

CASE STUDY

Re-positioning a Destination Leads to Real Results

Narrow View=Short Trips

The Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development wanted to re-position the state in an effort to increase both the number and value of visitors. Prior segmentation research showed that several clusters of Baby Boomers in nearby drive-to markets were ripe for cultivation, but it did not reveal their “why’s” and “how’s”: specifically, why would these segments consider Maryland as a leisure destination and how to motivate them to extend their stay beyond the typical day-trip. Our qualitative research with these targets showed that prospective visitors’ image of the state was very narrow – limited mostly to the Baltimore Inner Harbor – which equated to a day-trip or pass through on the way to bigger and better destinations.

“Out-of-the box” Projective Techniques Reveal New Potential

In order to quickly educate focus group respondents about the State’s diverse offerings, understand and prioritize their interests, and uncover their rational and emotional drivers, a careful collaging exercise was implemented. Teams of respondents sifted and sorted through hundreds of images, words, and phrases about the state. Eventually, they took the stimuli that resonated and in teams, created a visual and oral representation of their ideal trip. In-depth debriefs and a pattern analysis of the visual depictions were illuminating. From this research came the umbrella positioning: “Maryland is the vacation destination that offers so many authentic, hidden treasures,” and a Maryland Heritage Traveler strategy was born and implemented.

Real Results

The state’s creative team launched a campaign that was targeted, “authentic” and historical. In short time, the campaign yielded real results. Inquiries to the state’s call center increased four-fold annually. At the same time, the cost per lead decreased by almost \$10, while conversion rates went up. Maryland outperformed its venerable neighbors – Pennsylvania and Virginia – in tourism dollars.

Put Edge to work for you!