



Category: Low Budget Campaign

Company: Tees Valley Combined Authority

Entry title: Launching Tees Valley Tourism – Enjoy!

Brief and objectives:

Create a brand for a destination marketing service, agree it with six political leaders of different parties representing five boroughs and launch within two weeks with less than £1,000 (!).

Collaboration with local authorities was essential to transcend political issues, positively amplify the brand and secure political support for the Combined Authority's application for UK City of Culture 2025.

We were tasked with launching the brand during English Tourism Week, raising the service's profile, attracting interest in tourism in Tees Valley, and winning support from two regional newspapers (critical for tonality of coverage) in a febrile political environment.

Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:

Tees Valley comprises five local authorities (Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees). The area did not have a destination marketing brand for ten years and struggled to change negative perceptions and attract tourists. Tees Valley has felt a lot of recent heartache, with a 2015 steelworks closure making 3,000 people unemployed overnight and attracting unwanted national headlines.

A dedicated Combined Authority team was created to manage the destination and marketing function. However, with no brand and two weeks until English Tourism Week, the corporate Communications Team was asked to step in, develop a brand, agree it with political leaders and launch it on a limited budget.

The Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity report highlighted 2016 Tees Valley tourism spend was 7% of its economy. This could increase by 16% in three years and 11,000 jobs could be created if its potential was maximised, not least by encouraging locals to appreciate what was on their doorstep and visit their area as "tourists".

All of this would be at risk and the multimillion-pound service could be scuppered with an unsuccessful launch; the importance of delivering the brief and objectives cannot be overstated.

A planning meeting set objectives of what the brand should achieve, and identified the target audiences: regional media and political stakeholders; local residents; and visitors/potential tourists, predominantly via online channels, given the budget.

Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:

Collaboration was at the heart of the launch. At the time the six political leaders (five Labour and one Conservative Mayor) were having public disagreements, covered daily by the region's leading newspapers. It was an extremely challenging time to agree a single brand covering five distinct councils, with each council leader very passionate that their borough was represented equally.

A joint by-line from the Tees Valley Mayor (Conservative) and Middlesbrough Mayor (Labour) was penned, something unheard of in the past, which demonstrated collaboration and cross-party support.

Storyboards were presented individually to each leader to gather early feedback and ensure key stakeholder involvement from the start. Comments were taken on board, reflected suitably by designs, and a final brand, developed in-house, was agreed.

The brand was applied to a regional listings website, social media platforms were created and collateral was quickly prepared for a multichannel campaign that engaged wide, varied audiences. Large one-metre letters representing the brand “#Enjoy” were sourced as props for consumer activations and to involve local people front and centre in imagery.

The letters were taken to key attractions, businesses and landmarks, including the local beach finally hitting national headlines for the right reason - the discovery of an ancient petrified forest was attracting visitors from around the UK. During this period, endorsements were sought, and were forthcoming, from leisure business leaders, residents and visitors.

As a public body mainly dealing with investors/stakeholders, we realised we must adopt an innovative approach to engage with younger people to help create a buzz about “Enjoy”, so we worked with the local university and developed our first branded Snapchat filter. We engaged the business community to create prizes for online competitions to amplify the brand.

Implementation of tactics:

Extensive advance briefings were given to newspaper editors – including pitching tailored joint by-line pieces – and imagery was provided under embargo to coincide with English Tourism Week.

We landed two front-page splashes, which helped sell in to broadcast on launch day. The tone was set – and regional broadcast and print media endorsed the brand and reported favourably.

We recognised there would be limited media pick-up following the release so focus shifted to working with the five local authority Comms Teams to amplify the message across social media. The brand letters toured the boroughs and generated a social media buzz, not least

on where they would turn up next (!). The nature of the brand “Enjoy” was about people having fun and not becoming too serious. It ran for five days across the five boroughs (one borough, one day) and engaged consumers with active social interactions, often using people and businesses to further amplify through their own social channels.

Measurement and evaluation:

The launch well exceeded expectations.

- Enjoy Tees Valley brand and service launched, on time, under budget
- Front page splashes, leads and positive editorial in both main newspapers, one reporting it was “wholeheartedly behind” the scheme
- Changing perceptions – headline of biggest-selling newspaper: “Showcasing the valley of riches”
- TV and radio broadcasters support: main story on BBC Tees and second lead on ITV Tyne Tees television news, with a combined reach of 835k
- 21 additional articles generated on day one with a potential reach of over 1.1million, all sentiment positive or neutral
- All regional media support the service and continually actively engage to promote it, helping to raise its profile and change perceptions
- Digital channels performed exceptionally well with one Facebook post’s reach being 306k (almost half of Tees Valley’s population), attracting 1.4k page likes and 2.2k engagements
- Partner authorities collaborated and amplified the brand, messages and engagement predominantly on social channels, with the letters appearing in over 50 locations in five days
- Over 1.5k site visits, 4k page views with very positive feedback in week one
- Within two months, “Submit an Event” was the fourth most-visited webpage, demonstrating a high level of engagement and collaboration with partners
- Unanimous and unprecedented political buy-in and support achieved
- The Combined Authority has now agreed to submit a UK City of Culture 2025 application

Budget and cost effectiveness:

Total Budget cost – £934.50

- Photography - £99.87
- Letters - £ 770
- Snapchat filter - £64.63