

Ramada Brand Builds Marketing Campaign Around Guests

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Franchisees attending the Ramada Worldwide annual conference here today learned that the brand plans to strengthen its consumer value proposition and boost incremental room night sales through targeted marketing.

Keri Putera, senior director of marketing, described the "key building blocks" of the 2005 Ramada marketing plan: "increase electronic media efforts, continue with mass marketing presence, develop key travel trade partnerships, provide regional and local marketing resources and leverage the reach of the TripRewards loyalty program."

The Ramada 2005 marketing plan reflects two years of consumer research to better understand changing guest dynamics. That research shows Ramada guests are "active, travel for both business and leisure and love to surf the Internet." The research also shows the Ramada name enjoys an "astounding 93 percent awareness rate," she said.

In addition, the research reveals that the brand's guests are looking for an "affordable lodging experience from a global brand," with a "casually, relaxing atmosphere" where they can meet friends and socialize.

Putera said the brand this year will focus marketing efforts on driving consumers to the brand's consumer Web site, Ramada.com. "Because this channel is so vital to our business, we've embarked on an extensive project to help us grab guests from the first moment of impact and surpass the competition," she said.

Ramada.com is being redesigned to feature "improved, cutting-edge functionality" that will make it easier to book a hotel stay," she said. The brand conducted interviews and focus groups to determine how consumers use the site and "what they like and dislike about the experience."

First and foremost, consumers said they look for updated, relevant, high-quality photos to assess hotels before booking rooms. To address that need, the brand will be embarking on a major initiative to obtain professional photos for its Web site and consumer marketing collateral.

To attract more consumers, the brand has nearly doubled paid-search marketing, listing Ramada hotels on two of the largest search providers, Google and Yahoo! It also increased banner advertising on MapQuest, Weather.com, Tripadvisor.com and Canada.com.

To maintain its relationship with current guests, the brand will deliver "targeted and relevant offers" via e-mail based on their specific travel needs. "Through our newly redesigned e-mail template, we're offering travel packages and personalized content to retain our guests and keep them excited about everything Ramada has to offer," she said.

In addition to the online initiatives, the brand will continue its print advertising campaign in Canada's National Post and USA TODAY, targeting key travel months throughout the year.

In the United States and Canada, the brand is running two 15-second television commercials on key cable networks and a variety of specialty stations throughout the year. According to Putera, one spot focuses on the brand's Guaranteed Best Available Rate program and the other on the benefits of TripRewards membership.

To complement those efforts, the brand has "built a comprehensive targeted travel-trade plan to touch all members of this community, from travel agents to corporate travel managers," said Putera.

The plan centers on print advertising in Travel Agent magazine, Business Travel News and Travelweek throughout the year, "continually reinforcing the Ramada name, our global presence and our solid value proposition," she said. To supplement this campaign, the brand is increasing its exposure at key trade shows throughout the year.

In an effort to "nurture lasting relationships" with travel agents and "constantly keep them engaged," the brand has developed a new program in tandem with Travel Agent magazine. The Ramada Worldwide Specialist Program, which launches in July, will educate travel agents about the brand, its upgraded features and benefits.

Concurrently, the brand has formed a new strategic partnership with Budget Rent A Car. This alliance, a first of its kind for the brand, will allow for "cross-marketing opportunities with Budget guests, who mirror our brand demographics, and will help add incremental dollars to our franchisees' bottom line," she said.

Marketing efforts for the summer center on the TripRewards loyalty program's Stay a Spell promotion, which offers guests a Bewitched movie-themed coupon booklet valued at more than \$250. In Columbia Pictures' beguiling romantic comedy, Bewitched, an all-star cast led by Nicole Kidman, Will Ferrell, Shirley MacLaine and Michael Caine cast their spell on the movie version of one of TV's most memorable and beloved shows under the direction of Nora Ephron. The film releases in theaters June 24.

During the promotional period, TripRewards members can enter a sweepstakes for daily and monthly prizes. Every day during the promotion, TripRewards will give away gas cards valued at \$100 each in the Stay a Spell online instant win game. Four times during the promotion TripRewards members can win one million TripRewards points.

One million TripRewards points can be redeemed for 166 free hotel night stays, five months worth of car rentals, 181 \$25 gift cards from top retailers, 30 mountain bikes, 68 blenders, 18 plane tickets or other great rewards.

The coupon book includes a free car rental upgrade and discounts on shopping and entertainment.

Ramada Worldwide Inc., a subsidiary of Cendant Corporation (NYSE: CD), is a mid-to upper-mid market chain of 993 properties worldwide. Reservations can be made by calling, toll-free, (800) 2-RAMADA or online at www.ramada.com.

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