

Effective Partnerships

Shop & Dine London is Marketing London's Retailers, Restaurants

By Carolyn J. Feimster SCMD, President, CJF Marketing International, North Brunswick, NJ

TWO WORDS YOU SEE FREQUENTLY IN THIS SERIES OF TOURISM ARTICLES ARE "LEVERAGING" AND "PARTNERSHIPS." Why? Because both leveraging and partnerships are usually included in successful visitor program strategies. We form partnerships to leverage each other's dollars and resources so our message can reach a wider audience more frequently.

I've featured several successful partnerships in previous articles, including the Shop America Alliance (www.shopamericavip.com) and America's Premier Shopping Places (www.americas-shoppingplaces.com), General Growth Properties' branding strategy for its tourism centers. In 2009, we covered The Sandestin Alliance (www.sandestination.com) in a three-part series. This month, we are featuring a new partnership, Shop & Dine London, and the next article will cover Historic Shopping & Dining Attractions, an alliance of three centers in Boston, NYC and Washington, DC.

Why a "Shop & Dine London" program? Isn't shopping already an expected activity for visitors to London?

"Of course," explains Kathy Anderson, CMD, founder of Shop & Dine London and president of Anderson Retail Tourism Marketing, "which is all the more reason to take London's unique shopping experiences and promote them to visitors in advance of their travel to generate even greater traffic and sales for shopping centers, retailers and restaurants. By developing a dedicated brand and tourism plan,

participating businesses will have their message heard and seen by millions more people around the world than they could possibly have reached on their own."

Better Knowledge, More Spending

Shop & Dine London, which was officially launched in April of this year, is designed as a cooperative tourism marketing program that promotes select shopping centers, retailers and restaurants in and around London to visitors who are planning a trip to the city.

"We use a variety of travel marketing resources including print, electronic and personal business meetings with the travel trade and media to meet our objective of increasing pre-arrival awareness and driving more business to our partners," Anderson says.

"We know from experience that the more travelers know about a destination, including the shops and restaurants, the more likely they are to visit and the more they spend on shopping and dining. When they know about unique shops and restaurants in advance, they will schedule time to see them as a part of their itinerary instead of trying to just squeeze in a visit.

"In addition, as a part of our pre-arrival awareness marketing, we promote Shop & Dine London's 'visitor passport' incentive program. Visitors from outside the London area are invited to receive a visi-

tor passport card which is presented at Shop & Dine London partner establishments to receive special offers, complimentary menu items, gifts with purchase or services such as shipping, package delivery, beauty makeovers, etc. This is an important element to tour operators and travel agents looking to provide added value in their travel packages to London. Groups especially love the visitor passport!"

Preparing for the Olympics

I asked Anderson how/why she decided to embark on such an ambitious project. She responded, "When I traveled to London for a trade show two years ago, I met with a company that was going to propose events to the Olympic Committee, and they commented that it would be good to incorporate special shopping and dining offers.

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Shop & Dine London's home page.

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Creating Shop & Dine London followed the basic steps of creating any successful marketing alliance. Viable partners are identified, a business plan is developed demonstrating ROI and then you simply “pound the pavement” to introduce the company, explain the concept and get buy-in from key establishments. Typically, once they are in, others will follow.

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“We did a year of research and meetings with retailers, restaurants, tour operators, concierges, etc., after which we realized that there was no cohesive program dedicated to promoting these businesses to tourists. So we decided to use our 20 years of retail tourism marketing experience in the states to develop a program for London.”

Finding Strong Partners

Creating Shop & Dine London followed the basic steps of creating any successful marketing alliance. Viable partners are identified, a business plan is developed demonstrating ROI and then you simply “pound the pavement” to introduce the company, explain the concept and get buy-in from key establishments. Typically, once they are in, others will follow.

“The biggest challenge was getting the retailers and restaurants to partner with their competition,” said Anderson. “But once they understood the importance and cost-effectiveness of promoting their business globally, especially during a down economy, they committed to the program. We launched with just a few key players we knew understood the importance of tourism marketing to their businesses. We anticipate doubling the number of our retail and restaurant partners in 2011, and increasing our incentive offers by at least one-third. By 2012, we’ll have a solid offering for Olympics visitors.”

Currently, the program provides visitors with over 200 special offers, amenities and services from retailers located along Regent Street, at Burlington Arcade and Bicester Village as well as Harrods and Fortnum & Mason. Restaurants located along Regent Street, in Harrods and Fortnum & Mason, as well as the esteemed Criterion Restaurant were part of the launch.

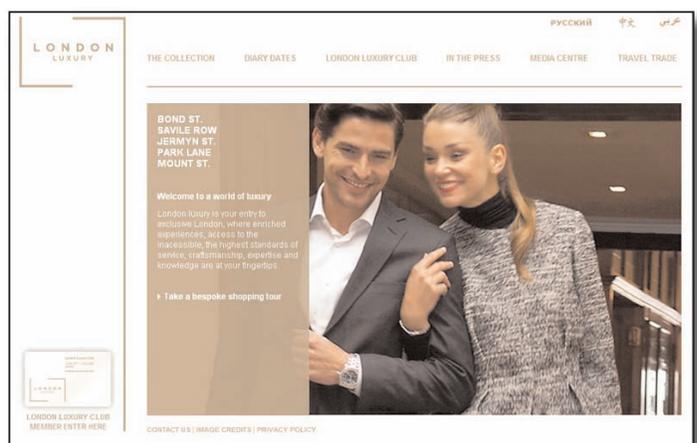
Regent Street alone has over a mile of shop fronts under the ownership of The Crown Estate. It is a unique international destination and a world-class environment that delivers quality, heritage, style and success to shoppers and businesses alike.

“Regent Street is pleased to be a partner in Shop & Dine London,” says Annie Walker, director, Regent Street Association. “It enables us to promote our unique shopping and dining offers to travelers visiting London from around the world.” Check out www.regentstreetonline.com.

The Shop & Dine London marketing team works with tour operators and travel agents

in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and North America, along with select ground handlers, meeting planners and concierges in London. They are currently developing a promotion with British Airways and do online marketing with guidebooks such as www.WhereTraveler.com. These travel professionals provide their clients with a special

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Top: Shop & Dine London voucher. Bottom: London Luxury website homepage.

Programs such as these don't just take a launch-and-let-it-happen approach. It takes constant selling, promotion and training. For the latter, Anderson is presenting a tourism marketing workshop and luncheon designed especially for retailers and restaurants on November 3rd in Central London.

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multi-lingual printed voucher which is then presented at designated redemption locations throughout London including Harrods, Burlington Arcade and Regent Street where visitors receive a four-color shopping and dining travel guide along with their visitor passport card. In addition, travelers can also print a voucher from the Shop & Dine London website www.ShopAndDineLondon.com and soon they will be able to download it to their mobile smart phone. Cards can be used on future trips to London. New offers, special events and promotions are continually updated and featured on the Shop & Dine London website. Going to London? Try it yourself!

Always a step ahead of the game, Anderson is working on the next phase and also represents Luxury London, a program of customized shopping tours and unique shop-and-stay packages with London's most discerning hotels, retailers and restaurants located in London's New West End. A dedicated Luxury London privilege card and website in Arabic and English highlight an exclusive mix of privileges and luxury offers that money can't buy — from tea at Asprey in a private room to viewing Grace Kelly's diary to Sir Winston Churchill's suit block.

"We're expecting upwards of 45 million international visitors to come to London's West End in the lead-up to the 2012 Olympics, which is worth an estimated £2.2 billion to the

local retail and leisure economy," commented Jace Tyrrell, communication director, New West End Company. "Luxury London is a catalyst to capitalize on our key growth markets of high net worth visitors seeking a bespoke program of privileges and shop-and-stay packages."

Constant Sales, Promotion, Training

Programs such as these don't just take a launch-and-let-it-happen approach. It takes constant selling, promotion and training. For the latter, Anderson is presenting a tourism marketing workshop and luncheon designed especially for retailers and restaurants on November 3rd in Central London. The luncheon will feature travel and tourism industry speakers, case studies on luxury retail and culinary tourism projects, updates on the London visitor market and plans for maximizing London's shopping and dining message for the 2012 Olympics. Additionally, it will educate participants on how they can capitalize on their partnership in Shop & Dine London and enhance their own tourism marketing by developing packages with hotels, attractions and special events. Current travel and tourism industry stats will be presented as well as examples of other successful marketing initiatives.

Shop & Dine London is a member of Visit London, UK Inbound and the International Culinary Tourism Association and uses these industry memberships to communicate with travel professionals and media by sending them updated press

releases on partner events and activities — just more tactical approaches to disseminating information, getting coverage and realizing the profits as more people visit and spend money. For further information on Shop & Dine London or London Luxury, contact Kathy@retailtourism.com.

As we alluded to earlier, my next article will cover the new alliance of Faneuil Hall Marketplace in Boston, South Street Seaport in NYC and Union Station DC — "Historic Shopping & Dining Attractions."

We are continuing this series of articles on tourism every other month and would like to focus on some of the more innovative programs. Please submit your programs to me, either via e-mail at Carolyn@CJFMarketingInternational.com, fax (732/545-3138) or mail. If possible, include samples of your graphics. Full credit will be given to the person or team responsible for the program. Visit our new web site: www.cjfmarketinginternational.com. ■

CJF Marketing International offers a range of services for creating and implementing strategic tourism, economic development and marketing programs for shopping centers, urban entertainment projects, downtown retail districts, communities and commercial properties globally. The firm also offers educational programs and seminars for corporate meeting planners, shopping center developers, communities and re-development agencies. Feimster can be reached at 732/249-6080.
