SOJERN

The Destination Marketer's Guide to **Always-On Marketing**

Marketing Your Destination
to Today's Traveler



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Introduction

With the world at their fingertips, consumers today have an unprecedented level of connection. They can draw inspiration, access the answers to their biggest questions, and plan a trip from start to finish, from any device they want, whenever they want.

This constant access means travel buying habits have changed and every user approaches planning differently. They're ready to make a purchase at any time, any day. They are always on and destination marketing must be too.

An always-on marketing strategy requires a paradigm shift. As a destination marketer, you can capture the attention of your travelers by staying one step ahead.

When you anticipate the needs and desires of your ideal visitors, you can inspire them with endless possibilities awaiting them in your destination. The reality is, the world has changed. An always-on marketing strategy will help you find the always-connected, always-planning traveler.

In *The Destination Marketer's Guide to Always-On Marketing*, you will learn:

- How always-on marketing works and how to leverage it for your destination
- How to improve performance and efficiencies to gain visibility around the planning and booking journey
- How insights into traveler behavior will help you rethink your digital marketing strategy
- How to gain consistent market presence and open up co-op opportunities

Gain the competitive edge and discover the power of an **always-on marketing strategy.**

CHAPTER ONE

Give Your Strategy an **Instant Upgrade** With Always-On Marketing



What is Always-On Marketing?

Destinations traditionally plan media in “flights” or episodic campaigns designed to support specific business goals or marketing strategies. A burst flight is a campaign that runs for less than 21 days. These campaigns typically support seasonal initiatives or promote events during a specific timeframe.

An always-on marketing strategy takes a more dynamic and ongoing approach, allowing you to support the high seasons and capture demand during the shoulder seasons. Using real-time traveler intent data, audience segmentation, and personalized messaging, always-on marketing capitalizes on the full scope of the travel buying journey.

In a market where travelers are continuously searching for trips, most marketing channels are intensely competitive. Consumers don’t like disruption, and travelers want to be engaged in whatever media, platform, or content they frequent—when they’re most receptive to your messaging.

Relying on seasonal marketing and episodic bursts doesn’t give you the comprehensive coverage you need to reach your customer whenever and wherever they are in their planning and booking journey. Always-on marketing is a customer-centric way to personalize your content and connect with them on their terms.



“You never know what stage of travel planning someone is in. For us, it just makes sense to always be on. Summer is our peak season and traditionally that’s not where we would be running media, but we do have a digital presence to keep Pensacola top of mind. Our hard-hitting marketing effort happens January to April and August to December when we’re in the low seasons.”

Nicole Stacey

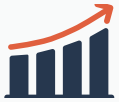
Vice President of Destination Development

Pensacola FLORIDA



What's Stopping You From Adopting an Always-On Strategy?

Always-On Myths and Misconceptions



"I only need to market during the high seasons."

Destination marketers often work with a fraction of their past budgets, creating a hesitancy to invest marketing dollars during the low season. That doesn't mean travelers aren't still on the move. If you only market for your high seasons, you could be missing out on the opportunity to catch travelers during their planning phase—the moments that matter.



"I don't want to aggressively ad-target my audiences."

Always-on marketing doesn't mean you're in front of travelers all the time. It means you're delivering relevant messaging based on what these travelers are looking for in the most important moments of their search. When you collect data with your campaigns, you get the information you need to send the right message at the right time.



"When we set a strategy, we have to stick to it."

With an always-on campaign, you can constantly optimize and adjust. Just because you set your strategy at the beginning of the year doesn't mean you can't make changes. Your data may show an increase in visitors from a country you weren't aware of or visitors may arrive when you weren't anticipating. Always-on marketing is flexible, so you won't miss out on capitalizing on your findings.



"My budget must be spent evenly throughout the year."

Looking at booking lead times, travel intent, and interests of your ideal travelers, you will get a better idea of how to reach them throughout the year. With an always-on strategy, you can use data to be strategic about your spending and make the right investments at the right time.

What Are the Benefits of Always-On Marketing for Destinations?

Boost Campaign Efficiency and Maximize Your Budget

As you plan your marketing strategies for the year, always-on marketing can help with two things: efficiency and budget. This doesn't mean you blanket target anyone and everyone with your message. You can hone in on the travelers that will make the most impact on your destination.

These travelers are going to have a positive experience, love what your destination has to offer, spend a lot of time and money visiting, and keep coming back.

When you target your ideal travelers, your marketing spend is used towards travelers who will bring the most return, and fit the profile—making the most of your budget. Looking at the average cost per action (CPA) of destination campaigns in the U.S., we found that always-on campaigns had a **33% lower CPA** than burst media flights. See the *Average Cost Per Action* Chart on Page 9.

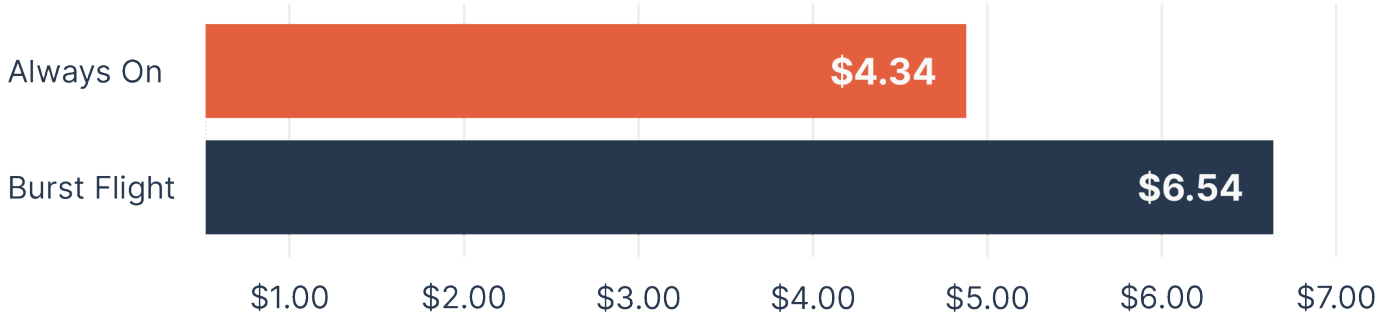
Drive Performance With Better Data and Insights

Always-on campaigns capture high-intent users better, improve the campaign's machine learning capabilities, and allow for more efficient campaign management. Test and learn as you go by making use of your data and insights on a regular basis.

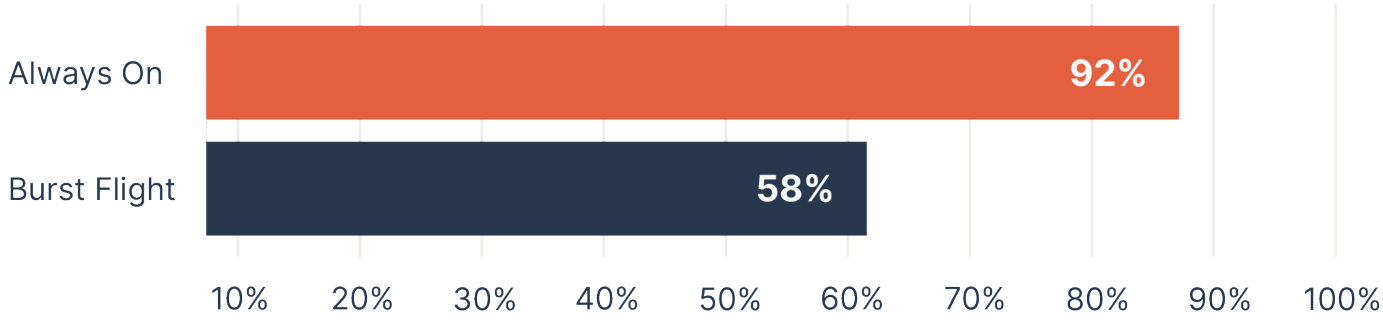
On average, **92% of always-on campaigns with Sojern exceeded campaign goals** compared to just 58% with burst flights. See the *Percentage of Channels Beating Goals* Chart on Page 9.



Flight Length: Average Cost Per Action



Flight Length: Percentage of Channels Beating Goal (Cost Per Action)



“An always-on approach is recommendable for any brand or tourism board that wants to maintain a constant conversation with their potential audiences across the year. This strategy increases and maintains the recall rates of the brand through the targeted audiences keeping it top-of-mind, and delivers a higher ROI on a medium and long term basis.”

George Kalliamvakos

Digital Media Manager,
Department of Culture and Tourism

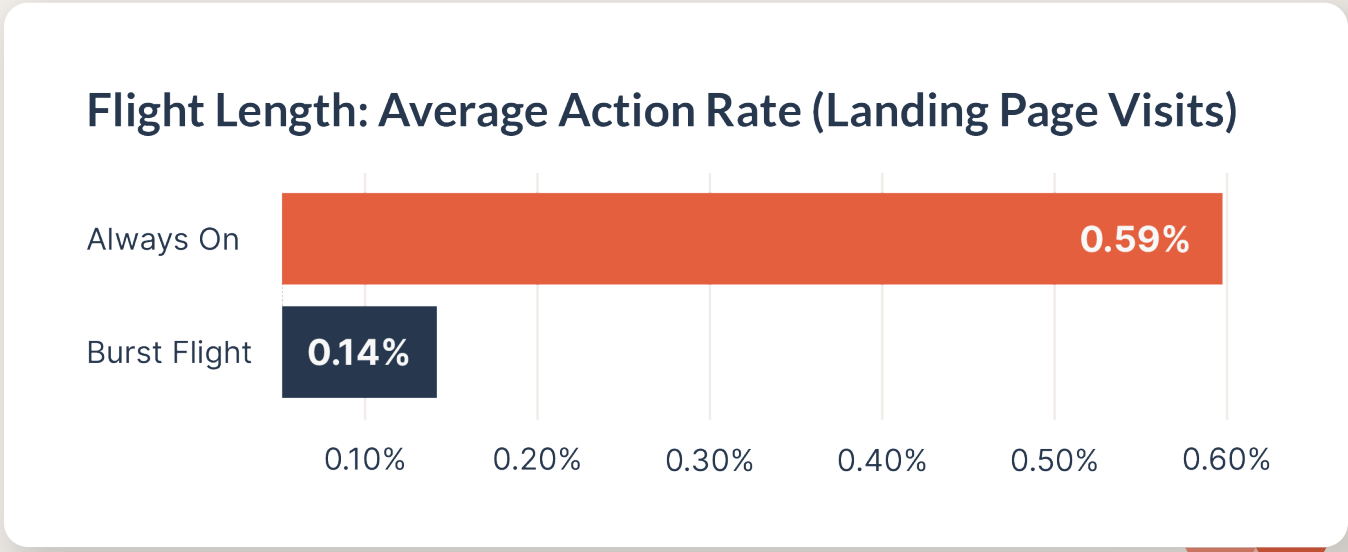


Inspire Visitors to Take Action With a Better Ad Experience

Collecting data is a major challenge for Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), but building a first-party data program opens up the opportunity for a traveler-centric strategy. Starting from scratch may be a hassle, but without data you're making assumptions about your audiences, creating a negative experience for them.

With a first-party data program and always-on marketing, you can use fresh data to identify and activate your most valuable segment of customers.

Relevant messages and strategic targeting will improve the experience of your ideal travelers—inspiring them to take action on your website. We found that always-on campaigns had an incredible **328% higher action rate** compared to burst flights.



CHAPTER TWO

Use **Travel Intent, Timing & Planning** to Your Advantage



Say “Bon Voyage” to Relying on Seasonal Advertising

Destinations around the world are always looking for a competitive edge. Travelers are searching and booking anytime, anywhere. If your destination doesn’t show up in the moments that matter, your competitors will.

To put this reality into perspective, we compiled insights for the yearly seasonality of travelers planning and booking vacations to Athens, Greece, and Zurich, Switzerland. Looking at the search to travel lead times, most of the year travelers are consistently showing travel intent toward Switzerland, and intent towards Athens happens anywhere from November to August. These travelers are arriving in the summer for both Athens and Switzerland, with Switzerland also seeing popularity in December.

The insights show travelers are searching well in advance and they are in-market throughout the year. Seasons are much longer than you think, and it’s time to think outside of your seasonal advertising.

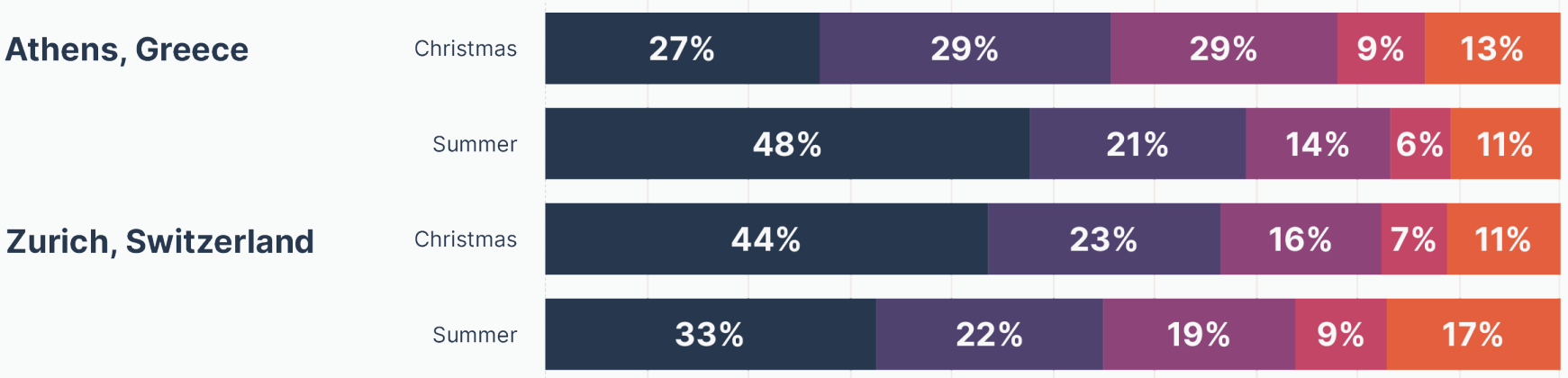
Leisure Travelers Planning & Booking Vacations

Destination Metro	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Athens, Greece	7%	9%	10%	10%	11%	9%	8%	7%	6%	5%	11%	7%
Zurich, Switzerland	6%	7%	8%	9%	10%	9%	8%	9%	8%	8%	9%	7%

Leisure Travelers Arriving For Vacation

Destination Metro	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Athens, Greece	1%	3%	4%	9%	8%	11%	16%	15%	11%	8%	5%	9%
Zurich, Switzerland	2%	4%	6%	8%	8%	10%	12%	11%	10%	9%	7%	13%

Percent of Total Planning & Booking Actions



Engaging your ideal travelers doesn't stop once they've booked. When they arrive at your destination, you can use data and insights to drive them to act. Encourage them to shop around, participate in activities, coordinate rental cars, and more. Showcase what makes your destination special and keep them wanting more.

Nimble Campaigns Adapt to Engage Your Ideal Travelers

Destination marketers often rely on assumptions about their target audience based on outdated research and reports. They are accessing data from a variety of different sources, including third parties or building their own datasets of traveler information.

In partnership with Sojern, you can access data to understand traveler behavior in real time to reach your audience with precision. Throughout the year, you may know the best times of year to market your destination due to seasonality or your calendar of events, but you can also understand what types of travelers will make the most of those events and the best time to reach them.

Distance Traveled & Lead Times to Orlando for Spring Break

Distance From Orlando	Average Lead Time
0-500 miles	22 days
500-1000 miles	35 days
2000-3000 miles	36 days
1000-1500 miles	39 days
1500-2000 miles	40 days
3000+ miles	58 days

For example, we pulled data for leisure travelers booking trips to Orlando during Spring Break. We found that travelers from farther away are planning trips well in advance, while travelers closer to the destination plan their trips more closely to arrival. See the *Percentage of Total Planning & Booking Actions* Chart on Page 14.

Now consider the type of travelers you're looking to attract. If you're a family-friendly destination like Orlando, you'll need to plan your strategies to account for longer lead times for planning and booking. If you coordinate other events during specific times of the year, you can plan for the lead times of solo travelers, couples, or empty nesters. With always-on marketing, you build a foundation of customer data and insight, providing visibility into the buying journey that you never had before.

Types of Leisure Travelers & Average Lead Times To Orlando for Spring Break

Traveler Type	Average Lead Time
Solo	27 days
Couple	41 days
Family	52 days

“Historically, we’ve always been a family beach destination for summer. Always-on marketing allows us to be more than that. We have so much more than just beaches. We have festivals, events, museums, arts and culture. We’re more than just a sleepy beach town that you come to in the dead of summer. Always-on has really allowed us to talk to other audiences that have been rising above when family travel was so focused on just summer.”

Nicole Stacey
Vice President of Destination Development

Pensacola FLORIDA



Numbers Don’t Lie: Performance & Efficiency Increase With Always-On Marketing

We analyzed two destinations’ campaigns over the same period of time with similar budgets and targeting parameters—Destination A running always-on and Destination B running burst flights.

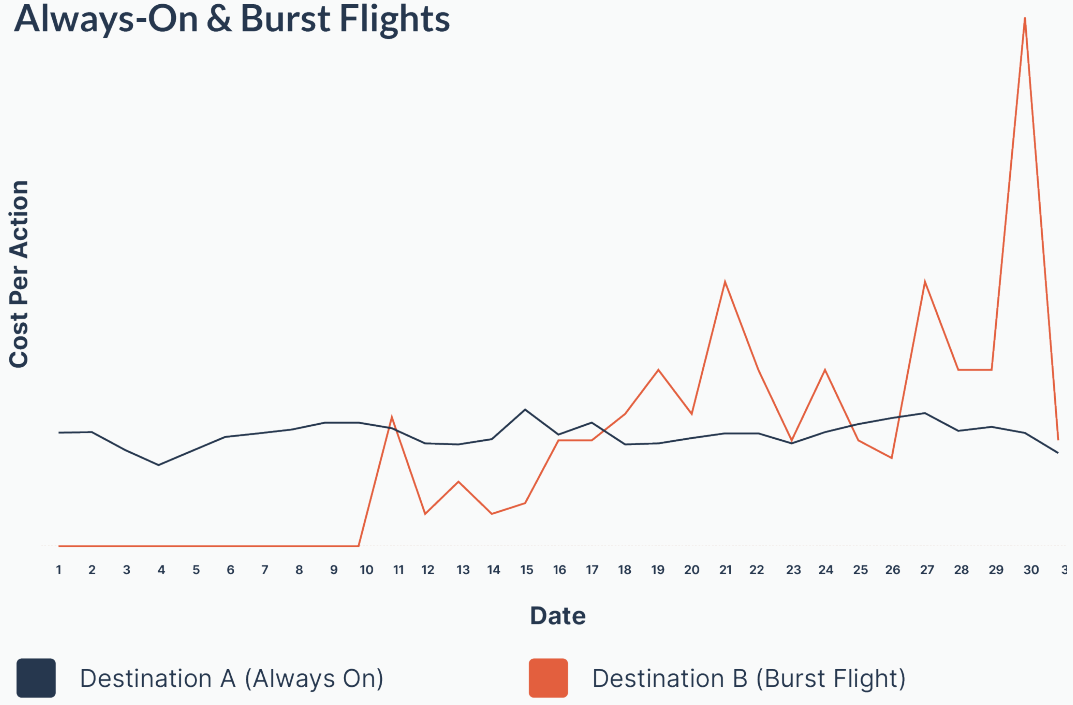
Destination A: Always-On

In Destination A, Sojern ran one continuous campaign over the course of a month. This campaign not only had consistent performance, reaching high-intent users at the beginning and end, but it also had a **40% lower CPA and generated 60% more conversions.**

Destination B: Burst Flights

In Destination B, Sojern ran two successive burst campaigns, both lasting 14 days. The campaigns had a significantly longer ramp-up period with no site engagements (actions) driven the first week of the campaign.

CPA Comparison For Destinations Running Always-On & Burst Flights



CHAPTER THREE

Four Ways to Launch Your Always-On Strategy



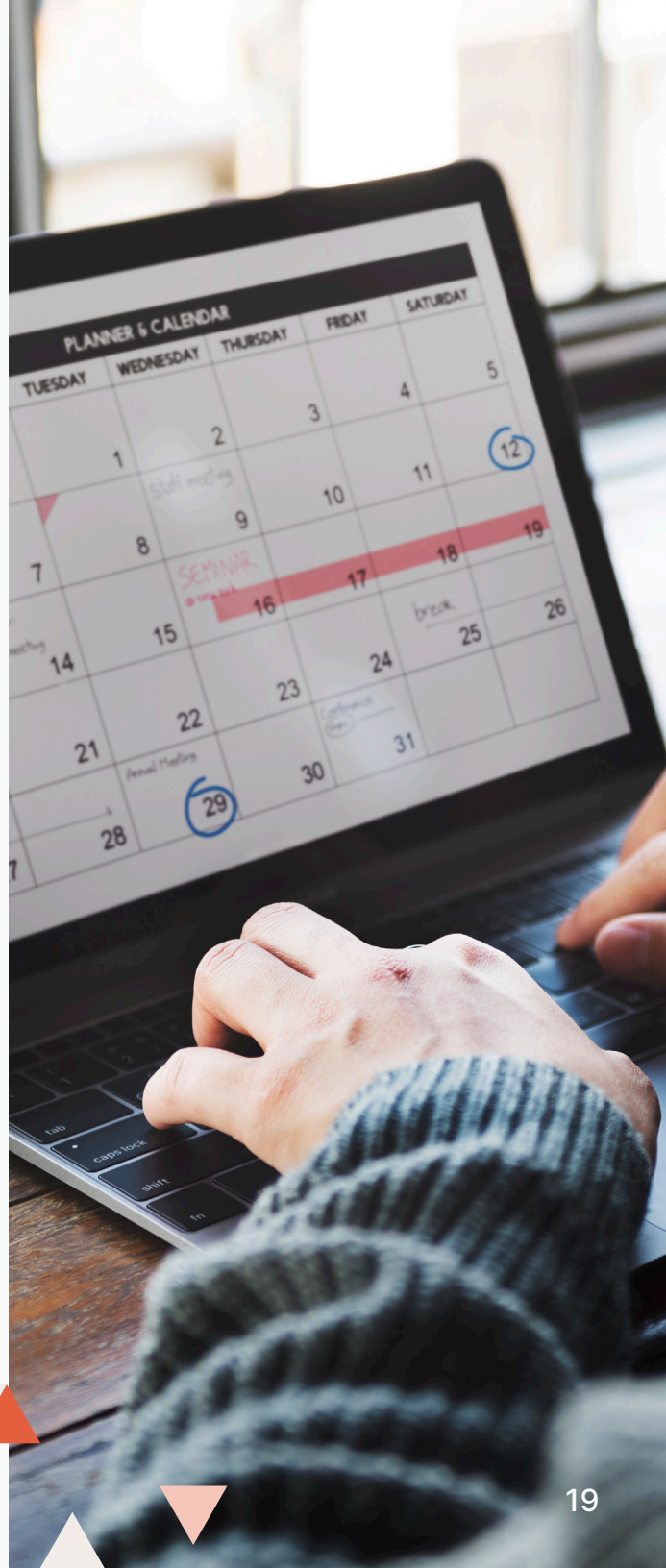
#1: Mix Seasonal Bursts & Always-On Media for More Impact

Moving to an always-on strategy doesn't mean the end of your seasonal flight campaigns completely. Find a mix between always-on and the strategies you know work to shift your thinking away from campaigns and flights to audiences and messaging first. By taking away those limits, you'll understand what's most effective to drive visitation.

We segment your audiences and listen to the data to determine who is most likely to act on your message. Not only will your ideal travelers be likely to choose you when it's time to book, but when we run your seasonal campaigns, they're already aware of your brand and you will be a solid part of their consideration set.

Using always-on strategies provides valuable consumer intent signals that will be critical in helping you improve your ad targeting, performance, and scale.

"Our digital campaigns are always on, but our individual targets always change depending on the seasonality. If it's summer, we're known as a family beach destination, and we talk to those interested travelers. If it's the fall when many of our festivals are happening, we might be talking to arts and culture-driven travelers, couples, or empty nesters, who can travel any time," said Nicole Stacey, Vice President of Destination Development at Visit Pensacola.



#2: Deliver Value to Your Co-Op Partners Without the Hassle

If you're working with limited budgets and resources, launching your always-on strategy might be a challenge. A marketing co-op is a great way to get your always-on strategy off the ground and maximize your spend. By pooling resources and budgets with local stakeholders, like hotels and attractions, you can work together to reach your ideal travelers efficiently.

A marketing co-op is a complex strategy with a lot of moving pieces, but it doesn't have to be a headache to set up and manage with the right solution. Sojern can help you and your partners create a sustainable ecosystem that not only increases economic scale but helps budgets go further and aid in faster recovery.

The DMO often leads the charge as the host, and if you have adopted an always-on marketing strategy, you will have more to offer your partners. Partners will gain insight into their ideal visitors, timing and seasonality, and the effectiveness of creative messaging. The host can offer a digital marketing program that delivers better results for all partners. Participants may even be excited to continue after the program ends with their own always-on strategy.

Co-Op Marketing: Get **3x Your Investment** in Media Value



*All monetary values are for example only. Partner investments can range from $500/mo. to $10k/mo. for 3 months.

†Partners may vary in number and type depending on host.

#3: Build Your First-Party Data Strategy From the Ground Up

Always-on marketing is run by data, but data can be hard to come by for DMOs. As the data ecosystem changes and first-party data takes the forefront, developing a first-party data program can guide how you collect, enrich, activate, and protect the data you do have. Then, you can build on it and make the most of it.

You may be starting from scratch, but building a customer database will only strengthen your always-on campaigns and help you prove economic impact to your key stakeholders. With a first-party data program in place, you are setting your destination up for success when it's time to launch your always-on campaigns.

#4: Speak Directly to Your Priority Audiences for Increased Engagement

With always-on, you can get to know your audiences and find opportunities to target people based on their interests, including sustainability-focused travelers, LGBTQ+ travelers, and meeting and convention planners. You can engage travelers with the most relevant content by simply adjusting your messaging and creatives.

More and more of today's travelers are thinking about their brand values when planning for their next trip. For example, 87% of travelers are focused on sustainability and want to do good in the communities they're arriving in. These travelers might be swayed by messaging specific to those interests.

Another example includes the LGBTQ+ tourism and travel market, worth $218 billion. Given their purchasing power, you can engage them with relevant messaging that shows your destination is inclusive, safe, and accessible. We use a specific data mix to ensure your brand shows up in front of your desired audience without sacrificing brand safety.



Key Takeaways

1. Adopting an always-on marketing approach requires a shift in thinking, but we prefer to let the data speak for itself. When your strategy reflects the reality of modern travel planning, you can get a more holistic view of your performance, quarter over quarter, year over year.

2. It's easy to make assumptions about your audiences or seasonality, but if you want to drive the right visitors to your destination, you must understand to whom you're talking. Shift your thinking away from relying on performance during a specific time frame, and instead have a dialogue with your customers all year round. Never stop optimizing and creating a positive experience for your ideal travelers online.

3. Always-on marketing with Sojern means you have better data and tools, and a partnership to manage your campaigns effectively, allocate your budget strategically, and reach your customers in the moments that matter.



Make Sojern Your Perfect Travel Companion

At Sojern, our business was born in travel and we know travelers better than anyone else. We are constantly innovating our product offerings and strategies to better serve our clients around the world and give them unmatched visibility into global travel demand.

It's difficult to stay competitive within the tourism and digital ad markets, and Sojern's data science, unique partnerships, and award-winning customer service can help you navigate the ever-changing landscape of digital marketing.

We can tell you everything you need to know about your customers and how to inspire them—the best platforms, ideal timing, and how to take a continuous and proactive approach. DMOs can make the most of always-on marketing with Sojern, especially with our variety of pricing models that suit travel brands of all sizes.

Always-on is not out of reach, and we're ready to help you craft and manage your strategy to come out on top in this intensely-competitive tourism market.

"The biggest disadvantage for us is budget. So between myself and our agency, we're always trying to make sure we are working with the very best vendors who can stretch our dollars as far as possible while being really creative and smart about what we're doing," said Nicole Stacey, Vice President of Destination Development at Visit Pensacola.



“Sojern’s support was fantastic throughout the whole process. The regular touchpoints that we have with Sojern are absolutely crucial to seeing how our campaigns develop. The monthly reporting and insights are invaluable. We in turn have become more experienced in deciding how we’re going to deliver these campaigns and the themes that we’re going to use.”

Hilary Farmery

Marketing and Communications Manager

VISIT LEEDS



Here's How We Do It

1

With **travel intent targeting,** we work with our data partners to see where travelers are searching and planning their next trip. This is the first tactic we use to target your desired audience at the right time to influence their purchasing decisions.

2

Next, we use **site targeting** to create a custom list of sites whose content is generated for your specific target—whether it's sustainable travelers, LGBTQ+ audiences, meeting and convention planners, and more. We target those sites to continue reaching your ideal target throughout their journey.

3

After that, we use **keyword contextual targeting** to find keywords associated with your brand and the audiences you want to target. We use those keywords to place your ads alongside content that is contextually relevant to your audience.



The Sojern Travel Marketing Platform helps destination marketers reach and inspire travelers throughout their planning journey across digital channels. With unmatched visibility into travel demand and market insights, we build audiences to find the right travelers for your destination. The platform is flexible to meet the needs of destinations and their stakeholders and gives visibility into the economic impact of your marketing efforts. Ten thousand destinations, hotels, attractions, and travel marketers rely on Sojern annually to engage and convert travelers around the world.

Learn more at www.sojern.com.

SOJERN

Born for Travel. Built for Performance.

www.sojern.com