

Atlantic Canada Showcase Research



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Context: Summary Report

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Research Objectives & Methodology



Atlantic Canada Showcase (ACS) is held every two years in rotation around the four provinces. It provides the region's tourism businesses (suppliers) with the opportunity to meet, in a trade show environment, with travel trade operators (buyers) interesting in selling Atlantic Canada. As well, buyers are invited to participate in regional familiarization tours (FAMS) associated with the show.

This research, conducted by Economic Planning Group, was designed to re-examine ACS's role and importance and to identify whether there were new approaches that could be adopted to connect buyers with Atlantic Canada's tourism businesses. Interviews were conducted with buyers, with sellers from each province and with other travel trade shows and marketplaces.



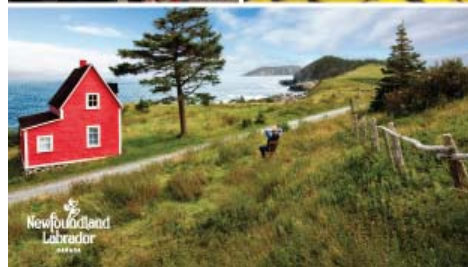
Key Findings

ACS is a key strategic piece in the overall travel trade marketing efforts in Atlantic Canada. ACS showcases the culture and tourism products of Atlantic Canada to travel trade buyers, both at the show and on FAMS. It provides an opportunity for buyers and sellers to meet, to develop their relationships and to do business together.

the show. Although unable to directly track sales to ACS, 50% of these buyers indicate that their expectations for new business are being met.

For Atlantic Canada's tourism industry, ACS also:

- Provides an opportunity for sellers to meet face to face with buyers who have an interest in the region;
- Helps build awareness of the destination and what it has to offer;



More than half of the suppliers attending ACS expect to get new business as a result of the show, either directly or through relationships that they establish at

- Educates sellers about the travel trade and their expectations;
- Brings buyers to the region and encourages their participation in FAMS;
- Provides an opportunity to network with their colleagues from across the region;

For travel trade buyers, ACS also:

- Helps them find new suppliers and products;
- Offers an opportunity to network with other buyers and sellers;
- Provides them with a better understanding of what Atlantic Canada has to offer

For many of the buyers, ACS is one of their favourite shows – its small size, focus on Atlantic Canada, format, length and the pre/post show FAMS are seen to be important features in the success of the show.

There are some concerns about ACS, particularly given recent trends in the sector with a decline in group tour business into the region.

The primary concern from a seller's perspective is a lack of new buyers. ACS needs more buyers, new buyers, and a mix of buyers that is a better match with what is happening in the marketplace. This means more qualified, quality travel trade buyers such as from overseas markets, FIT travel trade and online tour operators.

Buyers did not identify any major weaknesses with ACS. Buyers indicated that they would like to see

more product oriented to the FIT market and more new and different products and experiences. Some expressed concern that sellers did not understand how to work with receptives and FIT tour operators and needed more education on these aspects of the travel trade business.

The ACS show itself was very well received by both buyers and sellers. They liked the buyer-seated format, the length, and the FAMS with only a few suggestions for changes, mostly around making the appointments a bit longer. The rotating location was popular, as long as the location selected had good access and an appropriate venue for the show.

Buyers in particular said that they needed to know the date and location of ACS much much earlier, preferably at the end of the preceding show since their schedules are planned far in advance.

Neither buyers nor sellers were able to identify new approaches for connecting buyers and sellers. The Internet is of growing importance to tour operators in researching destinations and communicating with their suppliers. However, the opportunity shows and FAMS provide to meet face to face and to experience product first hand overshadowed the benefits of any other approaches. Buyers and sellers did suggest that much more use could be made of the ACS website between shows to connect buyers and sellers, to promote the show and to distribute information about the region.

Strategic Framework for the Future

Building on the results of the research, a strategic framework for the future of ACS was established with the assistance of the ACS Committee. The six strategies identified were:

- Enhance travel trade (buyer) participation in ACS – attract more buyers, particularly more non-group tour buyers.
- Enhance seller participation in ACS to ensure that the mix of sellers is a good match with the types of buyers attending and what they are looking for.
- Develop an educational strategy to ensure that sellers attending ACS are educated on working with the travel trade.
- Enhance the use of web-based technologies.
- Refine the show format and address other operational issues.
- Enhance show planning and management resources, particularly for the period between the close of one show and detailed planning for the next.