

encouraged the growth of marijuana tourism related businesses and opportunities for entrepreneurs such as John.

Tours of growing facilities and stores were increasing around the state, as well as companies that partnered with hotels to provide vaporizers to hotel guests wishing to consume marijuana while staying at the hotel. Marijuana resorts were developing into retreats where tourists could participate in marijuana related activities during their vacation after making their purchases at licensed retail stores. Despite the potential for growth, there were marketing regulations in place that restricted the inclusion of marijuana promotion in any marketing material that specifically targeted tourists from out of state.

In 2014, there were over 71 million visitors to Colorado bringing in \$18 billion into the economy and supporting more than 150,000 jobs (Colorado Budget Committee). A concern of the CTO was that preliminary research showed that marijuana tourists were a very small segment compared to other target markets, such as the family segment. Colorado offered opportunities to participate in outdoor recreation activities year round and a shift toward the perception of Colorado as a marijuana tourism destination had the potential to turn away their very profitable family target market. After all, family oriented tourists could choose other states where recreational marijuana was still illegal as destinations for skiing in the winter and rafting and hiking in the summer. Based on the desire to protect the future of the family friendly market, the CTO took the stance that they would not actively promote recreational marijuana in any of their initiatives to improve and increase tourism in the area.

Many towns and regions of Colorado had smaller Destination Management Organizations that followed the lead of the CTO. Andrea Seid, the Sales & Marketing Manager for the Durango Area Tourism Office (DATO), had the responsibility to identify target markets and reach them with marketing messages about why they should visit the Durango area. Andrea was a respected professional who had worked in the tourism industry in Durango for over a decade. She had been closely following what was happening with marijuana tourism and had been careful to follow the direction of the CTO and exclude any promotion of marijuana in her marketing material. Her marketing budget came directly from the allocation of Lodger's Tax and she was committed to aligning with the CTO's position to be responsible about spending public dollars.

Andrea was also the gatekeeper for all businesses requesting a listing on the DATO website. Many tourists searched online for information about the Durango area and are at some point directed to the DATO website, as it contains a variety of useful information to travelers. Having a listing on the DATO website was free to local businesses in the tourism industry. A relatively new and unique challenge that Andrea was encountering was the job of evaluating whether businesses were related to marijuana before approving their listing that could link tourists to a website with content promoting marijuana.

John initially reached out to DATO to request that his business be listed and linked on the website when he was primarily focused on cannabis tours. His request at that time was denied because the DATO board was firm on their stance that they did not actively promote marijuana tourism.

After being in operation for a few months, John started to realize that cannabis tours were a very small niche compared to other tourist activities offered in the Durango area. He realized that recreational marijuana was only "an appetizer" for most tourists; it was not the primary reason why they were visiting. He decided to expand his business to also include scenic tours, brewery tours, and airport transportation. He found that these services, despite facing area competition, brought in more revenue than the cannabis tours had brought in. John figured this expansion and rebranding would make him eligible for a listing on the DATO website. But when he reached out to Andrea Seid, his request was denied again.