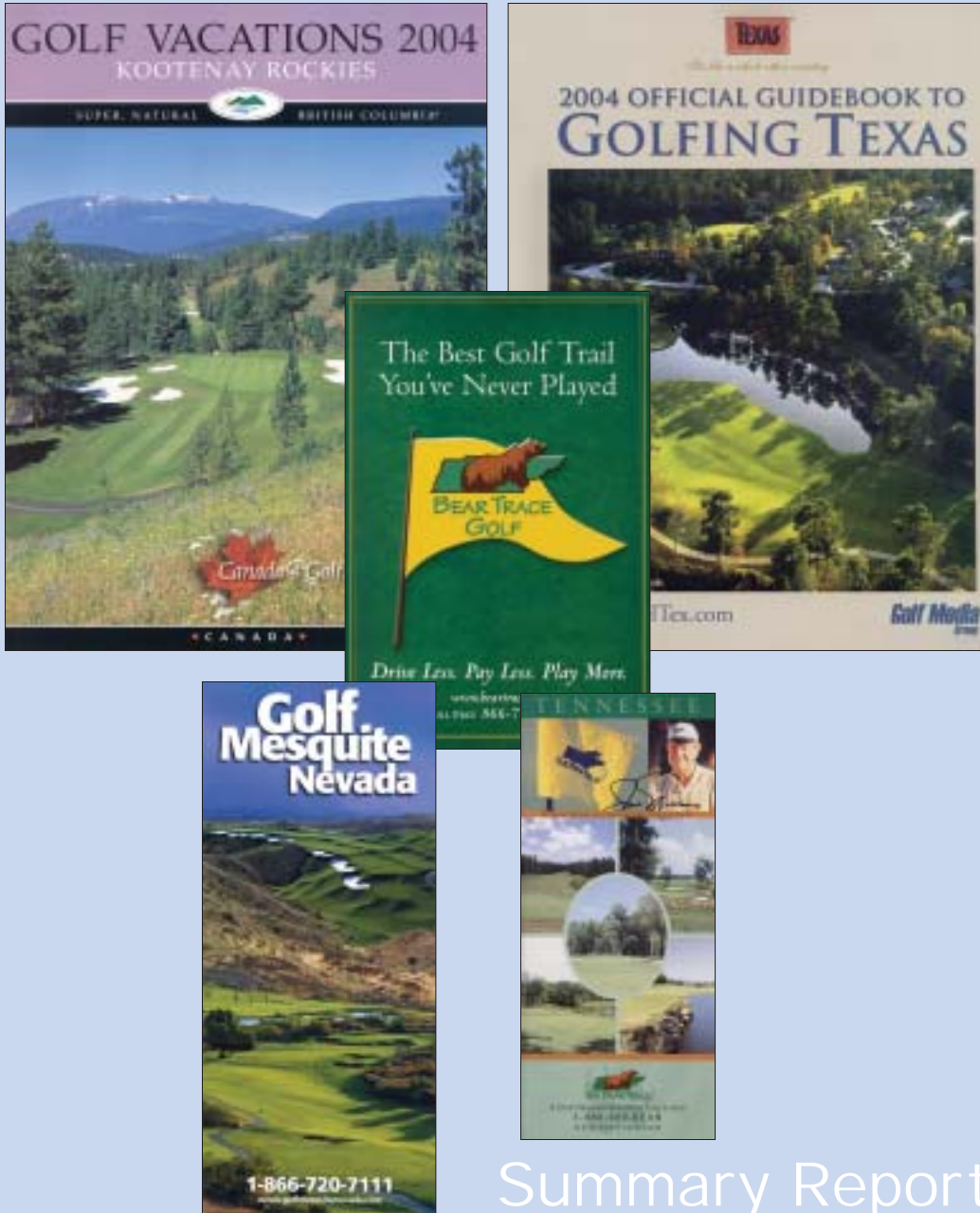


A Study of some of the Best Practices of Golf Course Consortia



Summary Report

A Study Of The Best Practices Of Golf Course Marketing Consortia

Alberta has one of the highest adult golf participation rates in the world, with an estimated 30% of adult Albertans playing at least 10 rounds of golf per year. The game has sustained steady growth over the past 20 years, and to satisfy consumer demand, there has been a boom in the construction and development of new golf courses and resorts in the province, which mirrors a similar construction growth throughout North America and worldwide. As the industry has matured, and growth in the total number of players has begun to level out, it is incumbent upon owners and managers of existing golf properties to maximize the effectiveness of their marketing strategies.

There has been a discernable trend over the past number of years for golf courses within close geographical areas to form marketing consortia so that they can achieve maximum leverage for their advertising and marketing budgets. This study has examined ten different groups around North America and overseas with the objective of discovering their success and failures based on a number of criteria. The consortia studies are as follows:

1. The Audubon Golf Trail – Louisiana
2. The Flathead Valley Golf Association – Montana
3. Pinehurst, North Carolina
4. Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
5. The Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail – Alabama
6. The Bear Trace Golf Trail – Tennessee
7. Canada's Desert Links – southern British Columbia
8. The Kootenay Rockies area – southeastern British Columbia
9. The Country of Ireland
10. The Mesquite, Nevada and St. George, Utah area

While some of the groups are just in their infancy whereas others are well-established entities, there were several clearly identifiable best practices that were consistent among the most successful of the groups. For a golf consortium to be successful in Alberta, which in turn will generate tourist traffic and economic activity, it is imperative the following best practices be incorporated:

- **Have a good website**

The website is probably going to be the first contact a potential new customer will have with the group. Interesting graphics, strong visuals and a clean, crisp look will get and hold the visitor's attention. Sites for Canada's Desert Links, the Audubon Golf Trail, and the Kootenay Rockies for example were, in the consultant's opinion, above average in delivering their initial message about location, the look and feel of their member courses, and were well laid out.

- **Have more than golf to offer**

The quality and overall value of the golf experience is of course very important in the buying decision of anyone researching where to spend time and money on a golf vacation. But developing good relationships with other local tourist attractions and leveraging the total experience available in their area has been critical to the success of many of the consortia. There are always the golf enthusiasts who want nothing more than “golf till you drop”, but many others seek off hours activities, fine dining and sights that help round out the entire vacation experience.

- **Make the booking process seamless**

Having either a toll-free number or the ability to book golf and accommodations with one phone call or online inquiry is very important. The Bear Trace, Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail, and the Flathead Valley Golf Association all had their toll-free phone numbers and/or online tee time link prominently displayed on their literature and their website. Some groups buried their contact information deep in the site or did not even offer packaging or a call to action initiative.

- **Be willing to adapt your marketing**

The RTJ Trail at first were encouraging visitors to see as many of their member courses as possible and this encouraged travel throughout the state. But they found that they could best control their guests’ entire trail experience by getting into the accommodation business and have begun to build on-site hotels and conference centers. The Audubon GT people have very closely tracked the response rates from various media buys, and have as a result pulled back from TV spots and gone more into direct mail pieces for success. The Myrtle Beach CVB is seeking to open new markets in the Midwest by proactively lobbying airlines to start more direct flights into their airport. Pinehurst has discovered that more visitors are willing to drive further distances in the post 9/11 environment rather than get on airplanes and they are advertising their relatively easy access by highway to a much wider audience.

- **Create a brand**

Successful consortia have capitalized on something unique or different either geographically or culturally in their area. For example, Ireland lures visitors with the mystique and old world charm of centuries worth of history. The Canada’s Desert Links group leverages their climate and desert-like setting right here in Canada. Myrtle Beach markets themselves as the world’s #1 golf destination with their intense concentration and variety of courses.