

Rediscover Rosarito—A Public Affairs Initiative

Public Affairs - Emerson College – Boston

Executive Summary:

Rediscover Rosarito is a public affairs project that addresses the reputational, political, social and economic crisis, caused by an increase in criminal incidents in response to Mexican President Felipe Caledron's War on Drugs. This crime increase has adversely impacted the beach community of Rosarito, Baja California, Mexico. Rediscover Rosarito reflects a commitment to ethics, journalist balance and transactional civic responsibility. It is a product of graduate students in the Masters Program in Management Communication at Emerson College, MA, USA, who have thoughtfully analyzed the issue with the aid of guest speakers and consultants and the mentoring of their professor. Rediscover Rosarito is intended to produce a win-win outcome for all the stakeholders and perhaps primarily the citizens and travelers and businesses of both sides of the border.

Furthermore, this plan is based upon the principles and scholarship of crisis management and communication, as well as the principles of political communication and public relations. Collectively, those principles put the highest value on ensuring that public opinion should be founded on facts rather than rumors, and are concerned with the providing for the information, attitudinal and behavioral needs of all those parties with a stake in these issues and concerns.

What follows is a detailed, tactical plan to achieving these goals.

Vision

To rediscover the promise of serenity, beauty and hospitality of Rosarito Beach.

Mission

The mission of the Rediscover Rosarito public affairs project is to develop an international coalition between students from Emerson College in Boston and local leaders of Rosarito Beach, Baja dedicated to restoring the image of Rosarito Beach as safe, secure and prime location for tourism, retirement and real estate investment.

Audit

The tourism, real estate, and business industries in Rosarito Beach, Baja Mexico have been seriously threatened by a series of highly publicized criminal acts in the Baja California area. The recent events are attributed to Mexican President Felipe Calderon's war on the major drug cartels in Mexico, a program whose long term objective is to make the area more safe and secure.

A recent media trend has portrayed the Baja as unsafe, and has created the perception of Rosarito as an unattractive tourist destination and a poor investment opportunity.. As a result, tourism has declined in the Baja area by at least 30%. For Rosarito tourism is the life blood of the community, as 70% of the 130,000 residents depend either directly or indirectly on tourism for employment

In addition to the tourism slump, the real estate market, which has achieved international attention with the developments by Donald Trump and others, has been negatively affected. Within the last year, real estate sales which had previously been enjoying a boom, have fallen 40 to 50 percent.

Rosarito Beach has responded to these problems. Mayor Hugo Torres has organized an exclusive police force, the 'policía turística.' Equipped with special uniforms and marked cars, the sole duty of this force is for the care and aid of tourism. The Mayor also has started initiatives to involve Rosarito residents in abating criminal acts; he has created a 'safe' phone line to connect residents with proper authorities in order to report suspicious behavior. A Citizens Council for Tourist Assistance also is being created to actively involve local residents in the conflict management. Rosarito's efforts are aimed to restore its image among tourists, potential home buyers and business investors. As communication specialists from Emerson College, we will further develop effective communication and public affairs strategies for these efforts

Who are our target publics?

- Tourists
 - Past
 - Present
 - Future

Tourists are typically envisioned to be from the Southern California area, but in reality they include US residents from the southwest, as well as Florida and other international tourists (i.e. Spain, Australia), and domestic Mexican visitors. They include students who come to Rosarito for weekend and spring break, families, retirees as well as singles.

- Local communities
 - Baja
 - Expatriates
 - Past
 - Present
 - Future (people approaching retirement)
 - Rosarito Beach business owners
 - Rosarito Beach residents
 - Real estate agents
 - Southern California
 - Real estate agents
 - Investors
 - Vacation home owners
- Media: local, regional, and national (Baja, Mexico and U.S – primarily southern California)
 - Television
 - Radio
 - Print
 - Internet

- Social Networking sites (SMS, Face Book, My Space, 2nd Life)
- Bloggers
- Sites covering the Baja area

Objectives

1. Create a credible and visible coalition of interested publics
2. Support and promote federal and local government strategies to ensure the safety and security of the Baja area
3. Communicate the facts of troublesome incidents in the Baja, and refute rumors and exaggerated media reports.
4. Craft and generate positive media messages.
5. Convince past, present, and future visitors that sporadic incidents in the Baja have not made Rosarito Beach an unsafe tourist destination.
6. Convince investors that Rosarito Beach is a desirable and profitable site for development.
7. Encourage prospective retirees and second home buyers to consider Rosarito as a real estate option.

Strategies

- Establish a strategic coalition, involving and connecting community groups and organizations such as the Rosarito Rotary Club, Desarrolla Intergral del la Familia, the Footprinters, the United Society of Baja California, Southern California and Baja colleges and universities, Rosarito business owners, etc.
 - make our presence known in the communities, both in Rosarito and Southern California.
 - build a network within those communities.
 - recruit opinion leaders of the Rosarito Beach and Southern California area to become involved.
 - create a committee consisting of delegates from the coalition parties to bolster commitment and coordinate activities
 - create “My Rosarito” campaigns in local Baja schools – essays, paintings that epitomize “My Rosarito” from grammar, middle and high school students. Competition and exhibitions and sister schools in Boston.
- Ensure accurate portrayal through information dissemination
 - Press kits
 - Press conference with local, regional, and national media
 - Focus on micro level communication, i.e. blogs, you tube, word-of-mouth

- Visual ad campaigns, posters/postcards/flyers/brochures, etc.
- PSA's, documentaries, docudramas
- Tourist education campaign
 - cab drivers, hotels, and tourist destinations equipped with safety information brochures
- Create opportunities for people to visit Rosarito
 - Organize special event, exhibits, sports attractions, conventions, forums, or convention in Rosarito
 - Rosarito International Business Convention
 - develop tourism campaign
 - All You Need to Know. . . My Rosarito (to the tune of the Beatles "All you need is love.")
 - promote campaigns that stress safety and security
 - ensure access to information through booths, brochures, website
 - tour incentives
 - Public launch of the program, with key coalition members

Implementation Tactics

- Transparency
- Consistent visibility
- Two-way communication
- Clarity and simplicity of the message
- Sincerity
- Support of opinion leader, someone with established presence in the community
- Personal interactions
- On going communication and coordination with local officials on the safety and security themes.