

Organization: Maryland Department of Commerce

Community Size: Large (More than 200,000)

Name of Marketing Initiative: Home for the Holidays

Strategic Approach: The Target: The holidays are a busy time for everyone. As much as we love it, bringing extended family together from near and far under one roof can introduce pressure, tensions, and even conflict. Hosts have an admirable but lofty goal of trying to bring together family members to make lifetime memories. While striving to make everyone happy, we often run short on space, time, and resources. When visiting family, no one ever wants to feel like they're a burden or in the way. This is the primary target of this initiative, as they are most likely to be convinced to seek out renting a hotel/motel room vs. staying with family.

The Truth: Travelers can benefit from the flexibility of staying in a hotel/motel vs. the overly crowded homestead. With the certainty and stability of having somewhere to escape the chaos, travelers can capture moments of solace, allowing them to recharge and ultimately feel comfortable to spend more time with their family... which ultimately extends their stay in Maryland. For hosts, this reduced pressure allows them to provide the best experience for everyone and devote more time to their guests.

The Rationale: Building capacity when there is a need. Annually, the majority of overnight trips to Maryland (32 percent) occur during summer (July-September); the least amount of overnight trips (21 percent) occur October to December, making the holiday season a prime one to appeal to those returning to their hometowns during this period.

The Premise: The Office of Tourism would partner with the hotel community to develop special holiday overnight packages, which would be listed on the VisitMaryland.org web site, promoted through a creative digital campaign, and track hotel room bookings.

Target Audience: The Tactics: We determined to create a digital campaign aimed at travelers in our traditional drive markets that would advertise holiday-related hotel package deals to those currently or recently searching for travel to Maryland. Lower-funnel tactic offers booking options and helps to close the deal with those currently in the mindset of holiday travel. We planned to utilize travel sites to capture the interest of drive market residents searching travel-related topics in Maryland.

Geographic targets included markets in Ohio (Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus), Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Philadelphia), the New York metro area, and Washington, D.C. For the last three weeks of the campaign, we added Maryland to the mix for vendor visibility and resident awareness. Age demographic targeted was 25-64, to capture adult children as well as parents of adult children. Interests targeted were family activities and holiday activities. The overall strategy included both prospecting and retargeting: prospecting for those who expressed interest in Maryland content in the past 30 days, with KPIs of site visits and awareness; and retargeting visitors to the site who did not book, with KPI of hotel bookings.

Out-of-state markets would be targeted with display/mobile and utilize travel sites which provide ROI based on bookings, and would capture a leaned-in audience who were most likely to book travel to Maryland over the holidays. Vendors chosen to carry the campaign were Adara and Trip Advisor. Trip Advisor had delivered top ROI in our previous spring/summer campaign, and we used Trip Advisor

Everywhere to retarget those who'd expressed interest in Maryland state content within the past 30 days. Adara included a significant value-added proposition (3M IMPs).

Innovation & Originality: Ad units were developed at four sizes for desktop/tablet, and three sizes for mobile. For SEM, relevant search terms were added to our SEM campaign Headline Events.

The creative was developed to be quirky, distinctive, and cheeky. Each featured a distinctive, eccentric character, silhouetted against a colorful background, and were all built around the common tagline, "Limit Holiday Awkwardness." A CTA link button on each ad was labeled with the action item "Book a Hotel." Our logo appears with our tagline "Maryland: Open For It."

Cost Effectiveness: Our total investment was \$20K. Our \$10K budget with TripAdvisor netted an ROI of \$109 to \$1. Our \$10K budget with Adara netted an ROI of \$44 to \$1. Combined, for our total expenditure on this seven-week campaign of \$20K, 11,922 room nights were booked, for a total revenue of \$1,538,045.

Source of Public Funds: Paid for with Maryland Office of Tourism designated marketing funds.

Source of Private Funds: No private investment.

Private Sector Investments: Private sector participation included hotel properties assembling and offering their own discounts and package deals.

Project Cost /ROI: The Outcomes: Our total investment was \$20K. Our \$10K budget with TripAdvisor netted an ROI of \$109 to \$1. Our \$10K budget with Adara netted an ROI of \$44 to \$1. Combined, for our total expenditure on this seven-week campaign of \$20K, 11,922 room nights were booked, for a total revenue of \$1,538,045.

Project Cost / Method for Measuring Results: Trip Advisor: Room nights, ADR and hotel revenue out-performed Adara, which served 3 times as many IMPs. Performance across origin states was fairly uniform, and the New York metro area had the highest CTR. Total impressions were 1,500,004, with a CTR of .10%. Bookings resulted in 7,742 room nights, an ADR of \$141.02, and revenue of \$1,092,039. Adara: Younger demos generated more clicks but not necessarily higher CTRs. CTR was consistent across all demos. The majority of room bookings came from the DC and Pennsylvania markets, with the largest destination for hotel bookings being Baltimore. Total impressions were 4,551,238, with a CTR of .08%. Bookings resulted in 4,180 room nights, an ADR of \$106.70, and revenue of \$446,006.

Achievement of Stated Objectives: The Outcomes: Our total investment was \$20K. Our \$10K budget with TripAdvisor netted an ROI of \$109 to \$1. Our \$10K budget with Adara netted an ROI of \$44 to \$1. Combined, for our total expenditure on this seven-week campaign of \$20K, 11,922 room nights were booked, for a total revenue of \$1,538,045.

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Graphic Appeal: Ad units were developed at four sizes for desktop/tablet, and three sizes for mobile. For SEM, relevant search terms were added to our SEM campaign Headline Events.

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Additional Docs:

https://www.medamd.com/index.php?gf-download=2019%2F11%2FOTD18-056_HFTH_Banners_Red-1024x768-137kb.jpg&form-id=27&field-id=40&hash=7e58a1822bc5446145bb23e1d3a1618c7c66c52e1846664fb69374dcde8cbe5

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