

TELLING YOUR STORY TO THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA

by MICHAEL SCHUMAN

--KNOW YOUR TARGET; One reason why I never take interest in pitches from public relations people is that they don't seem to understand what I do, what stories I write, and what TIME magazine likes to publish. Make sure you're trying to tell your story to someone who will listen.

--THINK BIG: The bigger the idea behind the pitch, the more likely it is that a journalist will pay attention. For example, a journalist outside of the travel press is unlikely to be interested in a new hotel opening. However, he/she might be interested in a story about the rapid growth of the hotel industry. Tell us about how tourism is transforming the economy, or people's lives. In other words, tell us a story about tourism that's not directly about hotels, airplanes and beaches, but ends up focusing on them anyway.

--THINK PEOPLE; Focusing story pitches on individuals of interest is always a good way to go. The mainstream media may not be interested in a new restaurant opening, but it might go for a story about a hot new innovative chef, or an interesting businessman behind a tourism project, or an up-and-coming interior designer who just decorated a boutique hotel.

--THINK ENVIRONMENT; Environment protection stories are of great interest in the mainstream media – and they can also double as tourism stories. Telling us about a new initiative to preserve coral reefs or endangered animals can also spark interest among potential travelers.

--MARKET YOUR COUNTRY; Just getting your country's name out there in the press in a positive light is good for tourism. The more people know and read about a place, the more likely they are to go. Pitching stories that address concerns tourists might have about coming to your country is also a good strategy.

--THE BOTTOM LINE is that you have to think about tourism marketing much more broadly. It's not just about golf courses and resorts. It's about economic development, business, what's happening in your country overall. All good press is good press if it makes people think about and know more about your country.