



Cranachan Truffle
Whisky, raspberry,
honey & oats
A very Scottish truffle!

Sweet Mango
Marbled white chocolate
with a sweet mango
flavour

Oban Morsels Growth Fund Case Study

Mixed Channel National &
International Campaign



Project Overview

Formed as a pressure group in the early 1990s, Oban and Lorn Tourism Association (OLTA) today is a cooperative company limited by guarantee with the prime function of growing the visitor economy in Oban and Lorn. Membership subscriptions, web advertising and sponsorship provide OLTA with funding for a variety of marketing initiatives.

OLTA received £15,000 from VisitScotland's Year of Food and Drink Growth Fund for Oban Morsels – Toast our Coast. The award was matched by the OLTA group so the full project was £30,000 of activities to promote Oban as a must-visit destination. The project was a 12 month campaign, which started in Spring 2015. The campaign built on previous activity positioning

Oban as the 'Seafood Capital of Scotland', and also highlighted 'pasture to plate' and other locally produced foods. The project aimed to: support VisitScotland's Taste our Best Quality Assurance Scheme by signing up OLTA members, encourage collaborative working, drive traffic to the website www.oban.org.uk and build on existing social media interactions and blog posts. The campaign was supported by editorial, advertising, and an on-pack promotion with Inverawe Smokehouse. OLTA also collaborated on a new food and drink trail leaflet in partnership with Argyll & The Isles Tourism Cooperative. The main objective of the project was to move towards doing more digital activities that ultimately result in more people visiting Oban and Lorn.



Activity Impact & Learning

OLTA commissioned four short videos entitled Oban Morsels; three focused on seafood and shellfish, meat and game, whisky and chocolate and one was a fully narrated video on Food and Drink in Oban and Lorn. The video content has a good shelf life, so can be continued to be used for a while and the whole video experience was good learning for the future.

Promotions on seafood packages produced by a local company, Inverawe, worked really well for OLTA. Competition entry levels and visits to the website were higher than expected with this activity. The competition attracted over 600 entries and wider promotional coverage. Furthermore, this activity had a high value for money factor considering what was achieved with very little spend.

A blog feature focusing on food and drink suppliers, producers and personalities was planned and included having guest bloggers promote Oban and Lorn's food and drink offerings. However, the proposed blog activity proved to be problematic as products were required.

This type of activity proved to be a very steep learning curve for OLTA. The flexibility of Growth Fund allowed OLTA to modify the blog approach and not be confined by the original planned guest blogger approach.

Other activities included: an editorial in Scottish Field each month containing a reader competition with prizes provided by OLTA members; and online promotion using a mix of bought space and self-generated coverage across social media channels.

Over the course the project, OLTA members' listings were viewed over 1,100,000 times and direct referrals to members own pages increased to 217,800 from 184,800. There was significant growth in social media with Facebook likes growing by 70%.

OLTA's past marketing campaigns were much more traditional and paper based, whereas this project shows a clear move towards digital. OLTA highlighted that the lack of mobile coverage in the area is an issue for progressing the digital agenda.

Wider Benefits

OLTA were of the opinion that "Growth Fund definitely helps to increase and maintain members. It keeps members energised". Though with this comes the challenge that "OLTA members now almost expect a Growth Fund application every year". Overall this project and previous Growth Fund projects delivered by OLTA have proved successful engagement tools. A previous Growth Fund campaign focusing on the 'seafood capital' theme resulted in the "whole town getting around it and wielded to it. It was very visible throughout the town".

There has been a notable positive change in attitudes amongst individual businesses to the activities of OLTA. However, the OLTA business base is varied - there are those that are eager and embrace everything, and then those who aren't proactive and are more lifestyle businesses. Over the course of the 'Oban Morsels' project 11 new members joined OLTA.

Visitor numbers in the area have been changeable over recent years. OLTA use a sample of business members to monitor visitor numbers, figures

from over the project period show that visitor numbers were down slightly. However, so far in 2016 visitor numbers have been up and many businesses are reporting record growth. Thus, there is likely a lag effect associated with the campaign activities. This is reinforced by the feedback from member businesses, reporting that the OLTA website provides the best referral rates even though these businesses are also on booking.com & TripAdvisor.

Growth Fund is an empowerment tool for small DMOs, such as OLTA. OLTA's successful delivery of a variety of Growth Fund projects over recent years as allowed them to retain credibility and achieve critical mass.

Growth Fund Experience & Looking Forward

OLTA believed that the application process provided a useful focus in terms of linking activities and outcomes. OLTA reported few issues with the monitoring and claims processes for Growth Fund. However, it was felt that experience may be a factor in this perception as OLTA have completed a range of public sector funded projects over the years.

OLTA were glad to see the modifications in the most recent application form, as some sections were previously very time consuming and awkward to complete. The innovation section was also noted as trying but recognised its need.

OLTA has a good working relationship with VisitScotland and feel this has been enhanced through Growth Fund, as it provides a good opportunity to become familiar with a wide range of departments across VisitScotland. The availability of Growth Fund helps VisitScotland's profile and recognition within industry.

OLTA's priorities for 2017 include widening the membership base, developing the short stay transit marina, and generally items with a wider marine focus.





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