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# Travel Offers Program

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Summer Campaign

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2014

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## **Summer Campaign - Travel Offers Program**

### **Overview of Program**

As a part of this year's marketing campaigns, the Southwest Ontario Tourism Corp. (SWOTC) introduced the Travel Offers program. This was SWOTC's first program of this nature and it had great response from the industry as well as consumers.

For the summer campaign, the website featured a total of 73 offers from 38 different tourism operators. The offers were featured in their own section on Ontariosouthwest.com with a navigation tab on the website's main menu; see Appendix 1 for a list of all offers. Each offer appeared in an appropriate category with most offers appearing in multiple categories. The categories included: Overnight Packages, Waterfront & Outdoors, Wine & Culinary, Family Fun, Couples Getaway, and Arts, Culture & Entertainment.

Overall, consumers showed significant interest in the offers and the campaign. SWOTC saw website traffic double over the same period last year. Of the various offers, hotels and attractions seemed to have the best results in terms of conversions; unfortunately, most restaurant related offers didn't get much traction. The travel offers resulted in a total of 1,798 referral clicks to partner websites from Ontariosouthwest.com.

As a reminder, it is SWOTC's role, with this campaign and overall, to compel travel to the region. SWOTC's measurement of success for this campaign is the referrals generated to partner websites.

It is SWOTC's hope that by providing this report, it will help you build even more compelling offers in the future.

### **Summer Marketing Campaign Activities**

- Free-standing insert (FSI) distributed via major dailies in the markets, shown in Appendix. The FSI was also distributed through nine DMOs and at targeted events throughout the summer. See Appendix 2 for a digital version of the FSI.
- Digital media included Trip Advisor, Google AdWords, Weather Network, targeted display ads, targeted mobile, Facebook ads & sponsored stories, and social media strategy.
- Website content updates to [www.Ontariosouthwest.com](http://www.Ontariosouthwest.com).
- Themed e-blasts distributed to OSW's email database.
- Media relations' activities including release distribution and story pitching.
- Consumer Contest – entrants had a chance to win an Outdoor Adventure prize pack valued at \$2500.00

## Results of Marketing Activities

Website traffic to [www.OntariosSouthwest.com](http://www.OntariosSouthwest.com) doubled to 73,509 unique visitors and 85,968 total visitors during the campaign, June 23<sup>rd</sup> – September 9<sup>th</sup>, compared to the same time period last year. SWOTC also saw a huge increase in traffic to the website from the United States, representing over 27% of total visitors, compared to an average of approximately 7% of total visitors last year. Digital media advertising resulted in 29,550,908 total impressions and 94,935 clicks of all digital ads.

Three themed E-blasts were delivered to a total of 8,519 email subscribers. The emails blasts averaged an open rate of 37.5%; exceeding the industry average of 20% for Travel & Tourism e-newsletters. Of those subscribers who opened the e-blasts, 893 unique people clicked on links pertaining to Travel Offers content. See Appendix 4 for the e-blasts that were deployed during the campaign.

A contest also ran during the campaign to help drive more traffic to the website and the offers section as well as increase OSW's email database. The contest ran for five weeks, June 23<sup>rd</sup> – July 31<sup>st</sup>, and had a total of 1,151 entrants from Canada and the United States.

## Program Insights

Accommodations and Entertainment & Attractions travel offers were among the most successful travel offers. Additionally, of the variety of incentives for the consumer to choose from, offers featuring discounts unique to the campaign performed better than offers featuring existing packages that were available through other sources.

Placement of the offer on the website page had no effect on which offer did well in terms of purchase conversions. An example of this is the Station Park Hotel London. The offer appeared near the bottom of the main Travel Offers page & Overnight Packages page and it was one of the most successful offers. Also, the WindsorEats offers also appeared near the bottom of the both Culinary & Wine and Travel Offers page and again, the operator was successful in terms of sales and also website referrals.

Additionally, in reference to website referral clicks, SWOTC found that the more successful offers also featured dedicated landing pages on the operators' website that related directly to the offer and provided more information as well as purchasing information. This shows that the easier it is for the consumer to purchase or book an offer, the more likely they are to buy.

When trying to determine success through measurement and tracking, offers that were unique to the summer campaign, or featured unique tracking codes, were much easier to track for partners than those that were already existing and available to consumers through other forums.

## Top Performing Offers

Many offers had success as part of the campaign. Figure 2 shows the Top 5 most purchased individual offers during the campaign by items sold. As the list shows, Entertainment & Attractions offers performed well as did Accommodations, shown in Figure 3, which lists best performing offers by operator totals by items sold. All of the operators shown in Figure 3 featured at least one offer that had accommodations as a part of the offer, with the exception of Viewpointe Estate Winery. Please see Appendix 1 to view the details of the offers provided by each of these operators.

Ideally, we would have liked to track each of the offers separately from the operators, as those listed in Figure 3, to allow for more in-depth conclusions to be drawn from the more successful offers; however this information was not made available by the majority of those who participated in the program. Many partners also indicated through anecdotal feedback that they most likely had many additional purchases of their offers by phone but were unable to track them unless a unique code was used by the consumer at the time of booking

**Figure 2**

Operator	Offer Name	Offer Description	Transactions	Items Sold
Clovermead Adventure Farm	Sweet Deal on the Adventure Farm	Receive \$2.50 off each admission ticket to Clovermead Adventure Farm when you purchase online. That's a savings of nearly 28%.	N/A	563
Port Stanley Festival Theatre	SWOTC Theatre Special	From June 1 - Sept 13, 2014 purchase 10 or more tickets to any one performance during our 2014 season and receive 10% off your order automatically.	9	113
Station Park Hotel London	Patio Package	Save on hotel & parking in the heart of London with the Patio Package from Station Park Inn. The package includes a one night for 2 in a deluxe suite, parking, one \$50.00 gift card to your choice from four great restaurants located steps from the hotel and you'll have a continental breakfast for two in the morning.	63	63
Viewpoint Estate Winery	Lunch at the Winery BOGO 50% Off	Purchase 1 lunch item at the winery and get the second item for 50% off. (2nd item must of equal or lesser value, limit one offer per table)	23	23
East Park	Family Waterpark Special Pass	Get an All Day Waterpark Pass for a Family of 4 for only \$50.00.	7	7

**Figure 3**

Operator	Listed Offers	Transactions	Items Sold
Viewpointe Estate Winery	4	32	32
HMCS Ojibwa	5	13	26
Kettle Creek Inn	5	15	15
Long Point Eco-Adventures	4	7	7
WindsorEats	3	6	6

## Top Website Referrals

Looking at the website referrals for the travel offers, referrals being clicks generated from the SWOTC website to the participating operator's website, it is clear to see that consumers were interested in the information they saw. There were a total of 1,798 clicks to partner offers from Ontariosouthwest.com. Consumers were willing to spend the time to find out more about the operators who listed the offer, as well as the offers themselves. Figure 4 below shows the Top 5 website referral totals by operator from their respective offer listings; and when comparing them to the Figure 2 and 3 on the previous page, there is definitely a positive correlation between more referral clicks and more offer purchases.

There are some limitations to the referral traffic figures as it is only possible to track the referrals from consumers who clicked on the two links listed within each offer. There most likely were many consumers who chose to seek out more information about the operators by using other means such as search engines or by phone.

If you would like to see a full list of all offers and the number of referral clicks received for each participating operator and their respective offers, please see Appendix 1.

**Figure 4**

<b>Operator</b>	<b>Referrals to Operator Homepage</b>	<b>Referrals to Offer on Operator Website</b>
Clovermead Adventure Farm	307	131
Long Point Eco-Adventures	116	97
Kettle Creek Inn	65	25
East Park	63	49
HMCS Ojibwa Museum of Naval History	61	16

## **Moving Forward – Lessons learned**

The 2014 Summer Campaign was SWOTC's first attempt at putting together a program like this and there were many lessons learned from the process. These learnings will be used to improve future programs for the consumer and for you, our regional tourism operators.

SWOTC is planning to run the Travel Offers program again in 2015, for future campaigns, and kindly ask that you give some thought into what offers you'd like to participate with. The planning process has begun much earlier for next year's marketing campaigns and SWOTC will begin reaching out for offers much sooner than this year in the hope of giving you ample time to pull your Travel Offers together.

Future programs will also feature simplified tracking. You will only be asked to track the number of transactions and items sold for each of the offers you submit and this information will only need to be provided at the end of each campaign. Also, tracking will not be optional for submitted offers. SWOTC is required by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport to provide in-depth results of all of our marketing activities and if a submitted offer is not trackable for sales, we will be unable to include it in future campaigns.

Thank you to everyone who provided their results. Moving forward as the program is refined and tracking simplified, it would be extremely helpful for participating operators to be more proactive in providing results based on the deadlines provided at the beginning of the campaign.

SWOTC will develop a similar report for the Fall Campaign. Please let Jen Moore or JT Uppal know if you would like any additional information that you did not see in this report included in the Fall Campaign report.

Finally, SWOTC would like to thank you once again for participating in the Travel Offers program and we hope you will join us again for next year's program. Stay tuned!

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

Please see attached Excel sheet, TravelOffers\_SummerCampaign. All offers are listed in alphabetical order by operator name to make finding a particular offer easier.

The spreadsheet also includes the website referrals to partner websites associated with each offer.

## Appendix 2

Free Standing Insert (FSI):

Page 1



Page 2



Page 3



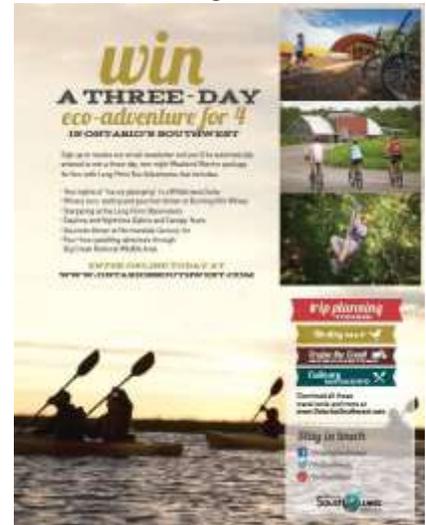
Page 4



Page 5



Page 6



### Appendix 3

#### FSI Distribution

<b>Circulation</b>	<b>Market</b>
62,279	Burlington, ON; surrounding Halton
48,725	Cambridge, ON
26,663	Brantford, ON; surrounding Brant
10,620	Guelph, ON
84,928	Hamilton, ON
53,000	Oakville, ON
34,279	Niagara Falls, ON
57,000	St. Catharines, ON
33,485	Welland, ON
380,000	Toronto, ON
423,041	Detroit, MI
7,000	Huron County, MI
49,000	Lansing, MI
43,371	Kalamazoo, MI
28,494	Bay City, MI
58,440	Flint, MI
32,220	Saginaw, MI
9,557	Mount Pleasant, MI
113,721	Toledo, OH
13,500	Midland, MI; Midland County
22,693	Port Huron, MI
78,700	Kitchener-Waterloo, ON

Appendix 4

June E-Blast:



**PLAY MORE SPEND LESS** *over 60 amazing offers >>*

<p><b>STEP 1</b> <b>SELECT YOUR shoreline</b></p>  <p><i>Beach blanket bliss</i> Home to Lake Erie, Lake Huron, and Lake St. Clair, Ontario's Southwest boasts many of the province's best beaches. <a href="#">SELECT YOUR BEACH HERE &gt;&gt;</a></p>	<p><b>STEP 2</b> <b>DECIDE YOUR ride</b></p>  <p><i>Anchors away</i> Cruise into one of our friendly marinas, or borrow our boats. <a href="#">CLICK HERE &gt;&gt;</a> <i>Trade 4 wheels for 2</i> 10 great motorcycle routes and hundreds of kilometres of cycling trails. <a href="#">CLICK HERE &gt;&gt;</a></p>
<p><b>STEP 3</b> <b>PURSUE YOUR passions</b></p>  <p><i>Shake things up</i> Reel-y big fishing fun in our freshwater lakes &amp; rivers &gt;&gt; Set up camp at one of <b>130+</b> campgrounds &gt;&gt; World-class birding, <b>300+</b> species of birds &gt;&gt; Explore our culinary routes, <b>40+</b> wineries &amp; breweries &gt;&gt;</p>	<p><b>STEP 4</b> <b>SINK INTO SERIOUS savings</b></p>  <p><i>Play more spend less</i> Take advantage of more than <b>60 amazing</b> offers and save big at area hotels, restaurants and attractions. <a href="#">FIND YOUR VACATION DEAL &gt;&gt;</a></p>

July E-Blast:



**SINK INTO  
SERIOUS**  
**savings**  
WWW.ONTARIOSOUTHWEST.COM

Take advantage of more than **60 amazing offers** on your next trip to Ontario's Southwest and **save big** at area hotels, restaurants and attractions.

<p><b>Accommodation</b> Sweet deals for sweet dreams. Find an accommodation offer for your next trip. <b>CLICK HERE »</b></p>	<p><b>Wine &amp; Culinary</b> Delicious deals. Find great offers at area restaurants and wineries. <b>CLICK HERE »</b></p>	<p><b>Couples Getaway</b> Table for two? Find special savings for your next couples getaway. <b>CLICK HERE »</b></p>
<p><b>Waterfront &amp; Outdoor</b> Great savings on the great outdoors. Find special savings on fresh-air fun. <b>CLICK HERE »</b></p>	<p><b>Family Fun</b> The more the merrier. Find special savings for your family getaway. <b>CLICK HERE »</b></p>	<p><b>Arts, Culture &amp; Entertainment</b> Encore! Encore! Find arts, culture and entertainment offers for your next trip. <b>CLICK HERE »</b></p>

For itineraries, more trip ideas and planning tools visit us at [www.ontariosouthwest.com](http://www.ontariosouthwest.com)

Ontario's **Southwest** Shaped by nature

ONTARIO  
Just below

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August E-Blast:



SELECT YOUR  
**shoreline**  
WWW.ONTARIOSOUTHWEST.COM

Home to Lake Erie, Lake Huron, and Lake St. Clair, Ontario's Southwest boasts many of the *province's best beaches.*

*find your* **BEACH BLANKET BLISS** >>

*play more* **SPEND LESS** >>  
take advantage of over 70 offers at area hotels, attractions and restaurants

Ontario's **Southwest** Shaped by nature

For itineraries, more trip ideas and planning tools visit us at [www.ontariosouthwest.com](http://www.ontariosouthwest.com)

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*Your & Home*