

Study Objectives and Methodology

Study Objective:

The objective of this study was to conduct comprehensive research and develop a strategic marketing plan to effectively position and market Currituck County, North Carolina as a travel and tourism destination of choice. The Currituck County Department of Travel and Tourism (CCDTT) retained Randall Travel Marketing, Inc. (RTM) of Mooresville, North Carolina to conduct this study.

Study Methodology:

Research was conducted in Currituck County, North Carolina from May through September 2007. The following methodology steps were implemented:

1. Initial Meeting and Materials Gathering:

- Initial meetings were conducted between the Currituck County Department of Travel and Tourism and RTM professionals in order to review study methodology, deliverables, questionnaires, gather input and collect marketing materials and other pertinent information.

2. Reconnaissance and Mystery Shopping:

- A professional reconnaissance team visited Currituck County June 8 through June 14, 2007. The region was fully evaluated from the perspective of the tourist.
- The team mystery shopped a sampling of visitor information centers, attractions, hotels, restaurants, retail stores, and amenities.
- Other elements evaluated included signage, gateways, wayfinding, and front line hospitality training.
- Findings were documented and are part of the written report for this study.

3. Performance Review:

- Documentation and analysis of CCDTT's governance and mission statement was completed.
- Funding and budget allocation for the CCDTT was compared to national averages.
- The CCDTT staffing and organizational structure was reviewed.
- CCDTT marketing programs, sales and outreach was reviewed.
- Program performance and results measures were analyzed.
- Economic impact statistics and tax relief for local residents were calculated.

4. Lodging Survey and Rental Agency Manager Interviews

- A confidential survey was sent to all lodging management in Currituck County.
- Response was received by nine (9) rental companies (1,883 rooms representing 61.34% of the total in Currituck County), four (4) hotel/motels (190 rooms representing 97.94% of the total in Currituck County), and two (2) bed and breakfast inns (8 rooms representing 100% of the total in Currituck County) that participated in the study. This response rate of 63.60% of overall lodging is reliable for the purpose of determining lodging market statistics.

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- RTM obtained a combined lodging statistics report for Dare and Currituck Counties from Smith Travel Research (STR). The Smith Travel (STR) data is part of this report.
- Additionally, RTM conducted executive interviews with managers of five (5) vacation home rental companies, representing the vast majority of rental properties in Currituck County, to ensure a thorough understanding of the vacation rental business and marketing needs.

5. Inquiry Mail Survey:

- 3,000 surveys were mailed to a stratified random sample of the total inquiries received by the Currituck County Department of Travel and Tourism (CCDTT) during a twelve-month period. The sample was stratified by the time of year received during the twelve-month period and by the inquiry source.
- The surveys were mailed in July 2007. A total of 318 surveys were completed representing 10.60% return.
- The survey instrument (questionnaire) contained forty-two (42) questions, was printed on a single sheet of 11" x 17" white paper and folded to a four page 8 ½" x 11" letter size format, 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 to be selected from those that responded.

6. Visitor Intercept Interviews:

- Random visitor intercept interview surveys were also conducted as part of this comprehensive travel and tourism study for Currituck County. The purpose of these intercept interviews was to allow the research team to explore in-depth visitor awareness of Currituck County, document tools used in trip planning, and explore behavior, expenditures, and perceptions.
- Intercept interview participants were chosen to provide data matching the overall lodging market mix as reported by the lodging properties in Currituck County.
- A total of fifteen (15) intercept interviews were conducted during the June 8 through 14, 2007 time period. The intercept interviews were conducted at various rental agencies, lodging properties, attractions, and events. All interviews were conducted by RTM staff.

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7. Attraction Manager Survey

- RTM conducted an attraction survey as part of this overall study. The survey instrument was sent to eight (8) attractions in Currituck County.
- Five (5) attractions elected to participate in this survey. The survey was conducted during the months of July 2007 and September 2007
- This survey instrument (questionnaire) contained five (5) questions and was written by RTM and approved by the Currituck county Department of Travel and Tourism.
- The results and data obtained from the completed surveys has been tabulated and documented and are part of this overall report.

8. State, Regional and National Data:

- Travel research data from the State of North Carolina 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 the Currituck County Department of Travel and Tourism.
- Materials were evaluated based on research findings and the marketing experience of the RTM team.
- Analysis and recommendations are a part of the marketing strategies in this report.

10. Final Report and Recommendations:

- Based on the research findings, a comprehensive report was written and presented to Currituck County Department of Travel and Tourism.