



CASE STUDY

South Dakota Travel

South Dakota utilizes personalization to convert web visitors from planning to booking

Ahead of the summer travel season, the South Dakota Department of Tourism looks to inspire, engage, and convert visitors into travelers through its multi-channel online strategy. At the heart of their strategy is their website. The goal of South Dakota’s website is to expose consumers to the breadth of experiences the state has to offer, while also providing consumers with the resources needed to plan their trips. The challenge for South Dakota, or any DMO website, is ensuring that they are:

- Providing users with a useful, relevant, and enriching site experience
- Showcasing the destination through inspiring storytelling and visuals
- Maximizing media, website, and content investments

A systemic travel industry issue is that you heavily invest in researching your audiences and customizing messages and media placements to match consumer personas and mind-sets, but send everyone to the exact same web experience. The one-to-many website model is outdated and broken.

In order to provide a relevant and useful website experience, MMGY Global strategized, developed, and implemented an in-depth, multi-touchpoint website personalization campaign from February to May 2017 leading into South Dakota’s peak summer season. They partnered with Bound to understand who their audiences are, what feeder markets they come from, and what informs their decision process when selecting a travel destination. From this knowledge, they produced a phased personalization campaign that focused first on customizing each target audience’s user experience from the inspirational visuals they see to the engaging stories they are served.

During the first phase of personalization, Bound identified users’ locations in order to better position content relevant for each target market. For example, a user interested in family vacations who accessed the website from Minnesota is vastly different from an active outdoor couple from New York. “Through content personalization with Bound, we are able to provide each user with more relevant content that immediately addresses who they are and what they are looking to gain from their vacation experience, and then serve the appropriate content to them,” says Robert Patterson, VP of Web Design & Content Strategy, MMGY Global.



PERSONALIZATION RESULTS

68% Increase in Pages Per Visit

98% Increase in Average Visit Duration

32% Decrease in Bounce Rate

5.5x Increase in Email Sign-ups Conversion Rate

5.6x Increase in Vacation Guide Conversion Rate



Personalized homepage targeting active couples in New York.

To further engage prospective visitors, MMGY is employing personalization to serve and showcase inspirational editorial content on fly-ins. The content served is based on consumer segments driven by media targeting. The goal is to further engage audiences to learn more about South Dakota experiences that correlate with their desired vacation attributes, personal interests, and lifestyle.

The strongest indicators of a visitor's intent to travel from a DMO website are typically leads generated from vacation guide or e-newsletter sign-ups. These actions signal that the visitor has qualified the destination and is close to completing their travel destination selection. In order to increase the conversion rate and total number of conversions, MMGY implemented behavioral targeting based on previous engagement on site. For example, if a user visited the vacation guide request form, but did not fill out the form, the user will be served an abandonment banner on subsequent visits to the site.

Immediately upon implementation, the South Dakota Department of Tourism experienced significant improvement in crucial areas of the website's engagement KPIs, including pages per session, session duration, and bounce rate. On average, over the course of the four-month personalization campaign, South Dakota saw pages per session increase by 68 percent, session duration increase by 98 percent, and the bounce rate decrease by 32 percent. More importantly, goal-oriented actions within the website that signal intent to travel increased dramatically. Within the first month, South Dakota's goal conversion rate for email sign-ups increased by 5.5 times and the vacation guide conversion rate increased by 5.6 times.



Fly-in about free activities targeting family travelers.



Personalized banner based on previous onsite engagement.

"Personalization with Bound significantly impacted South Dakota's website leading into their peak season. We not only increased the website's KPIs, but more importantly the ROI of the tourism department's media, content and website investments."

-Robert Patterson, VP of Web Design & Content Strategy, MMGY Global