

A MarketSearch *Topline*

Greenville Convention and Visitors Bureau

Backstage Pass Wave 1

September 2007

Background and Purpose

Looking to build on its success in attracting meeting and convention business, the Greenville Convention and Visitors Bureau seeks to expand its visitor base by attracting leisure travelers to the area.

Due to its sheer size, proximity, and Interstate access, the Greenville CVB decided to target Atlanta, Georgia. Because it lacks the budget for a traditional advertising campaign, however, the CVB is looking for creative ways to attract Atlanta residents to Greenville for leisure travel.

Working with area businesses and tourism partners, the Greenville CVB embarked on a word of mouth marketing campaign. In this campaign, targeted Atlanta residents were recruited to spend a weekend in Greenville that will allow them to experience the “best” of Greenville. The goal of the campaign is to have participants return to Atlanta and tell their friends about all that Greenville has to offer.

Methodology

This report provides a summary of the findings of Wave 1 of the Greenville Convention and Visitors Bureau’s Backstage Pass.

Wave 1 consists of two weekends:

- ✓ September 7, 8, and 9 and
- ✓ September 28, 29, and 30

A total of 35 couples participated in the two Backstage Pass events. The data provided in this report represent the

opinions of all couples. The total sample size is 62.

- ✓ For 27 of the couples, both members completed a survey.
- ✓ Eight of the couples completed the survey together.

Some of the respondent specs include:

- ✓ Married couples,
- ✓ Between the ages of 45 and 62,
- ✓ Household income between \$100,000 and \$250,000,
- ✓ At least one spouse with white collar/professional employment,
- ✓ Predisposed to cultural and outdoor activities.

Executive Summary

Changing consumers’ impressions of well-established brands can be a difficult task. While this is particularly true of brands that have negative attributes associated with them, changing consumer impressions represents a challenge for any established brand. This relates to the fact that, positive or negative, attributes of established brands are ingrained in the minds of consumers.

Prior to participating in this study, the city of Greenville was known to study participants, which is to say, they were aware of Greenville. However, most did not associate Greenville with being a weekend destination getaway.

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The objective of the Backstage Pass project was to expose study participants to Greenville's leisure product so they would return to Atlanta and tell their friends and families about their experience.

With 100% of participants saying they were *very satisfied*, findings from Wave 1 of the Backstage Pass study indicate the project was a great success.

Not only were participants pleased with their experience, the weekend in Greenville greatly changed impressions of Greenville for many. For example, prior to visiting for the Backstage Pass experience, only 13% said they were likely to think about Greenville as a destination for a long weekend getaway. Having experienced Greenville, 100% say they are likely to think of Greenville as a weekend getaway destination (86% say they are very likely).

Further, Greenville receives high marks on a range of factors such as:

- ✓ Being a fun and exciting place to visit,
- ✓ The downtown area,
- ✓ Having the kinds of restaurants you like,
- ✓ Having the kinds of shops and boutiques you like,
- ✓ Etc.

Given that the audience is from Atlanta, the fact that Greenville receives such high marks is all the more impressive.

As mentioned, the primary objective of the Backstage Pass experience is to have participants go back to Atlanta and tell their friends about Greenville. Again, the project was a success; 100% of participants say they are likely to recommend a weekend getaway to Greenville to their friends; 98% say they are *very likely*.

Specific Study Findings

- Couples report very high levels of satisfaction with the weekend getaway experience. In fact, 100% say they are *very satisfied* with the experience.



The following comments highlight some of the things participants wrote down as their “top 3” favorites about the weekend. A review of all responses indicates that a comment can be found about virtually every aspect of the experience.

“Seeing beautiful downtown Greenville and enjoying the parks and the Historic Trolley ride.”

“[The best part was] Seeing how the community came together to make the changes.”

“The BMW Driving School.”

“The trip to the lake.”

“Beautiful setting: downtown, mountains.”

“Accommodations.”

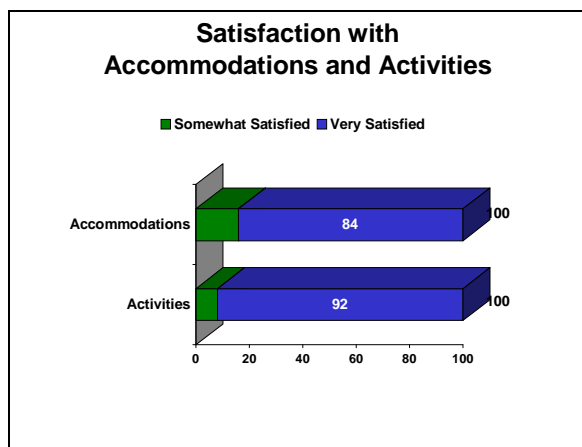
“The time spent with our Host Couple on Friday night, which explained the city’s goals and how they were met.”

“Friendly and courteous employees and servers at shops and restaurants.”

“Greenville County Museum of Art.”

“The history, culture, food in this city was well exposed.”

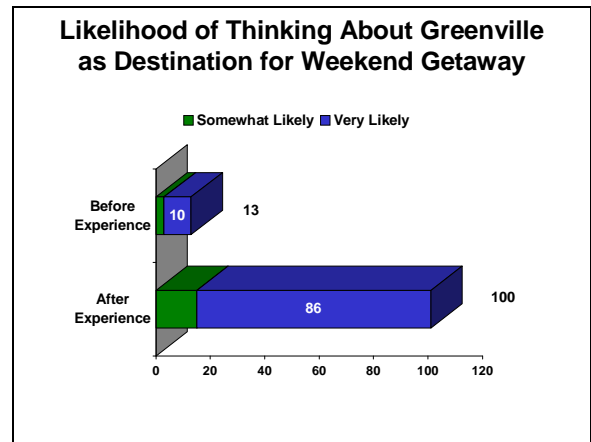
- In addition to the overall experience, participants expressed high levels of satisfaction with the accommodations and activities.



- The weekend in Greenville did more than provide couples with a pleasant experience; it actually changed impressions of Greenville.

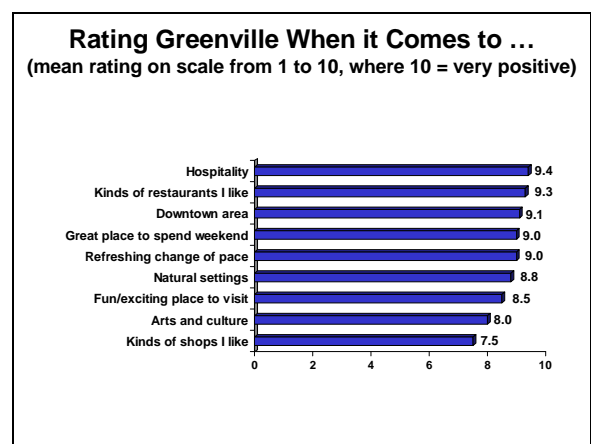
Prior to participating in Backstage Pass, only 13% say they were likely to think about Greenville as a destination for a weekend getaway.

After experiencing Greenville through the Backstage Pass experience, however, all couples say they are likely to think about Greenville as a destination for a weekend getaway; 86% say they are *very likely*.



- Participants give Greenville high marks across the board on things like restaurants, shopping, natural settings, the downtown area, etc.

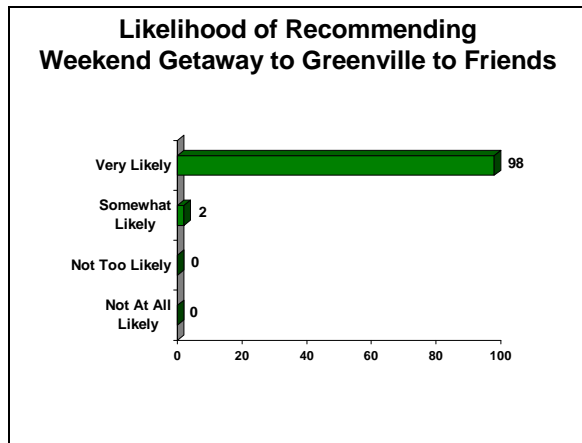
Despite a few negative comments about the restaurants, the score of 9.3 is a clear indication that participants enjoyed the restaurants at which they dined. Further, with all the shops and boutiques that Atlanta has to offer, the score of 7.5 for Greenville’s “having the kinds of shops, stores, and boutiques you like” is very respectable. The same is true for arts and cultural opportunities.



- Of course, the ultimate goal of the Backstage Pass project is to have

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couples go back to Atlanta and tell their friends and families about Greenville.



This is what some of the participants would tell people about Greenville.

"The city downtown area is wonderful, safe, beautiful, and clean. With over 90 restaurants of which I loved the ones we visited. The environment is still small but offers everything you need to have a great weekend escape."

"The downtown is very nice! Plenty of places to eat and places to shop and visit. It's nice to stroll along Main Street."

"I have already told everyone to get 2 hours out of Atlanta, head to Greenville for fine dining, safe, wonderful, almost European walking and eating experiences in the downtown. Easy parking, wonderful food and friendly shopping. Excellent museum, ease of public transportation, or walking, lovely downtown parks ... Super friendly, down-home people who are proud of a city's growth."

"It's not what you'd expect. It's a sophisticated, cosmopolitan and genteel city. Make sure you

spend a day exploring the surrounding area, be it the mountains, lakes or the BMW Driving School. Be sure to stay downtown and plan the trip in advance so that you can see a concert, play or baseball game. And plan to spend Friday night just wandering downtown."

"Greenville offers everything that larger cities like Atlanta offer without the crowd and traffic. The city offers a small quaint environment but lacks nothing less than the larger cities. There are several restaurants, shopping, cultural and art is exceptional. Everyone needs to visit Greenville."

"City is a hidden gem. Downtown is so nice, a lot like Athens, Ga. Very alive, clean, and safe. Has a lot of things going on—concerts, plays, good restaurants. People are friendly."

"I've already told family and friends what a gorgeous downtown area Greenville is to be centered around the river and it's beautiful waterfalls. I've told them how beautiful the parks are, the walkways that wind around the parks, the beautiful plantings and stone walkways and brick streets. Everything is so convenient and well kept. I loved seeing the little cast mice along the store fronts. I told them how beautiful Lake Jocassee is and how I would love to spend more time in the area exploring."

"The city is just beautiful and so clean. The park, waterfall, and suspension bridge were very unique. There are 90 restaurants in downtown Greenville and every one that we tried was

excellent. Greenville has so much to offer: free trolley, great theatre, concerts, baseball in a new stadium and all so convenient and safe. People we met were so friendly. The mountains are just a few miles away and are very beautiful. The Mountain House was so darling and the owner and staff were not only wonderful cooks but were adorable themselves.”

“It has the charm of a small town. Sophisticated arts programs. Falls Park is very family oriented, and the restaurants cater to both family and adult cuisine. It is such a charming place to visit, and a great place to retire.”

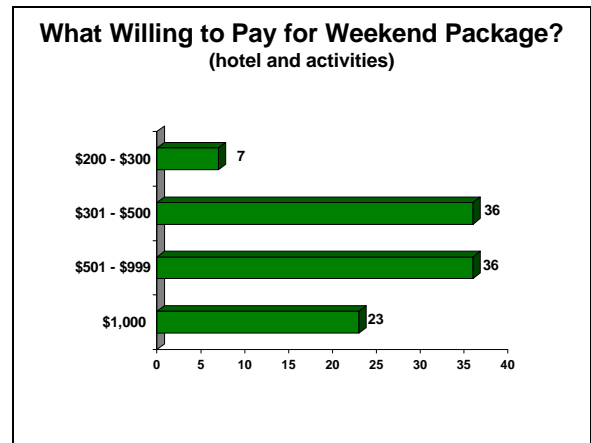
“It’s a quaint town with an adorable Main Street and beautiful park with a lovely waterfall going through it. There are so many things to do nearby and plenty of wonderful restaurants to enjoy. It has a unique charm and is a real hidden gem.”

“Great escape from the hassles of life in the big city. Like taking a trip to Fantasy Island. Relaxing atmosphere, great dining, friendly people and a chance to experience nature at its best.”

“That unless they have experienced the “new” Greenville, they know little or nothing about the city. This trip totally changed our perspective of Greenville, SC.”

- When asked how much they would be willing to pay for the hotel and activities portion of the package, most (58%) say

they would pay \$500 or more; 23% say they would pay \$1,000 or more.



- Finally, when asked about opportunities for improvements, many say that nothing about the weekend disappointed them.

“I can absolutely say that nothing about this trip was disappointing to me. It was carefully planned and executed faultlessly.”

“Nothing at all disappointed me about this trip, everything was carefully planned and carried out with extreme care.”

Others say they simply wish they had more time to enjoy the city.

“I would have liked a little more time to actually explore the downtown area on our own. We only had a short while between our outing on Saturday and dinner on Saturday night. Would love to see some antique stores in the downtown area.”

“I would allow a little more free time to see the city on our own. Everything else was executed and planned with excellence. Many, many thanks for the Greenville host.”

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"I wish there was more shopping at more unique stores and an antique area."

"I thought the weekend should have started a little earlier so we could see more of Greenville. I would like to have seen more of Greenville. We spent the entire day on Jocassee Lake. I felt we were a little rushed and we ate too late."

"Extend it by one day in order to include some free time for shopping/walking around downtown."

"Although I don't know how you would do it, it would have been nice to have had more time to explore the downtown and to have had time to see all of the museum area."

"I would have enjoyed having a picnic in Falls Park along with just touring downtown more."

"I would have enjoyed having a host couple join the group the second night, as well."

"To spend two days at the BMW driving school. This would not have really been practical. But, I would have done it."

- A few, however, felt there were some logistical issues that, if resolved, could make the weekend experience even better.

"Just that there were some details that weren't totally clear...was parking included in the hotel package?...should we valet or self park? How long the bus ride was to the Lake?"

"There was a LOT of confusion with the transportation setup. The schedule was set up but

there was NO way to ensure that the folks at the hotel all followed the plan. Suggest that they secure the room numbers and distribute them to the folks at that hotel so that when someone is missing, rather than hold up the ride, be able to call them and get them moving, so the rest of the folks do not miss the scheduled event."

"I would have liked to meet more people instead of being with the same group most of the weekend. We had dinner both nights with the same two couples and also had dinner Saturday night with the folks we spent the whole day Saturday with."

"Could have been more structured about where to meet on Friday afternoon along with the instructions about the Saturday night dining experience."

"People didn't know what was going on. The hotel didn't have any information, nor could they answer any questions. We were in the dark about what was next, where to go, they just said park, which was big."

Further, many of those who stayed at hotels some distance away indicated a preference for a downtown location.

"We enjoyed the Hilton, the rooms were lovely and the staff very accommodating; however, I think we would have enjoyed being downtown more, so that we could have walked to the shops and park during down time."

"Would have stayed at the Westin because of location."

When we return we will stay at the Westin.”

Conclusion

It is clear that Wave 1 of the Greenville Convention and Visitors Bureau's Backstage Pass was a resounding success.

Taking a page out of Branding 101 textbook, the Greenville Convention and Visitors Bureau has built the brand from the inside out by assembling a team of partners that is committed to developing a leisure tourism product.

Having done that, the next step is to promote the product, which is where the Backstage Pass comes in. As designed, the Backstage Pass experience served to open participants' eyes to Greenville's leisure tourism product. Further, comments indicate that participants will indeed be heading back to Atlanta to espouse all the great things that Greenville has to offer.