

## Marketing & Research Roundtable – Recap Notes:

Thank you to all those who attended or wanted to attend Tourism Tofino's first-ever Marketing & Research Roundtable - hopefully the first of many in the coming years!

To recap what was shared at the meeting, Executive Director Brad Parsell reviewed the following data:

- 2024 Business Survey (some data points were touched on, but this is an internal document)
- [Accommodation Data](#)
- [2024 Resident Survey](#)
- [2024 Economic Impact of Tourism in Tofino Study \(InterVistas\)](#)
- [2024 Brand Awareness and Perception Study \(Leger\)](#)

Then the Marketing Team, Samantha Fyleris, Jess Cloutier, and Danielle Fox shared about the work that they do and how Member businesses can engage with that work.

For additional context, please refer to the documents above.

Remarks:

- **2024 Resident & Business Surveys:**
  - **Brad pointed out:** There is a perception that businesses (particularly restaurants) are closed in the winter months, and this changes annually.
  - **Attendee:** Shared that there is a concern from visitors as to whether they can actually get to Tofino in a rental car in the winter. This is a very real perception when it comes to Hwy 4 (do rental car companies have snow tires to make travel possible through the Sutton Pass?).
  - **Attendee:** Visitors wonder what the transportation options are in-destination during the winter? Another consideration for visitor experience and destination development.
  - **Brad shared** that there is an opportunity to create a draw for visitation in the winter months, like a festival. He illustrated the example from Tasmania: [Dark Mofo winter festival](#) – a celebration of the darkness of winter, including food, public art, metal music, and more, all over Hobart, Tasmania. Currently do not have a large enough indoor venue to support this kind of festival.

- **Attendee:** what about a week-long wellness retreat? There are many offerings available already and could be an opportunity to bring in other experts in their field, similar to how Whistler hosts [\*Nourish Whistler Wellness Series\*](#) or [\*Wanderlust\*](#)
  
- **Accommodation Data:**
  - **Attendee:** Could you parse out accommodation occupancy data for accommodations that have a restaurant and/or spa onsite, versus accommodations that do not, for the shoulder seasons to see if there is a difference?
  
- **2024 Economic Impact of Tourism in Tofino Study (InterVistas):**
  - **Brad shared:** The last Economic Impact Study was conducted in 2018. The goal will be to collect data every two years going forward. This 2024 report was conducted throughout the entire year in Tofino, while the 2018 study was only conducted during the summer months. For this reason, please be cautious when drawing comparisons between the two reports, as they do not reflect the same timeline for data collection.
  - **Attendee:** Could future studies include a question to visitors about travelling with pets, please?
  - **Attendee:** It would be interesting to see the number of nights each visitor stays if the data for accommodations with “minimum night stays” could be parsed out and see how this changes the data reporting
  - **Attendee:** Was the data for activities and attractions collected via multiple choice? (i.e.: could a visitor select all of the different activities that they participated in, rather than just one?).
    - Answer: Yes, participants could select multiple activities that they did during their stay.
  - **Attendee:** It would be interesting to see how many people also visited Ucluelet in future studies.
  - **Attendee:** What, in a quantifiable way, has changed to increase the net promoter score so much from 2018 – Brad suggested it may be the averaging out of summer to off-season promoter scores (lower promoter score in summer, higher in winter?)

- **Attendee:** It would be interested to see the spending reports broken out by first-time visitors and repeat visitors to see if there are differences in their spending patterns.
- **Attendee:** It would be interested to collect data on visitor contributions to eco-tourism, volunteering/voluntourism activities, and financial contributions to non-profits in future studies.
- **Attendee:** It also would be interesting to compare spending based on the reason for the visit (e.g.: surf trip; family reunion; wedding; romantic getaway, etc.)
- **Attendee:** Where are the daytrippers coming from? Across Island, Port Alberni, Ucluelet?
- What are the visitors' pain points or challenges? Would be interesting to parse out net promoter scores for daytrippers vs visitors staying for one or more night(s).
- It might be that the new website has helped set a visitors' expectations more clearly than in 2018.

- **2024 Brand Awareness and Perception Study (Leger):**

- **Attendee:** Were people coming to Tofino with their kids, or do they just have kids?
  - Answer: They just have kids; the question was not specific to their potential or past experiences visiting Tofino with kids.
- **Attendee:** Has this survey been done before?
  - Answer: No, but we are about to start it again this coming month, and it will be conducted annually
- **Attendee:** Would you consider having a concierge at Tourism Tofino to sell the offerings from different businesses?
  - Note → we can do 'Check-In Canada' for some tracking through our website to booking pages for accommodations or experiences, but it's not a silver bullet and was discouraged from our web agency.
  - The last-minute availability pages were also created to help with some of the booking part
- **Attendee:** Does the perception study include seasonality?

- Answer: This isn't really shown in the data, but it has impacted our marketing to showcase that it is more affordable in shoulder seasons, as that was one of the big barriers identified to making a trip to Tofino.
- **Attendee:** Could you ask something about "Is it expensive to get here, or to be here?"
  - Answer: We don't have that question and might include that in this next survey.
- **Attendee:** Have you had conversations with Hullo and about partnering or promoting their services?
  - Answer: Yes, [Brad] have met with Hullo and we are trying to identify a clear path to Tofino for folks wanting to use their services, but that offering isn't available right now.
  - **Brad:** BC Ferries is going to get new vessels to add to their fleets, but they will decommission the older ones, so DMOs and mayors wrote a letter to encourage growing the fleet to better support the demand.
  - **Attendee:** If we are at capacity in the summer, are we really concerned about adding sailings/ferries?
  - **Brad:** It damages the perception of the brand if it is difficult to get a reservation/sailing to the Island, but you're not wrong.
- **Attendee:** During the shoulder season, Hot Springs Cove is less available with storms, and with everything less available in winter, so what are people doing?
  - Potential future question for an Economic Impact Study (i.e.: show activity results based on seasons).
- **Attendee:** Are there opportunities to amplify experiences with less awareness vs high interest to build that awareness?
  - **Brad:** We lean into the awareness part, but I disagree and see the low interest and high awareness being where we should put our energy.
- **From a message after the event:** Is it possible that the awareness of Tofino being so high in the 55-plus community could be due to the overall global awareness during the War in the Woods that was well-publicized and made Tofino a household name, while younger folks in their 20s and 30s were not around or would not have an awareness of the movement? This may skew the results.

**Samantha Fyleris – Brand Manager:**

Please reference [her slide deck here](#) and the additional notes below:

Our brand defines and expresses who we are as Tourism Tofino, and how we present Tofino.

This includes our values, our character, and brand attributes – what is it that truly differentiates Tofino from other destinations one might visit?

Our 6 brand attributes are:

- Rugged Nature
- Surf Culture
- Indigenous Communities
- West Coast Inspired Cuisine
- Activist Stronghold
- Local Artisans

We incorporate all of that into our purpose, and our brand promise, and how we show it as a brand expression: with our logo, our voice, brand colours, typography, and more.

The Brand Book is something we share with any creative contractors we work with – from graphic designers to our agency of record, to content creators.

The bulk of what I manage is the more traditional side of what a DMO does - paid advertising. This is mainly executed in campaigns with broad impressions.

Over a single campaign, we will have made over 65 million impressions. An impression is a key advertising metric of when one ad is shown on a screen to a user or person, whether it's on a social media platform, or a connected television spot, or a native ad, like a banner that's displayed on an app or a website you're using.

We typically run three campaigns per year: spring, and fall/winter, which used to run as 2 separate campaigns but have been consolidated into one.

We have run other campaigns as needed, like in July 2023 to help alleviate the business disruption caused by the Highway 4 closure at Cameron Lake.

This slide (with all the media outlet logos) shows a subset of platforms where our Spring ads are running. Spring is our largest campaign, due to the occupancy gaps in March through June. This campaign launched mid-February and runs through the first week of June.

Our geographical target audiences have stayed relatively consistent over time, with Vancouver and the Lower Mainland, as well as Alberta and sometimes Washington State residents.

Other factors like ages of audiences and campaign messaging are informed by data points we've collected. For example, the Brand Awareness and perception research from Leger Marketing confirmed what we knew, that one of the travel barriers to Tofino is the higher cost of accommodation – hence our present “expect less” campaign.

It also showed us that travel intent in younger BC residents (18-34) is strong, and we adjusted target demographics accordingly.

Timing:

To give you an idea of the timing of our work, I'm currently preparing a brief for our fall/winter campaign that will be send to our agency next week, informing them of our demographic targets, platforms we'd like to use (though they'll be similar to what you see here), campaign concept ideas that they'll refine, and how we're looking to define success of the campaign.

There's much to talk about with paid advertising!

## **Content shoots**

I plan these in collaboration with Jess, our Digital Marketing Mgr.

These images and videos will be shown in our paid advertising, as well as in social content we produce, and on our website. We reserve some images and video to share for editorial coverage, or what we call earned media, through Danielle.

We usually hire local talent, from photographers and videographers, to models. We recently completed a few shoots, including this wildlife/boat tour shoot working with a few member outfitters, and are readying another shoot to take place in the weeks to come.

Of course, we also license the usage of existing assets as well because shoots are labour-intensive.

If you have questions about our paid marketing or content shoots, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or come see me.

### **Jess Cloutier – Digital Marketing Manager:**

Additional points from [the Digital Marketing presentation](#):

**Slide 2:** I'm Jess and I am lucky and grateful to be in the role of Digital Marketing Manager for Tourism Tofino.

To make things confusing, there are three Jess's working at Tourism Tofino: Visitor Services Manager, Jess McGarry (on the left), Visitor Services Supervisor, Jess Turcotte (on the right), and myself, Digital Marketing Manager, Jess Cloutier (center). My email is listed below.

My role is to promote tourism in Tofino through owned media, such as our social media channels, the website, blogs, and visitor newsletters. You may have also connected with me in the past for the Hot Cocoa Trail, something I have lead for the past 2 years with the support of the District of Tofino and the Tofino Chamber of Commerce.

**Slide 3:** This is just what I am seeing on our social media accounts for what is working best for the last 6 months, with the constant changes to the algorithm. This may not be true for your channels, but I thought it might be helpful to share.

**Slide 4:** Please reference this slide as a strategy for working with us on social media content collaborations. Please email ([jessica@tourismtofino.com](mailto:jessica@tourismtofino.com)) or DM me on Instagram to pre-plan collaborations. It is often difficult for me to accept collaborations day-of because of content guidelines that we adhere to (either brand guidelines or visual guidelines) or because of previously scheduled content. Some of these guidelines are

included as bullet points on this slide, and I encourage everyone to review the content “no go’s” in the middle of [our Media page](#) (e.g.: can’t show the Cox Bay Lookout, dogs off leash, biking without helmets, etc.).

Currently, for music, the Tourism Tofino brand sounds like: folk, alternative, surf rock, or instrumental. It does not sound like top 40 pop, rap, or metal, and we do not use audio that has explicit content.

For the copy, please remember that the post will appear on both of our pages and therefore should sound like both of our brands. The most common writing style is a first-person perspective from your brand and language that includes “our” or “we” which is not reflective of Tourism Tofino, so trying to write in third-person as much as possible is important. I can also send you our land acknowledgement for the post, or you can reference our previous posts.

We try to avoid using copy on images (or collaborating on poster-style posts with a lot of copy as the image – folks seem to engage more with the imagery of events; I think it helps them envision themselves here.

**Slide 5:** Here are examples of some of the content that we cannot share, either in stories to amplify your brand messages, or in collaboration posts. If you would like Tourism Tofino to amplify and repost your content, please make sure that none of these and the longer list included on the Media page are in your content. It is particularly important to review and highlight these “no-go’s” when working with content creators.

**Slide 6:** Here are some ways that we can work together! I have already highlighted how best to go about collaboration posts with us, but some of the other ways include:

1. **Tagging us in your content** – if it is a story and is visitor-facing content, this is great opportunity for us to repost it. I try to limit the stories to 3 a day (sometimes more) because that seems to be optimal for engagement. More than 3 and we see a big dip in story views. If it is a post and I don’t have space to share it in the stories that day, I often add them to my “to share” saved folder to reference and share at a later date, so it’s worthwhile.
2. **Let us know if you are hosting content creators!** – As the Destination Management Organization (DMO), we don’t actually have any offerings to gift to content creators in exchange for their work. I do have some funds to use to help support content creator trips, but if we work together, we can stretch those dollars further. Our



mandate is to promote the shoulder seasons, so we cannot do collaborations in the summer months or over statutory holidays, and our focus is on high engagement rates and thoughtful storytelling over a large following.

3. **We want to share your events and promos!** – I will go into greater detail about how to share your upcoming events with Tourism Tofino in the next slide, but we also want to know if you have any exciting promotional offers. I will often do seasonal callouts for packages, promotions or events in the shoulder seasons to share in blogs or social media posts with our audience. This is a great way to get featured in our newsletters too. You can also email the [info@tourismtofino.com](mailto:info@tourismtofino.com) so that our whole team knows the exciting things you have coming up!

**Slide 7:** For event marketing, there are two ways to work with us to have your event showcased to our visitors: through content collaborations (already highlighted in previous slides) and on our Festivals & Events page. This slide lists what to include in your event information when you send it to [info@tourismtofino.com](mailto:info@tourismtofino.com) so that it can be posted to the website.

**Slide 8:** Screenshots of the Festivals & Events page.

**Slide 9:** A highlight for callouts in our Industry Newsletter to help highlight your offerings. If you are not subscribed to our Industry Newsletter, please sign up (QR code in the last slide).

**Slide 10:** Here is a brief overview of the reach, audience and content shared in our visitor newsletter. We are aiming to do a seasonal newsletter, once quarterly, about 1.5 months ahead of the season starting (eg: early August for fall; early November for winter, early Feb for spring, and early May for summer). We try to share a newsletter-exclusive promo in the intro of each newsletter and include 5 entries that link to blogs or pages on our website.

**Slide 11:** Screenshots of the May newsletter.

**Slide 12:** As a member of the Chamber and Tourism Tofino, your business will be featured on our website under the relevant categories. Outside of that, other opportunities to be

featured are in blog posts or for accommodations, through the 'Packages and Offers' page during the shoulder seasons (Sam, the Brand Manager, does these callouts). Again, I often to callouts for specific topics in our Industry Newsletter to write the blog posts.

**Slide 13:** Please scan the QR codes to sign up to our newsletters!

**Danielle Fox – Media and Communications Manager:**

I've been fortunate enough to be with Tourism Tofino for the last 5 years, overseeing a few different areas within the Marketing Department, so let's break it down.

**Media:** My main area working with media is collaborating with journalists and editors who focus mainly on travel writing. A lot of my role is building relationships within the industry, creating storylines and engaging itineraries for them to experience on their travels to Tofino. In return, they write stories, take photographs, and share their experiences with their outlets. I attend marketplaces to meet North American journalists, staying in touch and updating them on new stories or ideas in Tofino and to build those relationships to then having them join us in town.

The outlets they write for can range from personal online blogs to newspapers such as The Vancouver Sun or The Toronto Star, to magazines such as Travel + Leisure or Afar, as examples.

One of the main reasons why working with travels writers is so important is due to the personal experiences in their writing. It is a perfect complement to traditional advertising as it is from an outside perspective, and it can usually paint a larger image of the experiences than a traditional advertisement.

To explain the benefit of hosting travel writers, a recent article was published in

The way that I create itineraries for journalists, is to first understand the style of story they are wishing to tell, or what makes the best angle for the outlet they are on assignment for or pitching to. I then reach out to different members of Tourism Tofino to see if they are interested in participating on their itinerary. This can be anything from having them on a tour, for a meal, or an interview to sharing the story of their business. The members I choose relate to the story and have expressed interest in working with us. While we do have a media budget to assist with their trips, it isn't large, so we do appreciate any assistance

our members provide to assist in hosting travel media and making their experience top notch.

Tourism Tofino aims to host anywhere between 12-15 journalists a year, focusing on journalists who can pitch their article to more than one outlet, as our goals are to have 35-40 placements in outlets – meaning that a story gets picked up by more than 1 outlet or a journalist that visits writes more than one article about their experience. To give a bit of context, one of our journalists that was hosted earlier this year wrote 1 story, however it was picked up by over 35 placements! This article had a reach of over 20 million individuals, and had an AVE (advertising value equivalency) of over \$200,000 – meaning that if we were to put an advertisement out in the outlets that picked it up as a story, it would have cost us that much to gain that reach.

If you are interested in working with Travel Media or have any questions at all, I'd love to chat! Please reach out via email – [danielle@tourismtofino.com](mailto:danielle@tourismtofino.com)

**Communications:** Bi-weekly we send out the Tofino Community Tourism News or otherwise known as our Industry Newsletter. Within these newsletters, you'll find information on workshops and events, information from industry organizations such as Destination BC, schedules for things such as the free summer shuttle, action items such as updating your member listings or sending us information if you'd like to take part in certain programs we put together such as marketing opportunities or the Hot Cocoa Trail.

Additionally, I have been working on the Crisis Communications Program for Tourism Tofino, which will be finalized shortly. This plan is important because it provides a framework for managing information and ensuring timely communication with members and visitors. It includes steps of communication and future prevention to help prepare and navigate through unexpected situations, such as the road closing for a longer period, or an earthquake.

**Business Development:** I also oversee opportunities to work with outside sources to bring additional visitors when Tofino needs it – in the off season. Within this area, I attend different trade shows and marketplaces, connecting with meeting and event planners for corporate and incentive experiences. Showcasing why Tofino is the perfect destination for board retreats, small meetings or treating their top agents to a trip. I reply to requests for proposals, connecting meeting planners with properties in Tofino that would work for the group they are looking at proposing Tofino to.

Additionally, I work within the 'Travel Trade', which is working with travel agents, wholesalers, online travel agencies and tour operators to provide updates about Tofino and

different experiences they can sell to their clients. My role with Travel Trade is more of a supporting role, where I'm here should anyone within that market have questions about the destination.