

# Tourism Marketing Fact Sheet

## Key Facts about the State's Tourism Marketing Budget, Initiatives and Results

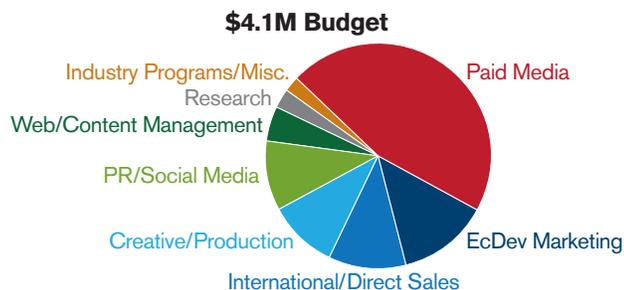
### Tourism is a key economic driver — for every region of Connecticut.



2016 Tourism Economic Impact Study, Tourism Economics

### Our tourism marketing budget has been highly variable — declining 73% since 2012.

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
\$15.0M	\$9.6M	\$12.0M	\$9.5M	\$6.5M	\$6.4M	\$4.1M
YOY Change	-36%	+25%	-21%	-32%	-2%	-36%



- **We aim to allocate 50% of the budget to media**, even with the budget reductions.
- **Budget decreases have eliminated key activities:** sacrifices have included staffing of Welcome Centers (eliminated 2016); mass media TV (eliminated 2016); marketing grants (eliminated 2016); Visitors Guide (eliminated 2019).

### We're also challenged by highly expensive and highly competitive media markets.

- **Need to reach the #1 and #9 most expensive advertising markets (DMAs)** in the U.S., since the majority of our tourism potential is from neighboring New York and Massachusetts.
- **Can afford to reach only a fraction of our target audience:** 31M people are in our target demographic households; the FY2019 media budget afforded us less than a 10% reach to that audience.
- **Being outspent by the competition:** nearby states spend a combined \$114M on tourism marketing. (Comparative FY2018 budgets: NY \$70M; ME \$12M; MA \$10M; NJ \$9M; NH \$7.2M; RI \$5.5M)

### Our highly integrated marketing strategy is delivering strong ROI.

Despite budget strains, what we are investing is working. Our research-driven marketing strategy leverages an array of modern tactics all supporting brand positioning based on extensive consumer research into what both residents and visitors value: *Connecticut offers a dynamic blend of complementary experiences: relaxing and active, historic and contemporary, natural and cultural. Better yet, they're all so close to each other — and all so close to you.*

#### Key Stats:

- **Consumers exposed to our advertising in NY were 6x more likely to actually visit Connecticut** than those who weren't exposed (new Arrivalist data for Spring/Summer 2018 campaign).
- **All 169 towns, all regions and 1,100+ hotels, restaurants, attractions, arts organizations, and museums,** have been prominently featured in our PR/advertising efforts.
- **Our CTvisit.com website now attracts more than 5 million visitors a year** — driven by search marketing, social media, content marketing, PR, email marketing, influencer marketing and a variety of other tactics.

## We continually optimize a diverse array of modern marketing tactics.

### **Paid Media | Utilize real-time data/advanced algorithms to optimize ROI.**

- **Generated 280M impressions** in 2018 alone through paid support of content marketing, search, social media, video marketing, TripAdvisor, streaming radio, out-of-home, branded content placements and others.
- **Created an array of campaigns** including the core campaign, Find Fall Faster, Play in CT, Aer Lingus/ TripAdvisor promo, Take Your Time, Fan Favorite Town, and What's On Your Connecticut Bucket List?
- **Honored with over 30 awards** for advertising, PR and web development since 2014.

### **Website Hub | Launched state-of-the-art CTvisit.com in 2016; refresh daily.**

- **Increased site traffic 420%** — from less than 1M in 2011 to more than 5M visitors a year in 2018.
- **Doubled number of partners featured on site** — from less than 2,000 in 2011 to more than 4,000 in 2018.
- **Send an average of 3M referrals to partners** each year from links on thousands of CTvisit.com pages.
- **Add ~8 articles monthly** — nearly each one featuring activities in all 5 regions.
- **Promote all sectors of the tourism industry** — with 48.6% of content highlighting arts, culture and history.

### **Search Marketing | Deploy advanced Search Engine Optimizaton/Search Engine Marketing (SEO/SEM) strategies to drive website traffic.**

- **Increased organic traffic to CTvisit.com from search 175%** since 2012.
- **Grew paid search traffic to CTvisit.com 2,807%** since 2012.

### **Social Media | Actively engage consumers on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest.**

- **Increased social media engagement** (likes, comments, shares) by 483% over 2015.
- **Increased organic traffic to the website from social sites by 2.5x** over 2014.

### **Public Relations | Secure high-profile, positive coverage from local, regional and national media.**

- **Earned more than 1B media impressions and ~1,000 story placements** each year for past 3 years.
- **Spotlight more than 900 different tourism partners** in press hits on average each year.
- **Organize/host media/blogger familiarization (“fam”) tours.** Work with partners; monitor coverage.
- **Secured high-profile placements in leading outlets** — including *USA Today*, *Forbes*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, *Travel & Leisure*, *AFAR*, and *Conde Nast Traveler*.

### **Content Marketing | Create, publish and drive viewers to hundreds of stories on an array of topics.**

- **Create/promote around 50 content pieces per month** that drive nearly 50% of the traffic to CTvisit.
- **Promote/include links to 1,000+ CT partners** (attractions, hotels, restaurants and towns) from articles.

### **Influencer Marketing | Increase the authenticity of our message by partnering with other influencers.**

- **Develop ongoing relationships with local experts/key bloggers in Connecticut.**
- **Publish and promote 2-4 influencer-crafted articles** per month.

### **In-State Marketing | While we spend a majority of our media budget out of state, we do focus a quarter of the budget on a variety of in state initiatives, including the following non-digital tactics:**

- **Create/run Open House Day**, which attracted 225 partners and 564 story placements in 2018 alone.
- **Installed permanent, in-state displays:** wall murals at Bradley Airport; billboards at New London ferry terminal.
- **Secured a Stamford “station domination”,** saturating our message on every billboard, mural, poster or ad space at the train station—both indoors and out—in 2014 and 2015.
- **Ran in-state OOH/billboard campaign** as budget allowed in 2012, 2014, 2015 and again in 2018.
- **Collaborate with WRCH-FM on weekly segment** called “Tell Me Something Good About Connecticut.”
- **Partner with FOX61 to promote ongoing campaign:** “What's on Your Connecticut Bucket List?”
- **Created CTvisit.com window decals** that local partners are using to cross sell other attractions in CT.

**E-Mail Marketing** | Send updates twice monthly to more than 100,000 opt-in, engaged consumers.

- **Redesigned best-practices templates** which have dramatically increased engagement/conversion.
- **More than doubled open rate** from 2014 to 2018. Continue to grow list through web/social sign ups.

**Conventions/Conferences** | Help fund CT Convention & Sports Bureau to market state as a premier destination for meetings and events.

- **Booked events in 2018 that will generate future sales revenues** of \$72M.
- **Contribute an additional \$4.9M in state tax revenues** from 2018 bookings alone.

**Regional Marketing Support** | Annually connect personally with 3,000+ partners to support their growth.

- **Reach out to partners with PR opportunities** to be included in international/national/regional travel press.
- **Created/manage Regional Marketing Program** which involves towns/organizations/partners and connects with over 3,000 partners annually to solicit input and help them maximize our no-cost marketing programs.
- **Host biannual Strategic Marketing Input sessions** which invite partners to review strategies/offer input.

**Additional Tourism Partner Support** | Provide additional support for the growth of our tourism businesses.

- **Host Governor's Conference on Tourism** which offers networking/professional development opportunities.
- **Sponsor the Governor's Tourism Industry Awards** to recognize outstanding contributors to the industry.
- **Launch/maintain the Tourism Industry Partner Portal** — an online hub reached via CTvisit offering all industry partners a wealth of information about the programs and opportunities with the Office of Tourism.
- **Manage industry email outreach** to more than 4,000 partners. Continually update email list.

**Market Research** | Conduct ongoing studies to glean consumer insights, monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) and track impact.

- **Leverage Arrivalist® tracking**, a state-of-the-art GPS-driven analytics tool, which allows us to see which media/content are driving actual visits to the state.
- **Conduct Attitudes and Awareness Study**, a survey conducted by a third-party organization annually that tracks changes in many key performance indicators over time.
- **Conduct a tourism economic impact study** every other year through Tourism Economics, which tracks the impact of tourism on Connecticut jobs, tax revenues, and business revenues.

**International Tourism** | Encourage international travelers to visit Connecticut.

- **Promote Connecticut at major international trade shows**, at least five annually.
- **Chair Discover New England board** (consortium of all New England state tourism directors).
- **Host 10-20 familiarization (fam) tours** for international media and tour operators each year.

## Program management

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Tourism marketing programs are managed by eight Connecticut employees, two Connecticut vendor agencies and a Tourism Advisory Council made up of industry hotel, attraction and cultural association professionals.

- **Internal team of eight DECD/COT employees** manage overall strategy, all programs outlined in this fact sheet, partner outreach, media inquiries, daily website activities/reporting, Regional Marketing Program, Big E, Open House Day, Governor's Tourism Conference, market research initiatives and KPI collection.
- **Avon-based Adams & Knight, one of the state's largest woman-owned marketing firms**, has led strategy/creative since 2014 (beginning 2 years after brand launch) and PR/social media since 2016.
- **Norwalk-based Media Storm, a full-service media agency**, has managed media strategy, buying and reporting since 2012.
- **The Tourism Advisory Council**, a board made up of industry leaders from around the state, reviews and guides Connecticut Office of Tourism strategies and initiatives.

## Just a few samples of our diverse creative executions



Bradley Airport Installation



Out of Home "Station Dominations":  
e.g., Manhattan Subway, Grand Central



Bus Wraps Traveling In- and Out-of-State



In-State and Out-of-State Highway Billboards



Rich Media/Mobile/Social/Content Marketing

**Traveler Resources Managed:** WEB: [CTvisit.com](http://CTvisit.com) | FACEBOOK: Visit Connecticut | TWITTER: @CTvisit  
INSTAGRAM: @CTvisit | PINTEREST: VisitCT

**Partner Resources Managed:** WEB: [CTvisit.com](http://CTvisit.com) CMS Partner Access | New Tourism Partner Portal

For more information, contact the Connecticut Office of Tourism, Department of Economic and Community Development, 450 Columbus Blvd., Suite 5, Hartford, CT 06103  
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