

Destination Gettysburg Column
By Carl Whitehill
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What in the world is a DMO?

The tourism industry, globally, is littered with acronyms – words often thrown around in common conversation.

One of those acronyms is DMO – and depending on who you talk to, DMO may stand for destination marketing organization or destination management organization. And in some cases, it's both.

DMOs are often misunderstood, misrepresented or nearly invisible within many local communities – mostly because the majority of a DMO's efforts are accomplished outside the very communities that their work supports.

Destination Gettysburg is now a destination management organization. This new designation best describes the efforts of Destination Gettysburg beyond tourism marketing – helping develop the tourism experience in Adams County. In recent years, the organization has broadened its scope from simply promoting the great experiences in this destination to being part of the efforts to create and expand these experiences for visitors.

While this change might seem insignificant, it represents an important development in the role that Destination Gettysburg has in the community – a true stakeholder in the local economy.

Destination Gettysburg is now working in partnership with municipal planners and economic development groups to represent the tourism industry as both an advocate and a voice for a better travel destination, meeting with businesses to create or grow their products, working with its members to better tell their stories, and training employees within the tourism community of Adams County.

Marketing, however, still represents a significant portion of Destination Gettysburg's efforts.

The marketing is simple but vital - Destination Gettysburg advertises and markets to potential visitors, group travel operators and meeting planners throughout the world, and those who do visit, spend money in our community and support our residents and business owners with revenue, tax benefits and jobs.

For communities within Adams County, that process and marketing are more important than in other cities and counties where tourism may not be as significant as it is here.

There are 48 DMOs in Pennsylvania, and hundreds across the United States. Each is a marketing organization that was established to help local communities achieve the economic benefits from tourism.

So, then, why are DMOs rather unfamiliar to many residents – including here in Adams County?

The answer is two-fold: as stated previously, most – if not all – of a DMO's marketing is done outside of the area, and secondly, residents don't often recognize the benefits they receive from tourism and therefore do not understand the work – or importance of that work – of a DMO.

Destination Gettysburg, for example, spends 85 percent of its budget on marketing – placing advertising in our key markets; working with travel journalists from around the world; engaging with meeting and conference representatives, or sponsoring social media posts throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. It's not often that a resident will come across our marketing efforts at home in Adams County, but it's keeping money in their wallet regardless.

And the vast majority of the money spent in this marketing comes from the visitors themselves through collection of the county's lodging tax.

Often when it comes to tourism, it's the money you don't pay that is the biggest benefit to local residents. Even those who aren't working in our hotels, restaurants, museums and other tourism-related businesses are receiving the benefits of the industry – estimated at \$810 per resident across Pennsylvania. That's money residents aren't paying in taxes because of the money that visitors are bringing into our community.

DMOs are a crucial organization of any community, especially in Adams County, where more than 7,200 jobs are positively benefiting from the visitors that travel to this destination, and where more than \$660 million is pumped annually into the local economy.

Those interested in Destination Gettysburg's marketing should visit www.gettysburgtourismworks.com.

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