

The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism Checks in With Targeted Marketing

The country's tourism bureau shifts from mass marketing to tailored campaigns to help drive tourists to the area.

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The Bahamas is a popular vacation spot, perhaps as well known for its beautiful beaches as for its mass advertising blitzes. Now the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism is on a journey of its own, looking for a solution to collect visitor demographics and then design targeted marketing campaigns to reel in more vacationers.

The region's traditional advertising efforts rely on travel agents and tour operators to recommend the Bahamas as a destination, reinforced by television and consumer magazine ads. Those standard advertising initiatives needed to be retooled. "Most people continue to believe that the best way to go after business is to have massive advertising campaigns, and hope that the most appropriate people decide to come and visit your destination, [but] that is an extraordinarily wasteful way of going after business," says Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace, director general of the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism.

Looking for a reporting tool that would allow the Bahamas to more effectively use its advertising dollars, the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism called on Indusa Global to help select and implement a solution. Jo Ram, COO of Indusa, says Indusa implemented Actuate's Enterprise Reporting Application Platform to provide reports and cubes, or drill-down tools, to all users. "We wanted something that they were very familiar with and the Actuate analytics piece has a very Excel-type look and feel," she says.

The starting point for the new solution was a revision of the Bahamas Immigration Card, a tool used to capture visitor data. Indusa processes these cards and builds a data warehouse, including information on who the visitors are, what they like to do, and why they came to the Bahamas. Indusa then uses Actuate to generate reports and analysis to the Bahamas government and hoteliers. "We had an opportunity...to become much smarter about who our visitors are," Vanderpool-Wallace says. "Therefore we can go...after those people in those marketplaces that seem to be the most likely prospects for us." The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism is maximizing its marketing effectiveness by tailoring its efforts. According to Vanderpool-Wallace, hotel operators on one island significantly reworked their traditional advertising plans once they found that their best customers were a narrow segment of the population.

"When [the hoteliers] begin to discover that something like...60 percent of all their business comes from five market areas in Florida, suddenly they begin to revise how they spend their time and what they are doing with their money."

The reporting and data-collection capabilities also allow the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism to explore cross-sell opportunities. "They are now...[coming up] with email marketing campaigns, which are very specific to exactly what the visitor put on their arrival card," Ram says. "We may know they came in for their honeymoon, and possibly be able to email them eight or nine months later to invite them back to the Bahamas for their first-year anniversary."

The marketing overhaul represents a shift, not a reduction, in how money is spent. "As a direct result of the information we are getting, we are using our marketing budget according to what we think is going to have the best affect," Vanderpool-Wallace says. Data collected from the tracking cards makes it easier to tie visitor complaints and concerns to specific attractions and vendors, which is helping the [tourist] bureau refine its training programs. "We now take some of the money that we used to spend in advertising and use it to fix problems on the island, because that makes a great deal more sense--people leaving the country with a positive opinion, as opposed to just continuing to use the money for promotion."