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## **POSITIVELY CLEVELAND LAUNCHES NEW DESTINATION BRAND**

### **GOAL OF DESTINATION BRAND TO BOOST CLEVELAND TOURISM**

**CLEVELAND** (March 19, 2014) – [Positively Cleveland](#), the convention and visitors bureau for Greater Cleveland, launched a new brand to attract visitors to Cleveland at its annual meeting today.

The essence of Cleveland’s new destination brand can be summarized in a brand anthem video viewable on the homepage of [www.ThisIsCleveland.com](http://www.ThisIsCleveland.com).

With the goal of boosting tourism to Northeast Ohio, the premise behind Cleveland’s new destination brand is simple: Cleveland doesn’t follow anyone’s rules – it makes its own. The brand focuses on the city’s world-class art, culture and rock and roll in a way that is irreverent, fun and always unmistakable.

“We’ve created a new destination brand because it’s time to change the narrative about Cleveland at home and outside the city,” David Gilbert, President & CEO of Positively Cleveland, said. “Right now, Cleveland is enjoying a renaissance along with the benefits of billions of dollars in new development and improvements. Now is the time to drive more travel and tourism to Cleveland”

#### **Cleveland’s New Destination Brand**

“At its core, a brand is a collection of stories describing a person, place or thing – a reputation if you will,” Colette Jones, Vice President of Marketing at Positively Cleveland, said. “That reputation comes from a combination of the experiences and word-of-mouth accounts of those experiences as told by customers.”

The new destination brand centers on the uniqueness of the city and its eclectic mix of people.

“Our industrial grit and cultural sophistication are part of what makes Cleveland unique,” Jones said. “Cleveland’s manufacturing past, the different ethnic groups it attracted, and the challenges we’ve faced, make the city a diverse, creative and authentic place to visit. Because of our experiences, conforming to other city’s standards just isn’t in our DNA.”

Ultimately, the goal of the destination branding initiative is to begin to improve perceptions about Cleveland by changing the narrative about the city.

Additionally, there is no one single slogan covering the whole destination. According to Jones, “Cleveland’s not a ‘one-size-fits-all’ kind of place. And, we don’t think you can define Cleveland with one catch-phrase. Rather we will use different campaigns to connect with our different audiences. But they will all be about the same brand: Cleveland.”

The new destination brand is designed to make Cleveland more attractive to visitors – particularly Millennials and Generation Xers.

The imagery involved in the new destination brand is what many describe as “sophisticated grit.” Many of the images that will be used throughout Positively Cleveland’s efforts will appear to have an Instagram®-like feel that is quite raw, but always authentic.

It’s also important to note that the brand will be used to attract more meetings and conventions to Cleveland, as well. The look and feel will be modified to best sell Cleveland as a meetings and conventions destination.

“Having the right meetings facilities is no longer the issue now that we have a new downtown convention center to add to the I-X Center and Public Hall. And, with a 55 percent increase in downtown hotel rooms between 2013-2016, we can accommodate larger-scale meetings,” Gilbert said. “However, our challenge with selling Cleveland to a meeting planner has historically been poor perceptions of Cleveland. This brand is anticipated to address that challenge.”

### **The Brand Process I: Identifying The Right Partners**

Positively Cleveland selected [MMGY Global](#), the largest firm in the world specializing in travel marketing, as an advisor to provide an unbiased outsider’s view of how Cleveland is perceived within the marketplace. MMGY’s extensive client list includes marketing work performed for Trump Hotels, the Colorado Tourism Board, the Tucson CVB and Walt Disney.

“MMGY Global specializes in travel marketing. It’s all they do. They are internationally respected as a leader within the travel and tourism industry. And, they’ve done a terrific job of identifying the structure behind our new destination brand,” Gilbert said.

Local agency [The Adcom Group](#) was selected simultaneously as the local partner to implement the structure that MMGY Global created to help produce and execute effective campaigns, marketing materials and the significant advertising plan and media buying for the new branding effort.

Positively Cleveland also is working closely with local firm [thunder::tech](#) on the local movement, #ThisisCLE, which directly ties to the branding initiatives.

### **The Brand Process II: Strategic Brand Research**

Positively Cleveland conducted four perception studies surveying residents, potential visitors and meeting planners in order to understand Cleveland as a destination product. The outcome showcased that there was a significant communication gap between the perception and reality of Cleveland as a destination.

Knowing the input of locals was absolutely necessary to the brand’s success, MMGY Global held objective and unbiased interviews with nearly 100 Clevelanders. This included stakeholders, restaurant owners, servers, hotel workers, bartenders, restaurant customers, arts and cultural advocates, music advocates, educators, healthcare leaders and even some local CEOs.

Additionally, Positively Cleveland commissioned a group of studies to explore the awareness of the “Cleveland Rocks” tagline, a familiar phrase often associated with the city. The results indicated that the tagline, while familiar to many people, does not motivate people to visit Cleveland.

### **The Brand Process III: Brand Identity Development and Testing**

With the information collected, a brand identity was created with the goal of getting more visitors to Cleveland. Because of the challenges Cleveland has experienced, the brand is designed to show visitors that the city is a more creative, fun and comfortable place to visit. Rather than hiding from its past, the destination brand identity embraces it as what makes Cleveland remarkable.

During this step of the process, Generation Xers (born 1960 – 1979) and Millennials (born 1980-1995) were identified as the most open and interested in visiting Cleveland. These two generations combined will make up two thirds of all visitors by 2020. As a result, the new destination brand will target these two generations.

In an effort to test the new brand, Positively Cleveland conducted focus groups with Millennials and GenXers in Detroit and Columbus. During those focus groups, the facilitator started the conversation by asking the groups their thoughts on Cleveland and if they'd ever consider visiting.

Then, the facilitator showed the group a brand essence video, which highlighted how Cleveland would be marketed as a destination.

After they watched this video, the groups were again asked their thoughts on Cleveland and if they'd ever consider visiting.

"The results were outstanding," said Gilbert. "There was a significantly positive shift in the responses from the focus groups after seeing the brand essence video. It demonstrated to us that we are moving in the right direction."

### **The Brand Process IV: Execution & Next Steps**

Positively Cleveland will launch the destination brand with two campaigns: one for leisure visitors and one for meeting planners.

The leisure visitor campaign, "And for that, you're welcome." will include online advertising, broadcast advertising spots, print advertising, marketing collateral, a new website ([www.ThisIsCleveland.com](http://www.ThisIsCleveland.com)) and out-of-home advertising. Advertising will be purchased in its primary target leisure visitor markets including Columbus, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Toledo, Buffalo and Erie.

A meetings and conventions campaign, "World-class experiences without the world-class ego," will include online and trade publication advertising, as well as a newly branded tradeshow booth for Positively Cleveland's convention sales team to use throughout the year.

In addition to all of this, Positively Cleveland launched a local movement using social media to encourage residents to brag to visitors about their favorite things about Cleveland by posting photos that are creative, eclectic, quirky, and unmistakably Cleveland. These photos are then sorted, organized and posted to [www.ThisIsCLE.com](http://www.ThisIsCLE.com). Positively Cleveland would like to use some of these photos in their marketing campaign materials and will request permission to the residents who posted.

Positively Cleveland will measure the destination brand's success on an on-going basis. In the short term, Positively Cleveland will analyze the individual campaigns that come out of the new brand. From a long-term approach, the organization will conduct annual research measuring different customer segments' perception of Cleveland and monitoring the annual visitor volume report.

The organization notes that there will be changes along the way as it reviews in-market results. According to Gilbert, “These tweaks will ultimately ensure the long-term success of Cleveland’s new destination brand.”

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**ABOUT POSITIVELY CLEVELAND:** *Positively Cleveland is Cleveland’s convention and visitors bureau. This private non-profit organization’s mission is to drive economic impact and stimulate community vitality for Greater Cleveland through leisure and business travel. Cleveland welcomes nearly 16 million visitors annually. For more information, visit [ThisisCleveland.com](http://ThisisCleveland.com).*