

Study Objectives & Methodology

Study Objective:

The objectives of this study were to conduct scientific travel and tourism research to determine the effectiveness of current marketing initiatives of the Greater Saint Charles Convention and Visitors Bureau (GSCCVB) and to determine the most effective market positioning for the Greater Saint Charles area. The City of Saint Charles and the Saint Charles Convention and Visitors Bureau retained Randall Travel Marketing, Inc. (RTM) of Mooresville, North Carolina to conduct this study.

Study Methodology:

Research was conducted for the Greater Saint Charles, Missouri area beginning in March 2005 and the final report will be completed in June of 2006. Many methods of data collection were used as part of this research project.

1. Stakeholder Input Meeting:

A meeting was held in Saint Charles on March 22, 2005. Participants invited to the meeting included retailers, hoteliers, attraction managers, and other tourism entities. The purpose of this meeting was to review the RTM research project and to gather input for the study from these participants.

2. Reconnaissance:

The RTM team is familiar with the Greater Saint Charles area having visited several times over the last few years. Specific site visitation and reconnaissance of the Greater Saint Charles area was conducted during the following dates:

∑ June 1-5, 2005

∑ July 19-23, 2005

∑ October 20-23, 2005

∑ NOTE: Additionally the Greater Saint Charles area will be visited during the first quarter of 2006 and the second quarter in 2006.

The destination was fully evaluated from the perspective of the tourist. The Reconnaissance Team findings are documented in this report.

3. Lodging Property Interviews and Fax Survey:

A survey was sent to every hotel, motel and inn located in the Greater Saint Charles area. Thirteen (13) lodging properties representing 1,001 of the 1,719 lodging rooms included in the survey responded representing an excellent 58% response rate. This can also be interpreted to mean that a good cross section of the geographic locations and types of lodging within Greater Saint Charles participated in this study. Two lodging properties, the Embassy Suites (296 rooms) and the Country Inn and Suites (86 rooms) did not participate in the study as they were newly opened and did not have adequate historical data. In addition, the RTM team obtained the local lodging data submitted to Smith Travel Research and compared it to the data collected as part of this study.

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4. Visitor Profile and Conversion Mail Survey – Random Sample of Inquiries:

The GSCCVB provided RTM with the total inquiries received and fulfilled by the GSCCVB during a twelve-month period. A random sample was selected and was stratified by the time of year the inquiry was received during the twelve-month period and by the inquiry source. Two thousand (2,000) surveys were mailed the week of August 15, 2005. A total of 348 surveys had been received by September 28, 2005, representing 17.40% response rate which is better than the expected acceptable response range of 10% to 15%. Thus, N=348 for the total mail survey responses in this report. Additionally, RTM noted a homogenous nature to the findings in this report which underscores the reliability of the data. The survey instrument (questionnaire) contained thirty-five questions and was printed on a single sheet of 11" x 17" white paper and folded to a four page 8 1/2" x 11" letter size format. The survey was mailed in an envelope at first class postage rate and a postage paid return mail addressed envelope was included. The survey included an incentive of a drawing for a free weekend visit in Greater Saint Charles to be selected from those that responded to the survey.

5. Intercept Interviews with Visitors to Saint Charles:

Quarterly intercept interviews were conducted as part of this study, and will continue to be conducted each of four quarters in order to establish perceptions of actual visitors over a one-year period. One hundred seventy (170) intercept interviews were targeted for collection in each of the intercept periods. The time periods covered by intercept interviews include:

- Σ 3Q '05: July 19-13, 2005
- Σ 4Q '05: October 20-23, 2005
- Σ 1Q '06: February 8-11, 2006
- Σ 2Q '06: May 10-13, 2006

The intercept locations include hotels, Main Street Saint Charles retail shops, restaurants, attractions, Bed & Breakfast Inns, and other appropriate locations where business, meeting and leisure travelers might be found.

6. Meeting Planner Interviews:

A list was obtained from the GSCCVB containing forty (40) meeting/convention planning decision makers who had held meetings in Saint Charles and forty (40) who had been targeted but chose not to have meetings in Saint Charles. Twelve (12) interviews were successfully completed with those who had brought meetings to Saint Charles and eight (8) interviews were successfully completed with those who had chosen not to bring meetings to Saint Charles. The findings and responses of this study are a part of this report.

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7. Performance Audit:

RTM conducted an in-depth performance audit and analysis of the GSCCVB. This included documentation and analysis of the organization's governance, mission statement, funding, staffing, budget allocation, results measures, and program performance. These findings were compared to other similar destinations and to national averages. This data is compiled and is a part of this report.

8. State, Regional and National Data:

Travel research data from the State of Missouri was obtained and analyzed as part of the study. Regional and national travel databases were also studied.

9. Marketing Materials Evaluation:

Marketing materials, including brochures and advertising, were obtained from GSCCVB. Those materials were evaluated based on research findings and the marketing experience of the RTM team. Our findings are a part of the recommendations in this report.

10. Report and Recommendations:

Based on the research findings, a report was written and presented to the Greater Saint Charles community and leadership.