

Contract Number 18-13-119
Wines on the Historic Trails Association

Grant Amount
\$5,000

Contact Information
Wines on the Historic Trails Association
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Issue of Interest

Improving the marketing of wines, tourism and agri-tourism in Western Nebraska and the Panhandle is of need to the industry in the area. With the distance involved in traveling from one winery to the next in our area, we realize we need to utilize as many forms of advertising and promotion as we can. The marketing of the wines is crucial to the health of our industry. Without the wines moving, we do not have a strong market for the vineyards.

Approach to Problem

To help increase traffic to and from our wineries and partner businesses we recreated the Wines on the Historic Trails (WHT) wine trail of participating wineries, vineyards, and partner businesses. We set up a new advertising campaign, developed marketing tools, and promoted our trail with banners, signs, and advertising. The trail's passport promotion was advertised throughout various print media and through the website www.wineswest.com. The initial incentive to participate in the wine trail is a signature wine glass with a historic logo from each winery and our vineyard. At the 5th official business visited, the participant was awarded the 6th glass in the series.

WHT launched its new promotion in July 2010. Each person following the trail would receive a free glass depicting a piece of Western Nebraska history. This was only given if a purchase was made. A collection of stamps on the trail card was made to identify that they had stopped at each one of the five locations in Western Nebraska. A collection of all 5 stamps also entered them into a drawing for wines or lodging or Nebraska Gourmet Food Basket. We have also incorporated other tourism businesses

along our trail for other places to stop, see, taste and enjoy Western Nebraska hospitality as the travelers passed along the trail

Goals/Achievement of Goals

Marketing wine in western Nebraska is an uphill task. With the distance between each of the wineries, it is difficult to attract people to visit all of our wineries. With all of the businesses off of the beaten path, per se, advertising is a must. Deciding who/where/and how much to spend on advertising is a challenge.

Our goal as WHT is to increase the visibility of our wineries, and our area of Nebraska, while at the same time, introducing area visitors to our wines, and our local cooperating business's. Visiting the tasting rooms created sales opportunities for all of the wineries, vineyard and cooperating businesses.

By increasing awareness, we create a tourism opportunity for the area. By creating a wine trail passport brochure, we encouraged visitors to travel the trail, visit the cooperating businesses, and get acquainted with Western Nebraska and our wines. Where this trail also spreads into Wyoming, we also help to drive the tourism in eastern Wyoming. By including Table Mountain Winery at Huntley, WY, we have an additional resource to start visitors on to the Nebraska side of the trail. This is beneficial, as sometimes visitors would have completely missed us, if not for promotion of the trail in Wyoming.

Results, Conclusions, Lessons Learned

We feel the trail did create traffic and associated sales. We needed to have the trail in place in the spring at the beginning of the winery tour season. It would have worked best if paired with the NWGGA Passport program. This would encourage more traffic and help more passport participants to complete our trail along with incentives to visit more of the western wineries, and thus discover the possibilities in Western Nebraska.

The trail concept needs to be not the only marketing concept at work, but part of a coordinated effort from each of the members advertising and marketing plans. Utilizing advertising in small papers that are distributed in Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska we were able to spread our presence out over a larger area.

The people were very excited to see a trail with a diverse amount to things to do. This includes family and pets. Some travelers said that this was a great meeting place for friends and family from the east and the west. Several people from Eastern Nebraska had never been in Western Nebraska before this year. They were very surprised at the great wine and all the vineyards in Western NE.

The trail's passport promotion has given visitors one more experience and collectable item to take with them along their journey on the Historic Trails. Now that the initial promotion has begun, I believe the wine trail will only be able to grow and attract more

visitors to all the wineries. With the success of the passport program, we have built a foundation of visitors and new customers to all the wineries.

The goal is to continue for 2011 and beyond. We have worked on marketing the wine trail in the past, but this promotion has really helped. We have learned that as much as we are all told to use the internet for e-marketing, it is only a tool. We still have the best results when we can in person, recommend a destination to visitors, and sell them on the idea. Utilizing the website is good, as it is a contact place. It provides a link from the wineries NWGGA, and allows people to learn about the trail ahead of time.

Whereas the statewide passport program is very good for the state industry, utilizing a regional program is actually a positive for the businesses in the area. The rewards

Progress Achieved According to Outcome Measures

Even if wineries on the trail were far apart, some people were stopping at one or a two per day, thus resulting in a night stay at an area motel or at the wine maker's loft. This of course means they needed to eat and get gas in Western Nebraska. 18% of customers Jan 1st to date were WHT participants. From the date we started the trail to date 24% had participated at South Fork Vineyard. Some brought children along as well as some being regular customers. Participants have been found to be from the local area, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, central and Eastern Nebraska and even Houston, Texas. Individuals on the trail had positive comments about each and every stop made on the trail. As each went along the trail they learned a piece of history about Western Nebraska.

We invited other partners along the trail to advertise with us and some people were very excited to see other tourism businesses that they did not know were in the towns where they had been before and go often. The Scottsbluff newspaper was very excited to hear about the trail and ran a feature story about it. That was a wonderful way for them to show support for the trail.

WHT in Western Nebraska helped the tourism industry, our partners along the trail, which sell agricultural products, and the wineries and vineyards. I believe that no matter where in Nebraska you are, you should work with those who want to help spread the word about wineries, vineyards, Nebraska foods, and tourism. We all can win if we work together. We feel the program partially achieved the goals we set out to address. We consider it something we should continue. We still have two months left in which to entertain more trail customers and anticipate more activity before the end of the year.

I believe additional promotions along the trail will continue to strengthen and enhance the vitality to the wineries in Western Nebraska. Out of those participating in the passport program, many positive comments were received. Many expressed a pleasant surprise to learn of the industry and the different and diverse wineries of the area. All of the participants who completed the trail indicated and expressed interest in additional trail promotions and events. While the cost of the promotional glasses was minimal, the

impact to all of the winery and trail partners was invaluable. Increasing customers and supporters of the industry through the wine trail has been a great asset during the current challenging economic times.

This was a great effort for the trail, and our wineries look forward to working with all the partners to continue and build on the trail for the 2011 season. The goal is to continue with the promotion of the WHT to continue the growth we have started. We will take what we have learned this year, tweak on it and continue.

Financial Report

2,000 Double Folded Rack Cards - \$755
Breakdown of this amount was as follows:
Graphic Design - \$300
Stock Art - \$27
Printing - \$358
Shipping - \$70

North Platte Telegraph Advertisement - \$317.50

C4 Designs - \$687.40
Tumbleweed Tracings - \$105.50
Sage Hill Vineyard - \$95.90
17 Ranch Winery - \$96
Table Mountain Vineyards - \$100
South Fork Vineyard - \$100
Prairie Vine Winery - \$124

17 Ranch Winery (KOGA Midwest Opinion) - \$40
Haynes Publishing (4 x 9 display ad with full color) - \$487.80

Kitterman's Graphics - \$614.27
Breakdown of this amount was as follows:
Web Renewal and Domain Name Purchase - \$214.24
Set-Up Fee – Labels and Printing Labels - \$115.03
Web Development and Transfer - \$285

17 Ranch Winery (KOGA) Midwest Opinion - \$40

Monica Mercer - \$755
North Platte Telegraph - \$317.50
Tumbleweed Tracings - \$21.10
Online Labels - \$91.90

Total Amount: \$4,748.87