Is your destination open for business?

If you work in destination or travel marketing, there are plenty of people that envy your job. What could be more fun than having travel as your business? After all, travel marketers get to research and report on the places that make a destination stand out. I am sure that involves a lot of fun activities like dining out and attending cultural events.

Some destinations are easier to market than others. Perhaps New York City or Washington, DC are more enticing to travelers than Des Moines or Kenosha (no offense to either of those cities).

Whatever destination you are marketing, however, you should make sure it is open for business. This means having places for people to stay and eat, and actually being open.

Yesterday, I went to Hagerstown, Maryland. My destination was not the city of Hagerstown, but rather the Premium Outlets located there. Once I was done shopping, I decided to check out "Historic Downtown Hagerstown." I figured I would stop by the visitor center to get some information about what made Hagerstown historic and then perhaps get a refreshment of some sort.

I drove into Hagerstown, and I noticed that there were few if any people on the street. Everything seemed closed. I went into the visitor center at 3:45 pm, which was lucky since it closes at 4 pm on Sundays. The only person there was the clerk. I asked if anything was open and he told me that most restaurants and other businesses in downtown Hagerstown are closed on Sundays AND on Mondays. I picked up a few brochures and left. Needless to say, I was not going to be able to get any snacks so I just headed to the highway and back home.

Hagerstown’s Convention and Visitor’s Bureau’s website does not mention that downtown Hagerstown is closed on Sundays. Also, their tagline seems to be “Let’s make some Maryland memories 75 miles away from Baltimore.” I am not sure why anyone would think that’s a good way to market a destination (hey, its more than an hour’s drive from a big city!).

Most people who take day trips do so on the weekends- Saturdays AND Sundays. If a town/city is dead on Sundays, there is no reason to visit. If you want to market your city or town as a destination (historic or otherwise), you must be open for business.

Would you make a separate trip to visit a place if you found it was not open on the day you visit? Let me know your thoughts.