

Bicentennial Planners will Target Strategic Markets

Chapter II described key markets for the Bicentennial: Montanans, recreation and leisure travelers, heritage and cultural tourists, Lewis & Clark "buffs," educators and adventurers.

Promotional programs will target each of the key markets strategically. Communication to Montana citizens and businesses will be needed through a variety of mediums, from newsletters and web sites to mass media and business organizations. Communication to nonresidents will be part of Montana's existing state and regional tourism promotion programming.

The top priority market is Montanans, including all of Montana's stakeholders: citizens, businesses, tribes, elected officials, agencies and preservationists. As noted, marketing the Bicentennial to Montanans is important for four key reasons:

1. Nonresident visitors will expect residents to be Lewis & Clark "experts."
2. More in-state travel among residents could have significant economic benefits.
3. The Bicentennial offers business opportunities for the tourism industry, retailers and manufacturers.
4. Awareness of the Lewis & Clark Expedition will facilitate efforts to preserve the Trail and key sites along it.

All four reasons could have a direct impact on economic growth in Montana. Building awareness about Lewis & Clark is important to help Montanans better understand their history, and in doing so, they will be interested in seeing and preserving their history. With increased awareness, they also can provide a higher quality experience for visitors. If visitors extend their stays, tourism revenues and jobs will result.

Commission and Partners will Coordinate Bicentennial Promotion

The Commission will partner with Travel Montana and Montana's six regional travel organizations to coordinate Bicentennial promotion. They also will coordinate with the National Bicentennial Council on promotional themes and schedules for Montana's Bicentennial events.

Chapter VI: Promotion

- ❖ Strategic Markets
- ❖ Supply and Demand
- ❖ Promotion Elements
- ❖ Timing Issues
- ❖ Recommendations
- ❖ Allocation of Resources

Promotional efforts targeting both residents and nonresidents are ongoing, but should continue with increased urgency. Peak Bicentennial years in Montana are likely to be 2005 and 2006 – the actual bicentennial dates of the Expedition. However, the national Commemoration begins on January 18, 2003 at Monticello, Virginia, with enormous fanfare and publicity. National attention and corporate involvement will be focused at that time, and it is important that Montana's programs and promotions are implemented early enough to coincide with the kick-off event.

Supply and Demand Drive Promotion Programming

Promotional strategies are based on supply and demand considerations. The supply side, or Bicentennial "product," includes Montana's segment of the Trail, key sites, supporting amenities and infrastructure, events and organizational capacity. The demand side, or "consumer," includes residents, existing visitors, potential additional visitors, businesses and other stakeholders. Key supply and demand considerations can be summarized as follows:

Supply Considerations:

- ◆ Availability of accommodations: varies widely by region of state
- ◆ Timing of existing/planned events: peak seasons/years vs. off-peak
- ◆ Summer vs. shoulder seasons: off-peak business is needed
- ◆ Corridors vs. travel regions: marketability of corridors requires coordination
- ◆ More visitors vs. longer length of stay (LOS): increased LOS provides higher return on investment

Demand Considerations:

- ◆ According to national research, there is low awareness/interest about Lewis & Clark among the U.S. population:
 - 86% have "heard of" the Expedition, BUT...
 - 74% are not familiar with the Bicentennial
 - Only 6% are "very interested" in visiting Lewis & Clark sites, BUT...
 - Montana is the #1 destination among people who are familiar with the Bicentennial
 - *Increased awareness will lead to increased visitation*
- ◆ 22 other states are competing for consumers' attention about the Bicentennial

**Building Awareness
about the
Bicentennial Will
Lead to Increased
Visitation.**

- ◆ The Bicentennial will last four loooooonnnnggg years – a marketing challenge in a "sound-bite" culture
- ◆ Other national or international events will compete for consumers' attention: Olympics, elections, natural disasters, political conflicts, etc.
- ◆ Promotions must balance the interests of residents with those of nonresidents
- ◆ Many potential Bicentennial visitors will be first-time visitors; however, repeat visitors are more cost-effective to attract

Key Promotion Elements Target Montanans and Nonresident Markets

Development of a comprehensive Bicentennial marketing plan was beyond the scope of this Master Plan. However, the planning team created a list of key promotional elements, based on their research and discussions with Commission members, Travel Montana and other partners. The promotional elements are divided into two broad categories: promotions targeting Montanans, and promotions targeting nonresidents.

Promotions Targeting Montanans

The goal of promotions targeting Montanans is to build awareness of, interest in, and support for, the Bicentennial. Montanans have expressed a number of concerns about the Bicentennial's impact. Promotional efforts must address those concerns while at the same time encouraging citizens and businesses to recognize the potential benefits of the Commemoration.

Key messages are to encourage Montanans to "explore Lewis & Clark in your backyard" and "enhance local facilities to benefit locals and visitors." Suggested promotional elements targeting Montanans are:

- ◆ General awareness-building:
 - Media relations (press releases, story ideas, event invitations, project updates)
 - "Lewis & Clark Moment" PSA's using print and electronic media
 - School curriculum development, teacher training, field trips
 - Campaign to "visit friends and relatives" in other parts of the state
 - Speakers bureau targeting business organizations and service clubs
 - Commission updates via web site, newsletters and e-mail



White Cliffs, National Wild &
Scenic Missouri River



Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail
Interpretive Center, Great Falls

- ◆ Orientation and interpretation:
 - Strategic orientation sites (rest areas, waysides, visitor centers)
 - Interpretive signs
 - Statewide and regional (corridor) brochures
 - Lewis & Clark 101 customer service training
 - Lewis & Clark in Montana history and guide books
- ◆ Events, projects and activities:
 - Bicentennial festivals, events, reenactments
 - Bicentennial themes at regular annual events
 - Solicitation of non-traditional partners in event planning (athletic teams, employee unions, business trade associations, etc.)
 - Announcement of work parties and fundraisers for site preservation and enhancement
 - Competitions related to the Bicentennial (fun runs, target shooting, boating)
- ◆ Business opportunities:
 - Direct mailing about sponsorship opportunities, national licensing program
 - Information to business trade organizations
 - Results of tourism research related to the Bicentennial

Promotions Targeting Nonresidents

The goals of promotions targeting nonresidents are to encourage repeat visitation, to extend visitors' length of stay and to influence potential first-time travelers to choose Montana as a Bicentennial destination. Key messages are to encourage previous visitors to "come back for the Bicentennial," to tell existing visitors that "there is more to see" or "enjoy Bicentennial fun while you're here," and to encourage potential Lewis & Clark travelers to "tread where they trod, see what they saw." Suggested promotional elements targeting nonresidents are:

- ◆ Orientation and interpretation:
 - Strategic orientation sites (gateway visitor centers and rest areas, waysides)
 - Interpretive signs and destination interpretive centers
 - Statewide brochure: "Lewis & Clark: The Montana Journey"

- Family of seven corridor rack brochures (similar design, distributed statewide, featuring regional Lewis & Clark story/sites, events, towns with amenities, major area attractions)
- Lewis & Clark in Montana history and guide books
- ◆ Travel planning and promotion (emphasize Bicentennial in existing programs):
 - Consumer and trade media advertising (magazine, newspaper, web, etc.)
 - Links to Lewis & Clark web sites (see Appendix I)
 - Montana Travel Planner packet
 - Travel Montana web site (www.visitmt.com) highlighting 7 corridors
 - Trade promotion: travel agents, AAA, motorcoach market
 - Transportation packaging: Amtrak, airlines, tour bus, fly/drive
 - Cross-promotion and packaging: hotels, outfitters, major retailers, car companies, .com's, adventure suppliers, contests, etc.
 - Media relations (travel writers, photographers, etc.)
 - Invite-A-Friend campaign asking Montanans to invite nonresidents
 - International promotion (Rocky Mountain International, etc.)
 - Cooperative promotions with National Bicentennial Council, neighboring Trail states (Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota)
- ◆ Events and activities:
 - Signature/national events marketed through National Bicentennial Council
 - Montana Bicentennial Calendar of Events (State Travel Planner, web site, etc.)
 - Bicentennial conferences, symposia, etc. promoted in publications targeting Lewis & Clark buffs and historians (*We Proceeded On*, National Council newsletter, state publications, Smithsonian, etc.)
- ◆ Montana products and services:
 - National distribution of Montana products licensed nationally
 - Montana Bicentennial sponsors promoted on web site, events calendar, etc.
 - Montana tour and guide services listed in Travel Planner, web site, etc.



Missouri River at Ft. Benton

The above list of promotion elements, though not exhaustive, provides some suggestions for Bicentennial planners as they contemplate strategic marketing.

Timing of Bicentennial Promotion is Critical

The official Bicentennial years of the Expedition in Montana are 2005-2006; however, state Bicentennial planners need to increase promotional efforts well before then. There are a number of reasons to believe that, strategically, "earlier is better:"

- ∪ The Bicentennial is four loooonnnnggg years!
- ∪ 22 states are promoting – competition will be fierce
- ∪ The Bicentennial kick-off is January 18, 2003 at Monticello, followed by the Expedition "launch" from St. Louis in early 2004 – both events will be well-funded with significant fanfare
- ∪ National sponsors likely will take an "Early In, Early Out" strategy
- ∪ Consumer burn-out is a danger (sound-bite culture - short attention span)
- ∪ Peak season lodging availability already is limited in many areas of Montana – spread the visitation over four years as much as possible

Recommendations for Bicentennial Planners and Promoters

Some implications and recommendations for Montana Bicentennial planners and promoters are the following:

- ◆ Be prepared for increased Bicentennial tourism as early as 2002 (following the Salt Lake Winter Olympics). The 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics sparked significant summer tourism throughout the Pacific and Inland Northwest. The Bicentennial will be promoted during the Salt Lake Games.
- ◆ Schedule some events in 2003 and 2004. National publicity will drive tourism, and many travelers will come early to "beat the rush." They will be disappointed if most events in Montana are scheduled only in 2005/2006.
- ◆ Time promotions to coincide with the national campaign in 2003/2004, and continue promotions through 2005/2006. Early promotion should be image-based to ensure that Montana is "on the map" for the national kick-off. Then the focus should be more event-specific for promotions in 2005/2006.

Gates of the Mountains Boat Trip



- ◆ Plan to address volunteer burn-out through event planning support, professional planning staff and paid reenactors (via donations or admission fees). Volunteers will not last through four years of intensive event productions.
- ◆ Emphasize off-peak seasons where possible (especially April-June, September-October). Expedition dates in Montana include late April through mid-June, and late September. Plan events and activities to coincide with off-peak dates, and encourage residents and heritage/cultural tourists (especially seniors) to travel in off-peak times to avoid heat and crowds.

Suggested Promotion Timing, Allocation of Resources

Based on the observations and implications listed above, the planning team recommends the following as an approximate guideline for timing of promotions and allocation of marketing resources:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Key Event</u>	<u>% of Resources</u>
2002:	Winter Olympics	10%
2003:	Bicentennial Kick-off	35%
2004:	Launch from St. Louis	25%
2005:	Westbound Journey	20%
2006:	Eastbound Journey	10%

Strategically, Montana has many competitive advantages as it prepares for Bicentennial marketing. Travel Montana already has outstanding tourism promotion programs in place, and the state's image is very positive. Among the "Lewis & Clark buffs" who are familiar with the upcoming Bicentennial, Montana is the number one Trail state destination. However, most of the population is unaware of the Bicentennial – including many previous Montana visitors. In order to achieve the highest return on investment of marketing expenditures, promotions must be implemented early, consistently and strategically to attract the numbers and types of Bicentennial visitors most desirable to Montanans.

Notes: