

# Agritourism: Marketing to Fit Your Enterprise

By Tamara Robertson, Wandering Acres LLC



Every farm or ranch is unique, and that is why your marketing plan should be unique as well. Agritourism enterprises face obstacles when it comes to marketing that other businesses may not. In this article we will discuss how you structure your enterprise with your future goals in mind. We will also discuss a few options for online marketing, on-farm marketing and grants that will help you reach your goals along with different resources you can use for marketing your business. At the conclusion of this article, we will go over where to market your farm enterprise and compare the difference in using only social media vs email marketing campaigns to see which one might be better for you and your operation.

To begin we need to ask a few questions...



## This guide will discuss:

- Marketing obstacles in Agritourism
- Keeping a future-focused mindset when developing a marketing plan
- Options for online marketing, grants, and other resources for marketing
- Where to market your farm enterprise, social media vs email



## Why should I have a marketing plan? Am I limiting myself without a marketing plan? What are the benefits to marketing?

Before even starting a business you know that people will need to attend, buy, or enjoy your product or service for it to be successful. Solid research on your topic is imperative to a successful marketing plan and will help you reach your specific audience that is looking for your product, goods or services. You can find a huge amount of marketing information specific to Montana at [marketmt.com](https://brand.mt.gov/Programs/Marketing/Tourism-Research/). The different programs will give you a breakdown on what Montana is doing to promote the great state and what you can do to follow suit for your operation, visit <https://brand.mt.gov/Programs/Marketing/Tourism-Research/> specifically to continue research. The benefits of adding similar marketing techniques used for the State of Montana will help your farm or ranch align with the already successful approach the state is working on and give your enterprise added verification for people who visit both your farm and Montana in general.

## What is my story? Why would anyone want to visit my farm/ranch? What can I offer to travelers?

After you have done some research on the ideas of incorporating tourism to your agriculturally based farm or ranch then it's time to decide on the structure and audience you are trying to create. People will be attracted to your authenticity and the story behind your 'why'. Knowing your story and your 'why' will help develop the line of marketing needed to attract the kind of people who will enjoy what you have created.

An example might include:

"I grew up in an agricultural setting and when I came home to help a sick family member I realized just how important it was to share the traditions and experience of my past with others. That's why I want to create a fun getaway for traveling families to enjoy the same experiences I had growing up and create a new understanding of the land while making memories to last a lifetime."

This story or 'why' is an example of how you can narrow down your audience. The story speaks to the type of people who would enjoy how this person grew up. The story implies this farm or ranch will be suitable for families, it will be fun, it will have an educational piece and be rooted in tradition.

It has authenticity, which gains trust and invokes a sense of community or family because it is relatable. This is the type of audience the example is trying to attract. Once you understand your audience, you can tailor the attractions on your farm or ranch to suit those people.



## Who is my audience or customer?

To tailor the attractions on your farm or ranch to a target audience you first need to be quite specific in how you define who that is. In 2021, Montana had 12.5 million visitors who spent \$5.15 billion according to the Institution for Tourism and Recreation Research. The number of people needed to make your business successful are already coming to Montana. You just need to know their profile, age, gender, interests and why they will buy from you so you can get them to visit your enterprise. The example above offered 'families' as the audience however, knowing they are middle aged families traveling with young children and trying to find new adventures and create memories outside of the city with only a small amount of experience in agriculture will help you define your attractions and specifically 'talk' to them through your marketing.



## Why are visitors coming to Montana?

According to a study done by the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research in 2021, 40% of travelers to Montana indicated vacation, recreation and pleasure as the reasons they are coming and 79% of the respondents had visited Montana before. Writing down your story will serve as a tool to reflect on as you continue through the years and evolve your marketing strategy in hopes to attract those returning visitors and reach your goals. Knowing your story and audience further helps when structuring attractions to include the geographic area you are trying to reach. The geographical area can include only people who are local, it can include people from across the state or on a larger level to include the entire nation. Build your marketing plan to be specific to the geographical area of your target audience.



**Now that we know who we're talking to and why, let's look at where to market and what resources are out there...**

# Where to Market and Funding to Help:

## Online marketing vs on-farm marketing: what's the difference?

Marketing starts at the very beginning of your journey. From the name of your enterprise to the work that goes into it and the presentation of the finished product at the end, marketing your services, products or goods is the story behind your 'why' and that's what people want to see.

**Online marketing** is a highly used form of marketing that can help tell your story and gain the know, like and trust factor from your audience resulting in more motivated sales. It's a way to showcase your story and provide your audience with the reasons why they should buy your product, visit your farm and learn from your teachings. Many forms of online marketing include email marketing, social media marketing, and content marketing all of which serve important roles in bringing your brand to life through relevant, useful information.

**On-farm marketing** serves 2 purposes. The first purpose is to provide visitors with detailed information of attractions, things to do and a look into the beauty you have created on your farm or ranch. Information can be delivered in the form of flyers to take from the farm store, designated signs throughout your business either as they enter or while they are exploring throughout the attractions.

This is in relation to the 4 A's of Agritourism: Attraction, Access, Accommodation, and Advertising. Having a clearly marked enterprise with guidance throughout will provide access without experiencing any difficulty and help provide a delightful experience for your audience.

The second purpose of on farm marketing goes hand in hand with online marketing. It serves to show your audience what you are doing on your farm before the audience arrives and allows you to market your finished product before you even have one. Showcasing the lead up to a finished product can serve as a wonderful tool in building the know, like and trust factor for your audience.

## Where can I find help in funding some marketing projects?

A few ways of accessing funding include reaching out to the Montana Food and Agriculture Development Network or the FADC at <https://agr.mt.gov/Food-and-Ag-Development-Centers>. Each region of Montana has a center that can help with Business planning and development, Business networking – statewide, nationally, and internationally, Access to financing, Grant application support and so much more. On this website you'll find a link to business development, grants and loans that will show you the available grants Montana is offering.

The Growth Through Agriculture Program is eligible for equipment, consultant services, ads, and promotion and is more for established businesses with a proven concept, demand and success.

The Growth Through Agriculture—Marketing Development Program is eligible for marketing needs and promotion campaigns of your existing marketing strategy for your agritourism business and is accepting applications until funding is expended.

These are just a few grants the FADC offers and with their help you will be able to find more. This network exists to help Montanans innovate and grow businesses that produce and commercialize food, agricultural and renewable energy products, and processes (FADC center website). These TA services are offered at no charge to you.

# Resources for Marketing:

Agritourism fits into 5 categories including Education, Direct Sales, Entertainment, Hospitality and Outdoor Recreation. The categories will all have different marketing strategies and audiences that are specific to the type of service being provided. Below is a list of recommended resource tools available for you to research and help promote different aspects of your agritourism enterprises:

## Email Marketing:

Email marketing is a very successful, direct marketing option designed to showcase new products, services and goods to audiences while engaging them in your brand. This type of marketing is useful for people both on and off of social media platforms. It allows you to collect email addresses and categorize them into areas of interest on your farm or ranch. Examples may be a group of emails designated to the educational piece you provide or another group of emails may be designated to the people who enjoy seeing wildlife roaming about. Email marketing is a great way to engage with customers and show them what you have to offer.

Examples of email marketing software that might fit your agritourism enterprise and should be researched on the basis of price, key email features and additional features they offer include:

- Mailchimp
- Brevo
- GetResponse
- ActiveCampaign
- Constant Contact

## Content Marketing:

Content marketing is the task of offering relevant, useful information to audiences in hopes of attracting and retaining new customers. There are many areas this type of marketing covers and email marketing can fit into this category as well. Knowing your audience will be important when coming up with relevant, useful information that is specific to the needs of your audience. Some examples of areas you can consider using content marketing include:

- Blogs
- Social media
- Video and audio content
- Offering reviews
- Email Marketing

# Resources for Marketing, continued:

## Website Analytics:

First off, not every farm or ranch enterprise has a website or even needs a website but if you do, understanding how your website is working for you and whether your website is attracting the right audience is how website analytics can help you.

Improving your online presence can be done with an array of different tools. The following are examples of companies you can research to help you review, gather data and evaluate your website:

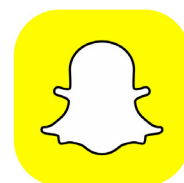
- Google Analytics
- Mailchimp Reporting and Analytics
- Adobe Analytics
- MonsterInsights
- Matomo

## Social Media Marketing:

The simple idea is the use of social media and websites to market to your audience to promote products, brands and services. Social media marketing is largely recognized in many business marketing plans. If your enterprise decides to use social media it can be very successful in coordination with your website however it also allows you to market without a website.

The downfall in using only social media as your marketing plan comes down to the rules and regulations set by social media. You may have a large following on social media but if the people running the platform decide to shutdown your page or the entire platform, then you are at risk of losing all the customers and audience. It is recommended to use social media in conjunction with an email marketing strategy to be able to retain your audience and their emails in the event of a lost social media account. Examples of social media platforms you can use with your enterprise include:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- X (formerly known as Twitter)
- WhatsApp



# Resources for Marketing, continued:

## Design Tools:

Now you have the tools needed to keep track of your websites, audiences, and information but you still need to create attractive, eye-catching campaigns that will draw in the audiences you are hoping to attract. Having access to different design tools will allow you to make sure your brand is uniform, relatable and recognizable when your audience opens it and sees your information. Design tools can help you create a strong brand, recognizable logos, uniform infographics and relatable information your audience will continue looking for. These design tools have many functions that can help build your agritourism enterprise:

- Canva
- Pixlr
- Adobe Illustrator
- HootSuite
- Adobe Lightroom

Specific websites that you may be utilizing will also have design tools that can help build your brand and reach your audience. If you are a vacation rental host you may find that listing your rental on sites like the ones below will offer their own amount of help in designing your listing:

- Airbnb
- VRBO
- Trip Advisor
- Expedia
- Farm Stay USA
- Hipcamp
- Harvest Host

## Direct Mail Marketing:

This type of marketing involves sending a physical piece of marketing material to audiences and customers through different postal services. It offers a more direct line of marketing and helps influence sales with things like flyers, posters, informational postcards and catalogs. Some services and tools include:

- USPS
- Fedex
- UPS
- VistaPrint
- SmartPress
- PostcardMania