as needed.
- c. **Advertising** – Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will advertise both cooperatively with partners and on its own in publications such as: MPI Directory, Ensemble Travel Group’s Vacations magazine, CSAE’s directory and resort travel supplement, Ignite magazine, The Planner, Business in Vancouver’s Meeting Places guide, and others.
- d. **Trade Shows** – Sales Director will attend events such as MPI functions, CSAE shows, IPEN events, Tete a Tete, CSTA, Two Nations Clipper Show, IncentiveWorks, and others. Gifts and giveaways will be purchased to increase exposure and lasting impression with show goers.
- e. **Travel / Hosting** – Personal selling and relationship building is integral to the success of both the meetings and sport aspects of this strategy. To build this rapport, Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism’s Sales Director will travel regularly to meet with planners and organizers – with partners whenever possible. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will develop opportunities to host potential clients when appropriate.
- f. **Local Familiarization Tours** – Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will coordinate bi-monthly familiarization tours for local stakeholders to increase knowledge of regional facilities.
- g. **Group Travel Assistance Fund** – An incentive for VICC groups to offset travel costs between Nanaimo and Parksville Qualicum Beach properties.
- h. **Meet Here Allowance** - After conversing with many of Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism’s hotel stakeholders it was decided that the groups market needed stimulation and incentives in order to improve perceptions of Vancouver Island as an affordable and easily accessible meeting destination. Thus, offering discounts and sharing the cost of BC Ferry transportation the PQB Meet Here Allowance (MHA) was born.

The MHA will be complemented by a new initiative for Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism to effectively become a BC Ferries wholesale distributor. This will allow Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism to pass along discounts to accommodation partners so they may entice business by offering more

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value than other Island destinations. This program will also bring the cost of the MHA down for both Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism and its stakeholders.

- i. **Internet** - Groups Sports & Meetings has its own section of the Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism website that features facility and services information and a request for proposals form. This section of the website will be overhauled along with the rest of the Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism website and re-launched with more focus on sport. A dedicated sport tourism Facebook page was developed to increase awareness both with locals and event organizers.

Independent / Leisure Travel Marketing

The Independent / Leisure (IT) travel is Parksville Qualicum Beach's current major market. The emphasis for this market is on consumer marketing. Traditionally Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's Executive Director has been responsible for developing the region's marketing programs and enlisting members' participation in cooperative advertising. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism hired Sharyn Sadauskas as Marketing Coordinator who is tasked with building stakeholder-driven sector specific programs and assist with website / social media development.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's primary IT geographical markets are Victoria and the rest of Vancouver Island, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, and the US Pacific Northwest. Demographics include couples traveling without children (shoulder and winter seasons) and families (summer and school breaks). Explorer Quotient segments include Cultural Explorers (year-round), Free Spirits (Summer peak season), and Authentic Experiencers (shoulder and off-season).

Programs

- a. **Brand & EQ Adoption** – Development of a stakeholder communications plan to demonstrate the value of Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's new brand / EQ to their businesses. Efforts will be made to help stakeholders make the new brand and the EQ work for them through workshops, webinars, and other means. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will also work closely with the Parksville and Qualicum Beach Chambers of Commerce to implement the new brand and EQ at local visitor centres.
- b. **Publications** - The 2013 Travel & Leisure Guide will be the first edition that implements the EQ. It will also be published in partnership between Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism and the Parksville Qualicum Beach News. The two organizations are combining their guides for 2013 to deliver content suitable for trip planning and as an in-destination resource.

The strategy introduced in 2012 will continue into 2013 featuring format, approach, and content that is more consistent with the changing reading habits to skimming. The guide acts as a springboard for visitors to access more content

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that interests them on the Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism website and through social media channels. A companion Facebook tab and advertising campaign will extend guide advertisers exposure year-round on this important social media channel.

Guides are distributed through a fulfillment contractor to visitor requests, visitor centres, BC Ferries, and BCAA and AMA offices. Victoria, Comox, and Nanaimo Airports also carry our guides. Measuring the success of guide distribution is difficult but Facebook tab and advertising is highly measurable.

- c. **Consumer Shows** - Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will attend consumer shows in Edmonton, Calgary, and Seattle with Tourism Vancouver Island in 2013. The Vancouver Home & Garden Show will be done without other Island DMO partners.
- d. **Cooperative Advertising** – As in the past, Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will offer a cooperative advertising opportunity to capitalize on Tourism Vancouver Island's (TVI) spending power in promoting their annual Vacation Guide and Outdoor Guide.

In order to introduce the stakeholder concept of “a la carte” cooperative marketing programs, Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will continue to introduce new opportunities that will allow businesses to get more exposure on our website and through external online, print, and possibly broadcast media.

These opportunities will be offered on a cost recovery plus administration charge basis for the most part. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will invest 15% of the total ad cost and, due to bulk buying power, stakeholders will continue to receive much more value than what they would receive by advertising on their own in any given medium.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism’s Marketing Coordinator will also work closely with stakeholder sectors and local groupings to build more relevant grassroots marketing opportunities.

- e. **BC Ferries Wholesaling** - Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism became a BC Ferries wholesale distributor in 2012 via Jonview Canada, a prominent receptive tour operator. This will allow Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism to pass along discounts to accommodation partners so they may entice business by offering more value than other Island destinations. Delays in the formal launch of this program to stakeholders were the result of the community branding initiative taking priority along with technology and security concerns. These challenges will be sorted for program launch in 2013.
- f. **Social Media** – Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism’s Marketing Coordinator manages social media communication primarily on Facebook and Twitter; secondarily on Pinterest and Instagram. Google+ will need to factor into 2013 efforts due to growing emphasis on this platform and impacts on search results.

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Social media efforts are focused primarily on engagement resulting in metrics that beat the vast majority of other DMOs in the social media space. Efforts are also made to amplify the messages of stakeholders and supportive local social media personalities.

- g. **Website** - Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism website will be overhauled in early 2013 to reflect the new brand and the EQ.

ParksvilleQualicumBeach.com is truly a "one stop shop" for visitors featuring comprehensive community, trip planning, accommodation, activities, attractions, dining, events, services, media, and contact information. The site is also used as a tracking mechanism for offline cooperative and destination awareness advertising with the primary call to action being the site's Specials section featuring stakeholder offers.

Ongoing content development and search engine optimization efforts have paid off with consistent high placement in search results. Increased efforts will be dedicated to website blogs along with content curation from other sources.

A mobile website and iPhone application were developed in early 2011 with great success. Android, Blackberry, and iPad apps were introduced in early 2012. The apps will continue to extend Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's web strength to this growing medium. 2013 website redevelopment will attempt to create a platform that is easier for mobile users to navigate in the hopes to encourage them to stay on the main site longer.

Media Relations

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's media relations efforts have evolved greatly over the years. Efforts were initially focused on promoting the multitude of events and festivals occur annually in the region. Media hosting and publicity events/campaigns now make up for most of the organization's success. Hundreds of articles have been earned by Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's media relations team ranging from newspapers and magazines to television and radio.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's Executive Director, Blain Sepos, and its contractor, Seasmoke PR, are responsible for media relations strategy and implementation.

Programs

- a. **Media Relations Contractor** - Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will continue to retain Seasmoke PR to build on our success and target primarily regional media on Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland to further support our close-in focus for 2013. Successful 2012 campaigns will be continued in 2013 including:
 - A "QR Code Rally" that had regional broadcast and social media personalities explore the area via a scavenger hunt of sorts.

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- A “National Relaxation Day” campaign that claimed this American observance as best enjoyed in Parksville Qualicum Beach. The Mayors of Parksville and Qualicum Beach were spokesmen for the campaign that saw coverage in every major newspaper in Canada both in print and online.
- b. **Media Hosting** - An essential part of travel media relations is hosting visits. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism proactively approaches qualified media who are known for topics that Parksville Qualicum Beach can deliver on such as spa, adventure, arts/culture, and events. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism also works closely with Tourism Vancouver Island to host media attracted through the Destination BC framework.
- c. **Media Attractions Pass** – Many media are choosing to experience a given destination as regular visitor rather than following rigid itineraries. Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism will continue to offer media an attractions pass that allows them to pick and choose any or all of the activities and attractions our region offers.
- d. **News Releases** – Seasmoke and Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism collaborate on news releases focused on timely seasonal events focused on local and short-haul media.
- e. **Destination Articles** - Reflect the theme and are produced in tandem with the Media Host Invitation. Destination articles have been a successful tactic as they are targeted primarily to small market newspapers that do not have staff dedicated to travel. Out of all of Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism’s media tactics, a professionally written destination article that is well followed-up on has the best potential to earn coverage for the region. Trend focused destination articles allow for a method of keeping current with emerging travel trends and aligning those trends up with what can be enjoyed in the Parksville and Qualicum Beach area.
- f. **Media Monitoring** – Seasmoke researchers locate as much coverage on the area as possible. PDFs are provided to Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism and are kept in a repository “inkwell”. Seasmoke strives to capture all coverage on the area, not just Seasmoke-related projects.
- g. **Website** - The media section of Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism's website requires regular updating of media coverage, releases, and story ideas.