
6 The Marketing of Golf Tourism

Spotlight: The Homecoming Scotland campaign



Visit Scotland promoting Homecoming Scotland, courtesy Visit Scotland

With Scotland synonymous with golf, the 2009 Homecoming Scotland campaign used its national sport as one of its main marketing levers. The year-long festival celebrated the 250-year anniversary of the birth of Robbie Burns, Scotland's signature poet. The golf component was the 'Drive It Home' campaign, featuring free golf for tourists from participating countries – United States of America, Canada, Sweden, France, Middle East, Germany, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Japan, China, Argentina, Brazil, Switzerland, Austria, Norway, Denmark, Finland and The Netherlands. The offer was for free four-ball fixtures at around 100 courses, encouraging groups to book a trip to Scotland via the dedicated website – www.driveithome2009.com. Drive It Home was Scotland's biggest ever golf promotion in its leading overseas golf markets.

With the offer prompting golfers to register online every five minutes of the day during the first phase, the promotion was intended to add around \$28 million to the Scottish economy that year, according to VisitScotland. Golfers are estimated to spend about \$3500 during an average trip there. In a bid to attract over 8000 golfers to Scotland, a second phase was launched in March 2009 with more courses participating. The initiative was created in collaboration with the Scottish Golf Union, Golf Tourism Scotland and the Scottish Ladies' Golfing Association.

VisitScotland's CEO, Philip Riddle promoted the campaign with a worldwide tour in 2008 to raise awareness among potential overseas tourists as well as the ex-pat community. 'We have a very widespread diaspora,' explained Riddle. 'There are almost as many Scots in Canada, for example, as there are in Scotland. There are very positive associations, too, for millions of people as well as an appreciation of what Scots have done around the world. We want to make 2009 the year for them to come home.' He was hoping to appeal to 'Blood' Scots (of Scottish descent) and 'Heart' Scots (those with a passion for the country and culture). Extending a general invitation to the world 'to anyone with an affinity to Scotland', Riddle toured the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, their main long-haul markets. British golfers – Scotland's biggest target market – were also encouraged. 'There are probably more Scots living in Britain than in Scotland,' averred Riddle.

The Homecoming Scotland campaign consisted of three marketing directions: UK (including corporate and private segments); International; and Business. 'Golf transcends all three of these segments,' he said. 'We're going beyond leisure tourism and talking to business, too.' The Forbes conference, in June 2009, was located at Gleneagles as a quasi business/golf meeting. Internationally, the campaign was targeting the 'mature devotee', particularly from the North American market, who often wants to fit in two rounds per day, but also reaching out to Asian markets such as Korea.

Another major market for VisitScotland is Sweden, with well-heeled tourists spending on an array of associated products during their stay. 'Swedes tend to come not just for golf but to see things, eat, drink and shop,' said Riddle. A second prong of the Homecoming Scotland operation was whisky: 'Of course with golf and whisky, that's a good combination in itself, but we also have the poetry of Burns, our culture, heritage, great minds and innovation on the intellectual side.'

While featuring the country's world famous championship courses, Riddle also wanted to emphasize cheaper golf available in Scotland. 'Scotland is seen as the home of golf with top courses and top golfers which is sometimes off-putting,' he explained. 'We have the best golf courses in the world but we encourage people to look beyond the best ones. There are 550 courses – an immense array and variety. There are island courses, municipal courses and Edinburgh has some of the best value courses with fantastic views for just \$25 a round, compared to \$400 at St Andrews, for example.' In Scotland, he added, golf is the game for the 'common man'.

Golf combo packages were also promoted. 'In a loose sense, for example in the English market which is our biggest market, the husband will golf and the wife will want to do something else such as painting or visiting historical sites or family activities,' said Riddle. Many Scottish golf courses were also broadening their appeal by attracting beginners. With the scenic backdrop of lush landscapes, quaint villages and local pubs and restaurants, Scotland was also emphasizing golf/fishing combos. 'There is so much compressed into Scotland all within a relatively small area. You could be shopping in Glasgow in the morning, playing a world-class golf course in the afternoon like Loch Lomond, then staying on an island and having dinner in the evening with no-one around,' he added.

The Homecoming Scotland campaign utilized a mix of print and online media advertising placements across travel and lifestyle media (including National Geographic and Scottish-themed magazines). With two main bursts in fall 2008 and spring 2009, the intention was to reach and influence target markets during the key consideration and booking period for 2009 travel. The Homecoming message was sent out monthly via the 'Diaspora' database of 1500 Scots-interest organizations globally, motivating gatekeepers to message their members. It was also dispersed across VisitBritain's global website networks via messaging and online banner advertising. Plans and controversy over the Trump golfing development were also giving Scotland free publicity in 2009. 'It's good for Scotland to have a venture like that. Donald Trump's a publicity magnet so it's good to get all that exposure,' said Riddle.

VisitScotland was responding to the worldwide drop in tourism numbers by creating this concerted campaign. Visitor numbers had recovered after a drop in 2001 but international visitation levelled off in 2008 and was expected to drop further in 2009 due to the economic recession. The project was a \$1.6 million investment: 'A lot of money has been put into the campaign by individual businesses as well as government,' said Riddle. VisitScotland incurs an annual expenditure of \$140 million for tourism promotion and running 100 visitor information centres spread throughout the country. Two-thirds of that financing comes from the Scottish government, the rest from partnerships with business and local government.

Various high profile events were planned throughout the year and branded 'Homecoming'. These included the Scottish Homecoming Golf Classics in April/May which offered prize-giving banquets 'fit for kings', a 'skir' of bagpipes, a taste of Scotland's cuisine and traditional entertainment. St Andrews Golf Week was also promoted on the Drive it Home website as well as the July Open at the newly-refitted Turnberry and the Cullen Homecoming Senior 2 Day Open Amateur Tournament in June. The Official Guide to Golf in Scotland 2009 dubbed the country 'The Home of Golf' with an introduction by golf celebrity Sam Torrance, 'Scotland's Ambassador for Golf'. 'Golf is a big part of 'Homecoming Scotland' and rightly so as we gave the game to the world,' said Torrance. The guide included all golf destinations and events for 2009 as well as Homecoming arts, cultural and culinary activities endorsed by actor Sean Connery.

Homecoming Scotland 2009 generated about \$80m in additional tourism revenue for Scotland, exceeding the £66m target. It also attracted 95,000 new visitors to Scotland and generated over \$200m of positive global media coverage. Because of this success, Scotland will be hosting another Year of Homecoming in 2014. In addition to the Commonwealth Games and Ryder Cup, there will be a year-long program of events and activities.

Sources:

Personal interview with Philip Riddle, CEO of VisitScotland, 2008.

Walker, T. (2009). 'Drive It Home to expand', *Leisure Management News*, February, www.leisuremanagement.co.uk/newsdetail1.cfm?codeID=106353&CFID=5306178
<http://www.homecomingscotland2009.com>

<http://www.visitscotland.com/see-do/homecoming-scotland-2014/>

Introduction

The Homecoming Scotland campaign highlights the importance of marketing in the golf tourism sector. The 2009 Homecoming Scotland attracted 95,000 visitors, boosted tourism revenue considerably, and provided positive global media coverage for Scotland in 40 plus countries. Marketing is of vital concern to those involved in golf tourism as it is the principal management influence that can be brought to bear on the size and behaviour of this global market. Even the smallest of clubs are realizing the importance of marketing and have appointed someone to take on this responsibility (Hill, 2009). Marketing has been defined as ‘the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual (customer) and organizational objectives’ (Kotler, 1984: 92). This philosophy defines marketing as a process intended to find, satisfy, and retain customers while the business makes a profit. Central to both these definitions is the role of the customer and the customer’s relationship to the product, whether that is a good, a service, or an idea. The golf tourism sector, like other service sectors, involves a combination of tangible and intangible products. For example, a golf resort is a mixture of goods (course, hotel beds, and food) that are linked with a range of services (lessons, clubhouse service, and pro shop services). This package of tangible and intangible products is perceived by the tourist as an experience, and represents the core of the tourism product.

The marketing plan

The term ‘marketing plan’ is widely used to mean a short-term plan for two years or less. The opening Spotlight described a marketing plan launched by VisitScotland in 2008/09.

A marketing plan serves a number of purposes for any organization involved in golf tourism: it provides a road map for all future marketing activities of the organization; it ensures that marketing activities are aligned with the corporate strategic plan; it forces marketing managers to review and think through all steps in the marketing process objectively; it assists in the budgeting process to match resources with marketing objectives; and it creates a process to monitor actual against expected results.

A systematic marketing planning process consists of eight logical steps, as outlined in Figure 6.1. These stages will be discussed in turn.



Figure 6.1: Marketing planning: an 8-step process