

# Hear About

## **Google & Truly 360**

Have you ever Googled for a local business or attraction and the information comes up incorrectly? The hours listed are outdated or the phone number is missing? Maybe the map looks wrong?

Hamilton County Tourism recently partnered with Truly360 to assist partners to create a stronger online presence. That way, users can easily find information, maps and imagery when visiting a destination like Hamilton County.

Truly360 is a trusted agency of Google and travels across the U.S. and internationally to connect with small and medium-sized businesses to help build brand awareness and in turn, drive engagement and revenue.

Ashley Ledford, director of marketing and promotions for Hamilton County Tourism, said the goal of this new initiative with the agency will give HCT direct access to Google to facilitate trainings with partners and increase the presence of our entire destination as a whole.

“Consumers are searching online for specific destinations and event specific details within destinations,” said Ledford. “This partnership gives us the ability to shape the online listings – with the help of the local businesses – and improve or freshen the community’s online presence or appeal.”

Recently, three representatives from Truly360 traveled to Hamilton County to spend several days on-site to meet partners and event shoot Google Street View and panoramic imagery. Training sessions included:

- Discussion of short- and long-term business goals.
- Assistance with updates to basic information like seasonal hours, location and website info.
- Verification of the business on Google and training on how to create panoramic and street views, add imagery and monitor customer reviews.
- Review of Google Analytics to find out how users currently interact with the business online.
- Education on ways to increase overall exposure and improve maps.

## **SMARI Advertising Effectiveness Study**

This year’s advertising campaigns in Chicago resulted in \$122 million in economic impact in Hamilton County, which is the most successful result of any promotion from Hamilton County Tourism. That’s according to SMARInsights, an Indy-based market research firm, that helped to compile the information for HCT for both the spring and fall campaigns.

This year, the two campaigns focused solely on Chicago and included TV commercials, radio segments and print ads with creative assistance from Three-Sixty Group out of Indianapolis.

SMARI recently reported that HCT’s fall campaign was more successful than spring’s with a return on investment of \$372 in comparison to \$338. Visitors spent on average \$712 per trip in the fall, which includes hotel accommodations, meals, attractions and entertainment.

“These are by far the best results numbers-wise we’ve ever received,” said Jordan Musall, marketing manager for HCT. “This proves our campaign was successful.”

Musall said it’s interesting because HCT spent \$11,000 less in advertising for the fall campaign, yet it was reached by a higher percentage of Chicago households, which is two percent more than the spring campaign.

Musall points to creative differences in the campaigns to be a factor, as well as seasonality. The spring ads promoted the music scene in the area while the fall ads focused specifically on outdoor activities. More thought will be given to how the timing of particular messages influences campaign results, or whether outdoor messages in general resonate better with this market.

“We now know what Chicagoans are more likely to watch or listen to so we will take that information and use it in the future,” he said.

SMARInsights also found:

- The number one trip motivator was shopping, which is traditional for most destinations. Visitors were also interested in Strawtown Koteewi Park and other outdoor activities such as biking, hiking and canoeing, staying in the county but enjoying regional attractions, the local dining scene and HCT’s quaint downtowns.
- A third of the Chicago households saw one or more of HCT’s fall ads.
- Ad aware households, or Chicagoans who saw or heard an HCT advertisement, were 10 percent more likely to make a trip to the area. Those visitors also spent on average one extra night in HC hotels.

“Conducting parallel research on advertising campaigns has helped us dramatically increase our returns on advertising investments,” said Ashley Ledford, director of marketing and promotions for HCT. “It’s an integral part of our marketing strategy.”

Indianapolis Star reporter John Tuohy recently traveled to the Chicago area and heard the HCT advertisements. Tuohy reached out and wrote a story on how the organization attracts visitors and highlighted how the spring campaign fared (the story ran before the fall campaign numbers were released).

Read the article here:

[https://www.indystar.com/story/news/local/hamilton-county/2018/11/12/hamilton-county-tourism-ad-blitz-chicago-paints-pretty-picture/1919046002/.](https://www.indystar.com/story/news/local/hamilton-county/2018/11/12/hamilton-county-tourism-ad-blitz-chicago-paints-pretty-picture/1919046002/)

## ***Nickel Plate Express Excursions***

Nickel Plate Express recently announced two upcoming train excursions: the Ales and Rails ride with beer and snacks and a holiday-themed Reindeer Ride Express.

Nickel Plate Express partnered with Sun King Brewing to offer a variety of beer samples and Just Pop In! for gourmet popcorn on the Ales and Rails ride. Tickets are currently on sale for the Nov. 17 event. This ride will be for adults only, ages 21 and up.

“Sun King is one of the most beloved breweries in the state, so it’s an honor to be able to work with such a well-known brand,” said Dagny Zupin, communications coordinator for Nickel Plate Express. “The only thing that makes a train ride better is a beer in hand.”

The Reindeer Ride Express will be a festive holiday ride for families with hot cocoa and Christmas carols. The exterior of the train will be lit up in holiday lights, courtesy of Gaylor Electric.

“The Nickel Plate Express team is bursting with holiday cheer,” Zupin said. “We can’t wait for the official lighting ceremony.”

The lighting ceremony will take place Nov. 23 with excursions every Saturday and Sunday through Dec. 23.

For more information on excursions or to buy tickets, visit [NickelPlateExpress.com](http://NickelPlateExpress.com).