

Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation
“Philadelphia. Get Your History Straight and Your Nightlife Gay®”

SITUATION ANALYSIS

In November 2003, the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corp. (GPTMC) joined a very short list of cities around the world to officially “come out” as a gay-friendly destination. In an effort to capture its share of the \$54.1 billion gay travel market, Philadelphia introduced *Philadelphia. Get Your History Straight and Your Nightlife Gay®*, in November 2003. Since that time, the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation has spent \$1.6 million towards gay and lesbian travelers.

RESEARCH

Before embarking on its own campaign, GPTMC commissioned the first-ever primary research study on gay travel specific to a U.S. destination called Gay Tourism 2003 with Community Marketing Inc. GPTMC’s goals were to establish: a demographic profile for Philadelphia’s potential gay visitor, geographic “feeder” markets, motivations for travel/length of trip and statistical benchmarks. GPTMC used the data to frame the issue as “a good business decision” rather than a social or political statement. Gay Tourism 2003 revealed that gay and lesbian travelers preferred to travel on weekends and stay in brand-name hotels; they spend between \$300-500 per two-night trip to Philadelphia and Its Countryside; they are in committed relationships, between the ages of 36-50 and 52% have a household income above \$75,000 per year; they were motivated to visit were: been here before, gay/lesbian event, “gayborhood,” arts and culture/history. As many gay and lesbian travelers from the West Coast visit Philadelphia as those from Central New Jersey. This finding indicated that Philadelphia has appeal as a national gay destination, not just a regional one.

A second survey was conducted in 2005 called Gay Tourism 2005. Just 18 months after the launch of the Philadelphia and Its Countryside™ gay-friendly tourism marketing campaign,

gay travelers said they were spending 30% more than they did before because of the gay campaign, up from \$179 per day in 2003 to \$233 a day in 2004. *Gay Tourism 2005*, a 30-page research study conducted by the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation and Community Marketing, Inc., also revealed that for every \$1 GPTMC invests in gay tourism marketing, \$153 is returned in direct visitor spending. This was the first time that Return on Investment on gay tourism marketing was reported in the travel industry.

In 2006, GPTMC again pioneered a national travel study by sponsoring the Travel Industry of America's first ever travel study on gay and lesbian tourism, called GLBT Leisure Travel Study. In that study we confirmed many of our previous studies and also asked the purpose of the visit: leisure, business or convention. The study was conducted with Witeck-Combs and Harris-Interactive.

GPTMC continues to survey the gay traveler and most recently, conducted an online survey after Philadelphia hosted "r family vacations" for that acclaimed travel company's first-ever land based vacations. The *R Family Philly Survey*, was sent out to 40 e-mail addresses of attending families, 31 respondent for an impressive 78% response rate. 90% of respondents came with a party size of 2-51 and 77% had children in their travel party. 97% were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied". 67% "Strongly agreed" that Philadelphia is *warm and welcoming to gay families*

CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

The following objectives grew out of GPTMC's mission, the research study and stakeholder input:

Establish an image for Philadelphia as a gay-friendly destination

Position Philadelphia's gay tourism campaign as a industry leader making innovative moves including: a ground-breaking 30-second television commercial; hosting the first-ever r

family vacations land-based trip with Rosie O'Donnell; and making the largest marketing commitment by a destination specifically for lesbian travelers.

Educate and involve the gay and straight members of the hospitality industry through the creation of the Philadelphia Gay Tourism Caucus, a coalition of volunteers from hotels, event producers, marketing agencies, cultural institutions and attractions. The Caucus is now a non-profit organization that works on tourism programs including bids for conventions and meetings and sports competitions, among other programs.

Conduct pioneering research, measure and track the effectiveness of the campaign and to educate the tourism industry on the economic impact of gay tourism.

Create corporate partnerships to extend the advertising reach. Corporate partnerships include Orbitz and Southwest Airlines, a first-of-its-kind partnership between those companies and a destination in the gay travel category.

Generate hotel room nights by gay and lesbian travelers and build web traffic to gophila.com/gay.

STRATEGY

GPTMC sought to integrate the gay campaign into the overall Philadelphia branding to create a synergy between the mainstream, multicultural and gay campaigns, which were running simultaneously. Philadelphia's icons, the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall have universal appeal and GPTMC had worked for years to extend icon status to its restaurants and arts/cultural experiences. The challenge was to demonstrate Philadelphia's gay appeal and its genuine intentions to welcoming gay and lesbian travelers to visit and spend money.

Beginning one year before the launch of the gay tourism campaign in 2003, GPTMC was instrumental in the founding of the Philadelphia Gay Tourism Caucus, whose members (gay and straight) work in the hospitality industry and beyond. The Caucus helped GPTMC to create the Philadelphia Freedom Hotel Package; a new gay and lesbian trip planner; brochures to identify gay-friendly and gay-owned businesses along with rainbow window

decals that depict the Liberty Bell and was sponsored by the Philadelphia Gay News, erected permanent 72 street signs in the Gayborhood that have rainbow decals as a signal of Philadelphia's openness and added content to special section of the Web site, gophila.com/gay.

While preparing for the launch of the campaign, GPTMC immediately formed an internal team of staff members from all departments, especially public relations, interactive and advertising, to create and launch the campaign. GPTMC's PR department applied its winning consumer marketing-based approach to create ground-breaking press materials (words and photographs), host visiting media, support marketing efforts of local gay events and networked with media through the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association. GPTMC's media team also prepared to react to negative responses to the campaign from groups or individuals who might oppose the effort. Also, GPTMC hired the Altus Group based in Philadelphia to develop the advertising creative and Community Marketing, Inc to conduct the research. In 2007, GPTMC hired Moon City based in New York City, New York.

RESULTS

Results can be summarized in two words: extraordinary and unprecedented.

The Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation's, Philadelphia. Get Your History Straight and Your Nightlife Gay®, tourism marketing campaign is the most-award winning gay tourism marketing campaign in history. The campaign has won top awards in the advertising, travel and public relations categories. The Travel Industry of America honored this campaign with its top award, the Domestic See America Marketing Award, in 2006, beating out entries from around the world and mainstream, multi-million dollar marketing campaigns. GPTMC won two other Odyssey Awards that year from the Travel Industry of America that year, a historic first for TIA, including for publicity and for research. The

campaign made history again when, for the first time in that organization's history, the Hospitality, Sales and Marketing Association International presented GPTMC with four Adrian Awards, including two Platinum Awards (out of just 13 given that year). PR Week presented GPTMC with its PR Multicultural Marketing award (2005) and the Association of National Advertisers presented GPTMC with its Multicultural Excellence Award (Gay and Lesbian Category 2005).

Publicity coverage of Philadelphia's gay tourism campaign is valued at \$20 million in advertising equivalency. Philadelphia's campaign has been covered in news stories seen around the globe through the power of cable television news networks, news wire services and the Internet. Multiple stories have appeared in *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Boston Globe* and the *LA Times*. Many newspapers published their first-ever gay travel stories in their regular travel sections. Philadelphia's campaign is also a pop culture phenomenon. The campaign has been on the "Hollywood Squares," the *Late Show with Jon Stewart* (HSMIAI Gold Award winner) and featured in multiple VHI entertainment programs, including "Totally Gay 2," "Best Week Ever" and VH1's upcoming program, "Big Gay 40."

Other measurements of success have been traffic to gophila.com/gay, subscribers to the electronic newsletter, Gay Tripper, brochure distribution, and downloads of the television commercial, Penn Pals. The campaign is credited with driving tourism to the region and is also cited with at least two businesses opening here from entrepreneurs who moved to Philadelphia because of the campaign and the city's gay-friendly reputation. Philadelphia's campaign is widely recognized by the media and in college case studies as a best practice gay tourism marketing campaign with a model that is extraordinary.

Finally, Jeff Guaracino, the leader of the GPTMC campaign, was invited by Elsevier to share what GPTMC had learned with a wider audience in the tourism and marketing industries in a first-of-its-kind book called, *Gay and Lesbian Tourism: The Essential Guide for Marketing*

(Elsevier 2007). The book features case studies, best practices in gay tourism marketing, and expert advice from the pioneers in gay travel.

GPTMC's team including Meryl Levitz, Sharon Rossi, Deborah Diamond and Jeff Guaracino have also been asked to expert presenters on gay tourism to the National Tour Association, the International Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus, the International Conference on Gay & Lesbian Tourism, the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association, Wharton School of Business in Philadelphia, and others.

You can reach Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing corporation online at gophila.com/gay or by calling (215) 599-0776.

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