



I Love New York

The State's Most Recognizable Ad Campaign Turns 30

By Jonathan Ment

Sing it with me: "I Love New York!" You know the tune, right? Sometimes you've just got to get away, and for the millions who live in the New York City and Toronto metro areas, much of New York State should be too close to ignore.



You know it. I know it, and Empire State Development Corp. knows it. Empire State Development is steward of the I Love New York logo—you know, the one with the heart. The state agency also manages the brand and oversees the marketing campaigns that implement it.

"This is the 30th anniversary of I Love New York.... One of the goals, certainly as it turns 30, was...reinvigoration," says A.J. Carter, Empire State Development's senior vice president for communications. "We feel Saatchi & Saatchi is the agency to help us do that." Selection of the agency, part of the Publicis group, was announced in late May when Governor Eliot Spitzer said, "A well-conceived and fully supported tourism campaign is an investment that will pay dividends for years to come."



The state budget provides nearly \$22 million for tourism promotion efforts, according to the Governor's office. \$16 million of that is for the I Love New York program, up roughly 50 percent over last year. There's also \$5.3 million for local tourism matching grants, a \$500,000 increase over last year.



"One of the goals is to see if we can get some of the 42 million people who come to New York City to spend an extra day, or two, or three, upstate—at the wineries in the Hudson Valley and the Finger Lakes, or the many other destinations upstate," says Carter.

The agreement with Saatchi & Saatchi, the 11th agency to work on the campaign in its 30 year history, is a three-year contract with an option for two more years, he says. "One of the many things that's going to be different is where the message is going to be placed," says Carter. "Beyond print, radio and television, a lot of the summer campaign is going to be on the Internet."



A New Web Site

In March, Empire State Development launched a re-designed and streamlined I Love New York Web site (www.iloveny.com), and last month added a new page aimed at last-minute travelers (www.iloveny.com/getoutoftown). The new area, accessible via a link labeled "Summer Home Page," on the I Love New York home page, helps connect vacationers from downstate and Toronto with last-minute deals at destinations between Long Island and Upstate, that they can drive to rather than reach by air. "Make plans, not excuses," lures the Web site. "We all have a hundred reasons for not planning the perfect summer getaway. But there are also hundreds of reasons to visit Upstate New York this year. It's more convenient than you think—and more affordable than you might have believed. And with summer halfway gone, we'd like

to help you out by highlighting some of the best, most exciting destinations we've got."

To help travelers from the New York or Toronto metro areas plan their last-minute getaways, a pull-down menu lets you choose an area of interest: culture and heritage, lifestyle, attractions, outdoors and tours. Another lets prospective visitors select preferred driving distances from three hours to five or more hours. The site offers suggested destinations to take the guesswork out of planning a getaway, and offers an online reservation system for accommodations throughout the state. Visitors to the site can also sign up for alerts on future deals and packages. The site also provides access to more than 12,000 items in the I Love New York tourism database, including attractions, activities, accommodations, special events and tourism facilities statewide. The summer pages are part of an eight-week campaign that runs through Labor Day.

Get Out of Town!

Targeting those in New York City, or those who will be, is by no means a new ploy for those wishing to attract tourists to upstate New York. Other efforts currently underway are aimed at international travelers already headed to the Big Apple or coming back as repeat visitors.

Greene County Tourism & Promotion Director Daniela Marino is part of a task force working on New York City—Plus, a to-the-trade effort begun in 2006 and focused on tour operators. "It's a campaign with the trade overseas," she says. "Both the tour operators overseas who send people to the United States, and the operators here called receptive operators, who accommodate people when they get here."

"Let's say you want to go to Rome, Italy. Perhaps you need a hotel and sightseeing tour pre-booked. Your travel agent will show you a tour operator catalog, you will pick from that catalog, and the travel agent will book it," says Marino. "You've dealt with a tour operator in the U.S. that sends people overseas. They don't book it with the hotel directly, they're working with the receptive (operator)."

"It's about getting product on the shelf," she continues. "The first step is getting tour operators to sell New York State. If the (overseas) tour operator wants to buy the product, the receptive agent needs to have it in the catalog."

Marino says that in order for a hotel to be offered, they need to give certain concessions, including commissions and room allotments. "There's a lot of preparatory work that needs to be done...(and) there's some amount of accounting involved," says Marino, adding hotels don't get their money when guests check in. They must bill the receptive operator that sold the package.

"The drawback is that we don't have a lot of big properties...we don't have a lot of chain hotels," she says. That makes the allotment part of the equation more difficult. Several larger properties, including the Kaatskill Mountain Club at Hunter Mountain and the Mohonk Mountain House in Ulster County, are available to international operators, she says.

"New England has been very successful in developing these international connections," says Marino. "They have chains that can be booked online."

Marino says most of the task force's efforts are not group oriented, and like the get-out-of-town initiative, for those who will drive or take train from New York City north. "Most is fly-drive," she says, adding "You can rent a car at a New York City-area airport, or take Amtrak north."

"New York State does not have name recognition internationally," says Marino. "Everyone knows the I Love New York logo, but thinks its New York City. The British are our number-one target market—many are repeat visitors and therefore an excellent market to invite to come and explore the rest of the state. They still don't understand that you can take a short trip outside of New York City and see the real America."

"The (Spitzer) administration is saying they want to put additional resources in publicizing Upstate New York to this market of travelers who already have been to New York City and it's something you could not have done before the Internet," says Marino. "That's the key thing about it, providing information across Europe, mailed, that just required enormous amounts of money."

In Ulster County, tourism Director Rick Remsnyder says a recent visit by tour operators to the Hudson River Valley was very productive. "They were very impressed with Kingston's historical significance," says Remsnyder. "When people come over from the United Kingdom for a week or two weeks, a lot of them want to spend the bulk of their time in New York City but a lot of them want to take the train north."

"Sometimes you do this (host tour operators) and never hear back from them," says Remsnyder. "I got four e-mails from members of the group, once they were back in the U.K., saying they had a good time and hoped to do some business with us."

Dutchess County Tourism Director Mary Kay Vrba said the international efforts offer a win-win situation. "A lot of folks from abroad have come to New York three, four or five times and are looking for something more and the tour operator says 'that's really easy, you just take a train north' you have everything."

Of course, local hotels must be ready to work with the foreign market, and ready to accept the vouchers they may be carrying, she says.

Vrba adds that the I Love New York brand has proven successful, but has not been used to its full potential in the past couple of years. "I think it's consistency that has been needed across the board," she says. "When you're trying to stay at a top-of-mind awareness, you need to have your message out in front of the visitor on an ongoing basis."

Something for Everyone

"New York State has a year-round product. We really do have something for everyone," says Vrba.

"We have skiing, culinary tourism with the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park and all the graduates that stay around. We've got history. We've got world-class arts centers, Dia: Beacon, the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College, Bethel Performing Arts Center, Storm King. There's hiking, canoeing and kayaking within 75 miles of the the largest population in the world. We do have it all."

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