

Thriving in the great outdoors: A marketing guide for startups and SMEs

The outdoor industry has undergone something of a revival since the end of the pandemic.

Recent research published by Mintel shows that Brits took 16.7 million camping trips last year, while 29% of UK consumers say they are “more likely” to go camping/caravanning now than they were before COVID-19.

As a small business owner, you can follow in the footsteps of entrepreneurs like *Finisterre founder Tom Kay* to boost your reputation and connect with eco-conscious consumers who want to support small brands. This can help you achieve responsible scalability goals and garner a piece of the outdoor marketing pie for yourself.

The outdoor industry boom

The boom in outdoor recreation may have risen significantly during the pandemic, but it hardly started then. Consumer spending on outdoor activities has doubled in the last decade and now generates *£12.3B per annum*. This spending is largely powered by common pursuits like running, swimming, and

hiking. However, niche outdoor pursuits are on the rise, too.

As a small business owner, you can ride the outdoor industry wave by aligning yourself with consumer interests. Consider investing some of your time and capital into product development and marketing that revolves around new business opportunities in the outdoor industry, like:

1. Tours: More people are taking guided hiking, flying, and snorkelling tours today. As a vendor of outdoor products, you can sell bespoke gear for tour companies that want high-quality goods for all their guests.
2. Campervanning: Caravaning has always been a popular pastime in the UK. However, the recent rise of campervanning means that you may be able to develop a range of products and marketing materials that appeal to younger, more adventurous campers.
3. Horse Riding: Horse riding used to be reserved for the elite. However, funding from British Equestrian is changing that paradigm. As a vendor of outdoor goods, you can position yourself to appeal to the recent influx of young riders.
4. Photography: Nature photography has its own set of unique challenges. As a small outdoor startup, you can appeal to nature photographers by foregrounding high-quality, environmentally friendly, durable products.

More people are spending their leisure time on outdoor pursuits. As a small business owner, you can take advantage of consumer interest by strategically positioning yourself to appeal to niche interests within the industry. This will generate plenty of revenue for your startup and help you safely scale up your operations.

Marketing plan

Focusing on a unique selling proposition (USP) in the outdoor industry can generate revenue and help you capture a portion of the market share. However, if you want to secure long-term growth, you'll need to create a robust marketing plan.

A marketing plan defines your goals, determines your key performance indicators (KPIs), and helps you take control of your budget. Most small businesses create a quarterly marketing plan, as this helps them track their progress. When writing a marketing plan for your outdoor business, include key details like:

Executive summary: A general overview of your plan, detailing your biggest goal and mission statement.

Goals: A breakdown of your current targets and KPIs. These goals should be

specific and attainable. If you find yourself not being able to reach these goals, reassess and adjust accordingly.

Unique selling proposition: This will clarify your USP and highlight key details that may be of interest to shareholders.

Target Market: Who do you plan to sell to? Are there any emerging markets that you'd like to target? Where does the bulk of your revenue come from?

Budget: How much can you spend on marketing? How do you plan to track your Return on Investment (ROI)?

A clear marketing plan ensures that everyone is on the same page. It can also help you spot potential weaknesses in your current approach. This is particularly important if you want to expand into a new niche. Use your plan to guide your content creation and be sure to relate each new social post or blog article to your wider goals, USP, and mission statement.

Your marketing plan can help you get into the *mind of the consumer*, too. By conducting target market research, you'll learn the four factors that influence consumer behaviour: Push, Pull, Inertia, and Anxiety. This can help you produce more relevant, engaging marketing materials that actually relate to the needs of your consumer base.

Conclusion

Thriving in the outdoor industry can be tough. Major players like Mountain Warehouse and Millets benefit from a strong brand presence and can sell their wares at a cheaper price due to their economies of scale. *As a small startup, you can build your brand presence by focusing your marketing efforts on USPs.* This will fuel long-term growth and help you scale up your operations sensibly.

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