



# **Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism In-State Market Research Findings**

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**November 2004**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism is interested in exploring the travel-related attitudes, behavior, and potential amongst Massachusetts residents. To gather information a series of six focus group discussions was conducted – two (2) in Springfield, Massachusetts and four (4) in Boston. The discussion covered several topics including attitudes toward short leisure and getaway trips; the motivators of getaway trips; the planning process; their image of Massachusetts; and interest in specific promotional efforts to generate additional travel.

Key findings from the research include the following:

- The main feature that defines a getaway is the feelings it engenders. A getaway provides escape from the daily routine, freedom from responsibility, and a change of scenery.
- People tend to view the ability to take this type of trip as a necessity. It is a way to cope with the stress of everyday life which offers a break from the daily routine.
- Key features of getaways include:
  - There is often minimum planning since the motivation for these trips is to get away from responsibility. People tend to return to comfortable and familiar destinations. They have less interest in new destinations.
  - Getaways do not generate a lot of passion, which is more the case with longer trips. Rather, these trips generate a feeling of rejuvenation.
  - Getaways are not planned very far in advance, because they tend to be short and occur in familiar places.
  - People are less willing to spend a lot of money on this type of trip, and they are interested in deals and value for their money.
  - The planning process for families with younger children at home is more complicated, since there are more people who have to approve of the choice. Parents choose a destination based on the needs/desires of their children and focus on finding a place that can cater to the interests of the children.
- A few factors influence whether a trip is a daytrip or includes an overnight stay. People are usually reluctant to stay overnight if the destination is within a couple of hours from home. It seems indulgent to spend money on a hotel room, if they can return home. However, if there is a perception that there is a lot to do they may stay overnight. Promotions and deals can also influence the decision and help turn daytrips into overnight stays.
- Also under consideration was whether the number of trips that people take is set or flexible. If it is set, capturing more trips from residents will mean “stealing market share” from other states. But, if the number of trips is flexible, there may be potential to convince people to add trips. Generally, among people traveling without children, the number of trips taken seems flexible. People indicated that if they saw an interesting place to visit or a good deal they might take another trip. However, given that travel is already high among this segment it may be difficult to yield significant influence. Additionally, families with children at home indicate that they would be unlikely to add to the number of trips they take.

- In developing in-state marketing efforts, it is important to understand how residents view Massachusetts as a place for short, overnight trips.
  - The current image is somewhat positive, but not especially focused. Massachusetts is viewed as having lots of variety rather than one or two key strengths. This could work well the “Make it Yours” campaign and provide an opportunity to highlight how the State can cater to a wide variety of interests.
  - It will likely be a challenge to generate overnight trips. Many people indicated being more likely to travel within Massachusetts for daytrips. In addition, there is some feeling that remaining in state does not provide the necessary psychological distance that a getaway requires.
  - Top-of-mind awareness of many of the State’s destinations was fairly low. It may be necessary to educate and remind people of the many things to see and do in the State.
- MOTT’s in-state promotion of hotel packages was explored with the groups. Currently there is little awareness of this program. It seemed that the promotion would generate interest and influence people to consider an in-state location, but it was unclear whether it would actually change behavior. Given current behavior, the promotion alone may not be enough to lure people away from their habitual destination efforts.
- One difficulty is that several different types of trips are taken which provide varying levels of opportunity and require distinct types of marketing. The best short-term opportunity for MOTT is to focus on couples without children at home (whether prior to having children or empty-nesters). Promotions and PR efforts aimed at this segment are likely to have the biggest impact on travel within Massachusetts.