



Canadian Tourism  
Commission

Commission canadienne  
du tourisme

# Global Tourism Watch – Year 1

## US - Key Findings

Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC)



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# introduction

## Background

The shocks of 2001 and 2003 were strong reminders for the tourism industry regarding the speed of which consumer perceptions and decision-making processes can change based on a single event.

While there has not been a major shock to the tourism industry since 2004, a myriad of technological, social, environmental, and policy changes have occurred, affecting consumer perceptions, attitudes, motivations and travel intentions. Such changes include:

- Escalation of social media websites and their popularity across many age groups;
- Desire for healthier and more sustainable lifestyles;
- Climate change and related advocacy efforts by high-profile personalities; and
- Entry rules such as the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI).

To stay on top of and to adjust to the changes that are occurring, an annual research monitor was initiated to keep a pulse on consumer changes in eight of CTC's key markets.

## Objectives

In 2007, the Canadian Tourism Commission, in conjunction with a partnership group that included Ontario, British Columbia, Manitoba, the Atlantic and the North, engaged Harris/Decima to conduct the Global Tourism Watch (GTW) tracking research. The program was implemented in eight global markets – the US, Mexico, the UK, France, Germany, Australia, Japan, and South Korea.

The research objectives are to collect market intelligence (across all markets in a consistent way) related to four over-arching themes:

- Monitoring key performance indicators;
- Tracking response to Brand Canada;
- Identifying and tracking product opportunities; and
- Providing input into marketing activities and strategic plans.

## Methodology

The target population for the survey consisted of residents, aged 18 and older, who have taken an international pleasure trip where they stayed at least one night in paid accommodations in the past three years or who plan to take such a trip in the next two years.

In the US, the target was n=3,000 international pleasure travellers, with a quota of n=1,050 recent travellers to Canada. Quotas were also set individually for three regions – border states, Mid-haul states and southern/long-haul states. The regions are defined as:

- Border states: Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Vermont, Washington, New York;
- Mid-haul states: Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia., Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Wyoming, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin; and
- Southern / long-haul states: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Colorado, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia.

The online survey was weighted by region, age and gender to align it with the international traveller population in each market based on data collected through a random telephone Omnibus (n=2,000).

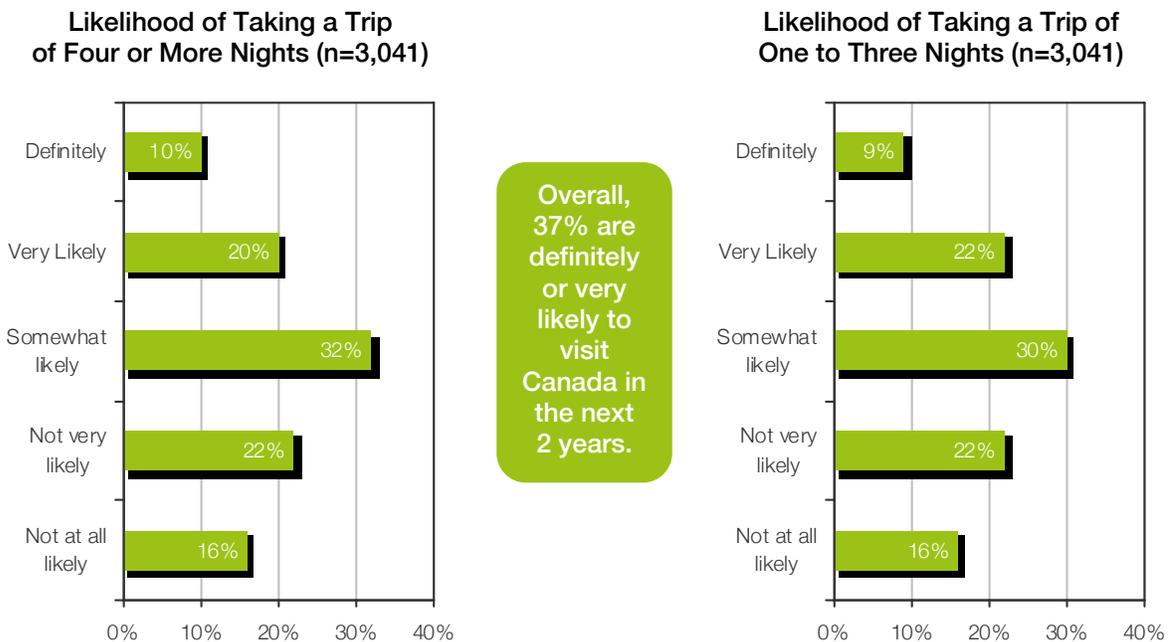
# what is the outlook for travel to canada and the regions in the next 2 years?

## Likelihood of Visiting Canada

The overall likelihood of visiting Canada in the next two years was assessed for both short getaways of one to three nights and longer vacations of four or more nights. Exhibit 1 shows that, in total, 37% of US travellers say they are either definitely or very likely to visit Canada in the next two years, providing a solid base of receptivity for Canada's marketing efforts in this country.

Interestingly, the market for short getaways and longer vacations is about the same size (with around 30% interested in each type of trip). However, there are differences by US market, with those in the Border States more likely to take a short getaway to Canada (45%), and those in the South least likely to do so (26%).

Exhibit 1– Likelihood of Visiting Canada in the next 2 years



Base: International pleasure travellers.

## Size of the Potential Market to Canada

Exhibit 2 provides an estimate of the size of the potential market for Canada in two ways – the target market and the immediate market.

The target market is a broader estimate of the market size based on expressed interest (very or somewhat interested) among US travellers in visiting Canada in the next two years. This yields a target market of over 67 million travellers with some level of interest in Canada.

The immediate potential is a more conservative estimate based on those who say they will definitely or very likely visit Canada in the next two years. This translates into more than 34 million travellers with immediate potential for conversion. Despite the current weakness in US travel flows, the fact remains that it is the largest immediate market for Canada, accounting for almost 60% of immediate travellers across the eight GTW markets.

While there is lower interest in Canada (70%) and less potential for immediate travel (32%) in the South, the substantially larger population of this region results in the largest immediate market for Canada (over 16 million travellers). However, given the distance barrier, this market will be tougher to convert, and should be treated by the CTC as a long-haul market that will require more awareness building.

There is no difference between the Border and Mid-Haul markets when it comes to interest in Canada, but those in the Border market are more likely to actually make a visit (49%), reflecting the proximity and convenience factor. Although well-primed, the smaller population in the Border States makes this region the smallest immediate market for Canada at around 7.5 million travellers.

## Exhibit 2 – Size of the potential market to Canada (next 2 years)

	Size of Potential Market to Canada		
	Border (n=994)	Mid-Haul (n=1,017)	South (n=1,030)
Total potential international pleasure travellers (aged 18 plus)	15,411,000	25,871,000	52,080,000
<b>Target Market for Canada</b>			
Very/somewhat interested in visiting Canada in the next 2 years	75%	76%	70%
Size of the target market	11,558,000	19,662,000	36,456,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>67,676,000</b>		
<b>Immediate Potential for Canada</b>			
Will definitely/very likely visit Canada in the next 2 years	49%	39%	32%
Immediate potential	7,551,000	10,090,000	16,666,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34,307,000</b>		

Base: International pleasure travellers. (n=3,041)

Notes: **Blue circles** indicate a result that is significantly lower than another region; **orange circles** indicate a result that is significantly higher than another region.

## Canadian Destinations Likely to Visit

Exhibit 3 indicates that Ontario (mentioned by 8 in 10) is the leading destination of interest among likely travellers to Canada, followed by British Columbia (7 in 10). Substantial segments of the market (around 4 in 10) are also interested in the Atlantic region. Around 2 in 10 express interest in visiting the North and 1 in 3 are interested in Manitoba.

Of GTW partner destinations, Niagara Falls is the individual destination that draws the most attention from US travellers, with 6 in 10 saying they want to visit this popular landmark while in Canada. Among Canada's leading cities, Vancouver is the destination of choice, selected by 6 in 10 travellers, while Toronto garners slightly less interest, at just over 5 in 10 who want to visit this city.

US travellers also show a healthy interest in moving beyond Canada's three major cities, with Halifax and Victoria of interest to around a quarter of travellers or more, and Ottawa, Whistler, Charlottetown and St John's of interest to between 13% and 17%.

Exhibit 4 shows there are some notable differences between the three US markets when it comes to the destinations that travellers are likely to visit while in Canada.

Within the Border market, there is lower interest in many of Canada's leading destinations, including Ontario and Niagara Falls. On the other hand, there appears to be greater interest in areas of Ontario and British Columbia that are outside the major centres (i.e., "Other Ontario" and "Other British Columbia" in the exhibit). This could reflect the fact that a high proportion of Border travellers have visited Canada before (almost 80%) and are now looking to go beyond the more popular tourist sites to explore something new. However, Toronto and Vancouver do retain their appeal for repeat travel, suggesting that they are viewed as being non-static, with constantly changing things to see and do.

Those in the Mid-Haul market are relatively more interested in Eastern destinations, including Québec and Atlantic Canada. They exhibit less interest in certain Western destinations including Whistler, Victoria, and Manitoba.

Compared with the other two US markets, travellers in the South appear to be more heavily focused on Western Canada, with higher interest in British Columbia (specifically Vancouver) and Manitoba. Southern travellers also show a greater interest in Canada's North, perhaps being attracted by an environment and climate that is so different from their own, while those in the Border States are less interested in the North.

**Exhibit 3: Destination Interest and Market Potential for the Regions**

	<b>BC</b>	<b>MB</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>ATL</b>	<b>North</b>
Likely to visit region	67	13%	79%	42%	23%
Immediate potential for the regions*	22,986,000	4,460,000	27,103,000	14,409,000	7,891,000
Most popular destinations within region	Vancouver (59%)	<i>n/a</i>	Niagara Falls (60%)	Halifax NS (24%)	Yukon (19%)
	Victoria (27%)		Toronto (62%)	St John's NFLD (17%)	NWT (15%)
	Whistler (13%)		Ottawa (14%)	Charlottetown (16%)	Nunavut (4%)

\* GTW partner regions.

#### Exhibit 4 – Canadian destinations<sup>1</sup> likely to visit by market

Destination	Border (n=788)	Mid-Haul (n=734)	South (n=647)
<b>Ontario</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>79%</b>
Niagara Falls	54%	65%	60%
Toronto	53%	55%	50%
Ottawa	13%	15%	14%
Other Ontario	9%	7%	5%
<b>British Columbia</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>72%</b>
Vancouver	55%	52%	63%
Victoria	29%	21%	30%
Whistler	17%	8%	13%
Other British Columbia	12%	8%	8%
<b>Atlantic</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>Nova Scotia</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>28%</b>
Halifax	24%	25%	25%
Other Nova Scotia	12%	14%	9%
<b>Prince Edward Island</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>20%</b>
Charlottetown	15%	15%	17%
Other Prince Edward Island	11%	11%	8%
<b>Newfoundland</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>20%</b>
St. John's	15%	17%	17%
Other Newfoundland	6%	7%	5%
<b>New Brunswick</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>11%</b>
Saint John	8%	11%	8%
Fredericton	5%	6%	4%
Other New Brunswick	4%	4%	3%
Northwest Territories	11%	14%	17%
Nunavut	3%	3%	4%
<b>Prairies</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>21%</b>
Manitoba	15%	11%	14%

Base: Those likely to visit Canada in the next 2 years and/or those who are considering, have decided to visit or have booked a trip there.

<sup>1</sup> GTW partner regions.

## what are US awareness levels of canada?

### Unaided Performance Indicators

The Global Tourism Watch measured three unaided (or top-of-mind) indicators<sup>2</sup> – unaided awareness of Canada, unaided awareness of Canadian travel advertising, and unaided destination consideration.

In terms of unaided destination awareness, Canada ranked sixth, with 17% of long-haul respondents mentioning Canada as a destination which comes to mind for a long-haul vacation.

For top-of-mind Canadian travel advertising, Canada ranked 4<sup>th</sup>, with 6% of long-haul respondents mentioning that they had seen or heard Canadian advertising relating to travel or holidays within three months of the survey.

Regarding unaided destination consideration, Canada ranked 4<sup>th</sup>, with 12% of long-haul respondents mentioning that they are seriously considering Canada and Canadian destinations for their holiday trips in the next 2 years.

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<sup>2</sup> All results include Canadian sub-destinations.

# what do recent and potential visitors from the US look like?

## Target Market for Canada

Exhibit 5 provides demographic profiles of recent US travellers to Canada and US travellers interested in visiting Canada in the next two years.

Recent visitors to Canada tend to be a more distinct group, being far older and considerably more affluent than the traveller population at large. Almost half (48%) are 55 plus, and accordingly; about a quarter of the market consists of retirees. Over half have annual household incomes of US\$75,000 or more, with 30% who earn in excess of US\$100,000. In addition, travellers to Canada are significantly more likely to hold managerial or professional positions in the workforce (55%).

Both recent and potential visitors are more likely to have friends or relatives in Canada than the market as a whole, indicating that even in the US, VFR is a key driver of both interest and actual travel.

## Target Market for Canada's Regions

Exhibit 6 shows the demographic profile of travellers who are likely to visit Canada (or are considering a trip there) in the near-term, as well as those who plan to visit each of the regions (only GTW regional partners are included). The profiles for British Columbia, Ontario and the Atlantic provinces are based on those who say they are most likely to visit the region, while the profiles for Manitoba and the North are based on those who express an interest in visiting these regions, given the relatively low proportion of travellers who say they are most likely to do so.

Across the regions, there are a few differences that are worthy of note:

- Travellers interested in visiting British Columbia are more likely to be single men and better educated, although notably, not more affluent;
- Those interested in the North are also more likely to be male, possibly attracted to the North by outdoor adventure experiences;
- Those interested in Ontario tend to be the youngest, and are more likely to have children living at home, perhaps indicating that Ontario has a family appeal;
- Those considering the Atlantic region tend to be older and more affluent, with a slant towards managerial/professional positions in the workforce; and
- Travellers likely to visit Manitoba and the North are understandably less likely to have friends or relatives there.

### Exhibit 5 – Target market demographics for Canada

	Recent Travellers to Canada (n=1,044)	Interested in Canada (n=1,150)
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	51%	48%
<b>Age</b>		
18 to 24	5%	10%
25 to 34	11%	21%
35 to 44	17%	18%
45 to 54	20%	22%
55 or older	48%	29%
<b>Close Friends or Relatives Living in Canada</b>		
Yes	34%	30%
<b>Have Children in Household Under 18</b>		
Yes	31%	37%
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married / partnered	74%	67%
Single / never married	13%	21%
Other (e.g. separated, divorced, widowed)	13%	12%
<b>Education</b>		
High school or less	36%	38%
Technical / vocational	9%	10%
Completed college / university	55%	51%
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Employed full-time/part-time	62%	68%
Housewife / homemaker	9%	8%
Retired	24%	16%
Unemployed	2%	2%
Student	3%	6%
<b>Occupation</b>		
Managerial/ Administrative/ Business owner	25%	23%
Professional	30%	29%
Clerical	5%	8%
Sales / Services	9%	11%
Technical / Skilled	14%	11%
Blue collar / Laborer	6%	7%
Other	12%	12%
<b>Average Annual Household Income (USD)</b>		
Less than \$35,000	14%	15%
\$35,000 to less than \$50,000	12%	16%
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000	22%	26%
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	23%	23%
\$100,000 or more	30%	21%

### Exhibit 6 –Target market for Canada’s regions

	TOTAL (n=2,169) <sup>1</sup>	BC <sup>3</sup> (n=574)	MB <sup>2</sup> (n=278)	ON <sup>3</sup> (n=889)	ATL <sup>3</sup> (n=161)	North <sup>2</sup> (n=425)
<b>Gender</b>						
Female	47%	43%	47%	49%	50%	39%
<b>Age</b>						
18 to 24	10%	12%	5%	10%	3%	9%
25 to 34	23%	23%	23%	27%	13%	14%
35 to 44	18%	18%	16%	21%	13%	16%
45 to 54	20%	19%	22%	19%	24%	20%
55 or older	29%	28%	34%	23%	48%	42%
<b>Close Friends or Relatives Living in Canada</b>						
Yes	26%	27%	21%	26%	28%	22%
<b>Have Children in Household Under 18</b>						
Yes	35%	32%	36%	41%	34%	29%
<b>Marital Status</b>						
Married / partnered	68%	64%	73%	72%	74%	70%
Single / never married	20%	26%	15%	17%	9%	16%
Other	12%	9%	12%	11%	17%	15%
<b>Education</b>						
High school or less	38%	32%	46%	41%	40%	45%
Technical / vocational	9%	9%	13%	11%	9%	11%
Completed college / university	53%	59%	41%	48%	51%	44%
<b>Employment Status</b>						
Employed full-time/part-time	69%	68%	60%	70%	67%	60%
Housewife / homemaker	7%	6%	9%	9%	7%	8%
Retired	16%	16%	23%	14%	21%	25%
Unemployed	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Student	5%	7%	5%	4%	1%	5%
<b>Occupation</b>						
Managerial/ Administrative/ Business owner	24%	26%	22%	19%	27%	21%
Professional	28%	27%	22%	27%	30%	28%
Clerical	6%	6%	6%	9%	2%	3%
Sales / Services	10%	13%	10%	9%	11%	10%
Technical / Skilled	13%	10%	16%	14%	14%	15%
Blue collar / Laborer	6%	5%	6%	9%	6%	5%
Other	13%	13%	18%	13%	10%	19%
<b>Average Annual Household Income (USD)</b>						
Less than \$35,000	14%	14%	19%	16%	12%	18%
\$35,000 to less than \$50,000	15%	16%	18%	16%	13%	20%
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000	25%	25%	23%	27%	26%	20%
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	22%	22%	21%	22%	22%	23%
\$100,000 or more	23%	23%	19%	20%	27%	19%

**Notes:**

1 Those likely to visit Canada in the next 2 years and/or those who are considering, have decided to visit or have booked a trip there.

2 Those likely to visit the region.

3 Those most likely to visit the region.

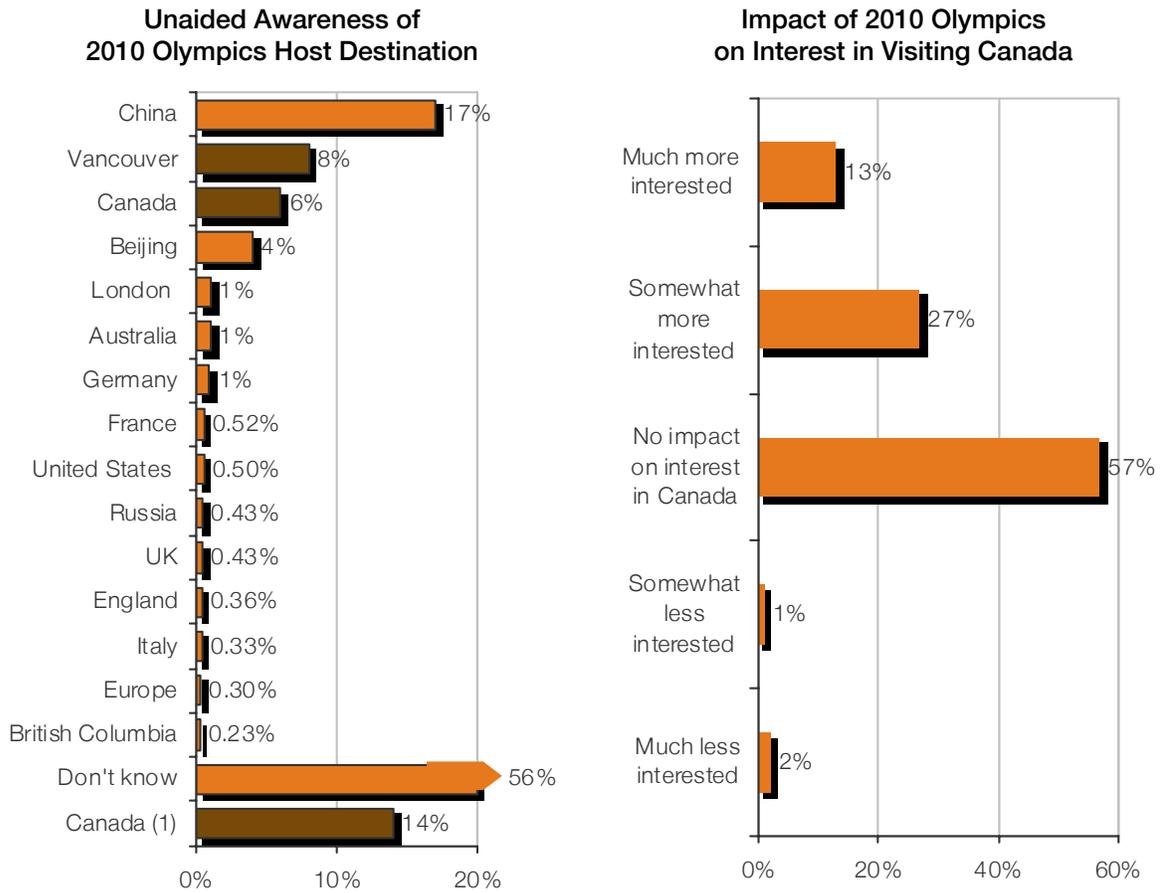
## what is the impact of the 2010 Olympic Games on travel to canada?

Exhibit 7 shows that, in total, 14% correctly identify Canada as the host of the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, mentioning Vancouver, Canada, or to a much lesser extent, British Columbia. However, there is obviously some confusion around the host cities as significantly more mention Beijing/China (21%), the host of the 2008 Summer Olympics. As a baseline, awareness levels are pretty low, but will doubtlessly increase following the 2008 Summer Olympics in China.

While the majority say that hosting the Olympics has no impact on their interest in visiting Canada, 40% say that it has enhanced their desire to visit the country, which is higher than the European markets, but lower than the Asian ones.

Not surprisingly, both awareness and impact are higher in the western border states (i.e., Montana, Idaho and Washington), with 38% who correctly identify the host destination and 50% who say the Games enhance their desire to visit Canada. Obviously, this may be a good region for Canada to target for Olympics-related travel.

**Exhibit 7 – Impact of 2010 Winter Olympics on General Interest in Canada**



Base: International pleasure travellers (n=3,041).

Note: (1) Includes all mentions of Canada, British Columbia, Vancouver and Whistler.

## what are canada's product strengths and weaknesses?

### Canada's Product Strengths and Weaknesses

Exhibit 8 presents a product strengths and weaknesses map for Canada in the US, which looks at impressions of Canada's product offerings vs. the importance of these products to US travellers on their international trips. The purpose is to identify products of importance to the US market where Canada is either favourably or unfavourably perceived.

**General product strengths for Canada are products that are both important in the minds of travellers in planning their international trips and for which Canada is favourably viewed.** As expected, nature is Canada's key product strength, including beautiful landscapes, rivers/waterfalls/coastal scenery, national parks and wildlife. Perhaps because of its scenic beauty, touring by car or train is viewed as good way of seeing Canada.

**Niche product strengths appeal to smaller groups of travellers and represent potential niche markets to be developed or targeted.** As in most markets, Canada's niche strengths in the US include a number of outdoor activities. Not surprisingly, skiing is Canada's strong suit, but hiking/trekking, fishing/hunting and canoeing/kayaking also represent good potential.

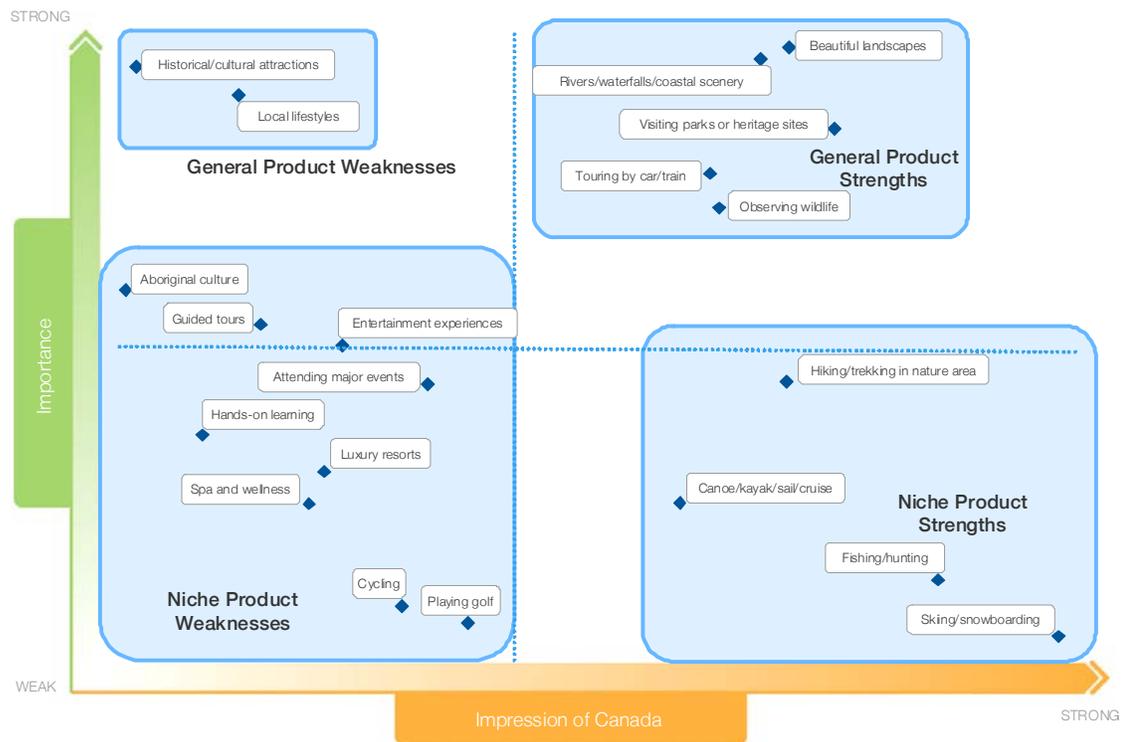
**General product weaknesses are products that are important to travellers, but for which Canada is not favourably rated, pointing to possible issues (perceptual or actual) to be mitigated.** Within the US, there are only two general product weaknesses – historical/cultural attractions and local lifestyles. These weaknesses are consistent with the low ratings on the people and culture dimensions of Brand Canada. Clearly these are misperceptions that need to be addressed given the importance of these products to both the market as a whole and to Authentic Experiencers, one of Canada's targeted EQ segments in the US.

**Niche marketing weaknesses are unfavourably rated activities that appeal to smaller groups of travellers.** As such, a considerable investment may be required to improve product perceptions for a lower return.

As in most markets, Canada is not seen as having much to offer to luxury travellers, being weak on spas, entertainment, luxury resorts and golf. It is also not viewed as being a prime destination for event travel, hands-on learning or cycling. Aboriginal culture emerges as another weakness, being one of the lowest-rated products for Canada. This may be because Canada's native groups and culture are not seen as being that different from what the US has to offer. Guided tours also emerge as a weakness, likely because Americans are familiar enough with Canada to tour it on their own.

Of the niche weaknesses, event travel is a possible area for development. Event travel is relatively important to US travellers, and Canada's rating is fairly reasonable as it stands now and will only increase as the Olympics draws near.

## Exhibit 8 – Product Strengths and Weaknesses Map



Base: International pleasure travellers (n=3,041).

### Top-Rated Products for Canada

Decima conducted a competitive exercise asking US respondents to select the best places to visit for a variety of travel products from amongst seven international destinations: Canada, Australia, UK, France, Mexico, Germany and China.

Canada has numerous competitive strengths in the US market, although virtually all of them relate to nature and the outdoors. Products that tend to be uniquely associated with Canada include skiing/snowboarding and fishing/hunting, although all but a few nature/outdoors products do make it onto Canada's list.

## what are american views on environmentally-friendly travel products?

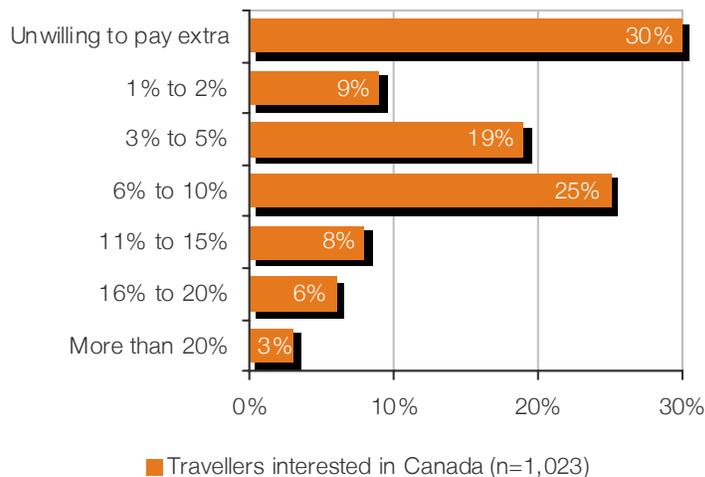
Prompted by growing public awareness of the environmental impact of travel and an increasing focus on responsible tourism in many countries, the GTW survey examined the attitudes of travellers towards eco-friendly tourism and travel products.

Survey results show that US travellers are not overly concerned about “green” travel. While 75% feel that environmentally-friendly travel is important, fewer than half actively put these principles into practice when they travel. About 45% say they take the environment into consideration in their destination decision-making, and fewer still make environmentally conscious choices like renting hybrid cars or staying at hotels with “green programs” when they travel.

The good news is that travellers who are interested in visiting Canada are more concerned about eco-friendly travel, with significantly higher ratings on all counts. Over 80% of potential travellers to Canada feel that environmentally-friendly travel is important, and roughly the same proportion consider Canada to be an environmentally-friendly destination, suggesting there are good opportunities for Canada to tap into this trend.

Exhibit 9 shows a total of 70% of potential travellers said that they were willing to pay a premium for green travel. 17% said that they were willing to pay a surcharge of more than 10%.

**Exhibit 9 – Willingness to Pay a Premium for Environmentally-Friendly Products**



*Base: International pleasure travellers.*

*Travellers Interested in Canada: those who are very interested in visiting Canada in the next 2 years.*

# how is canada perceived?

## Unaided Brand Personality Perceptions

Brand personality often serves as a good metaphor for understanding travellers' perceptions of a destination. As such, respondents were asked to indicate three personality traits or characteristics that come to mind when they think of Canada as a person. The responses were coded into a number of personality dimensions, each comprised of a group of related personality traits. These included the eight dimensions encompassed by Brand Canada: Authentic, Confident, Informal, Intriguing, Open, Warm, Witty and Youthful, as defined by the CTC.

As shown in Exhibit 10, the personality dimension that American travellers associate most closely with Canada is warm, which is defined by the CTC as being friendly, hospitable, welcoming, warm-hearted, kind, etc. Over a quarter of the market thinks of Canada in this way, mentioning these or related words to describe Canada on an unaided basis. Although incorporated into the new Brand Canada image, friendly people and a welcoming atmosphere have long been part of Canada's traditional image, which may be one reason for the strong showing here.

None of the other Brand Canada personality dimensions come anywhere close to "warm," with most being mentioned by between 5% and 8% of respondents:

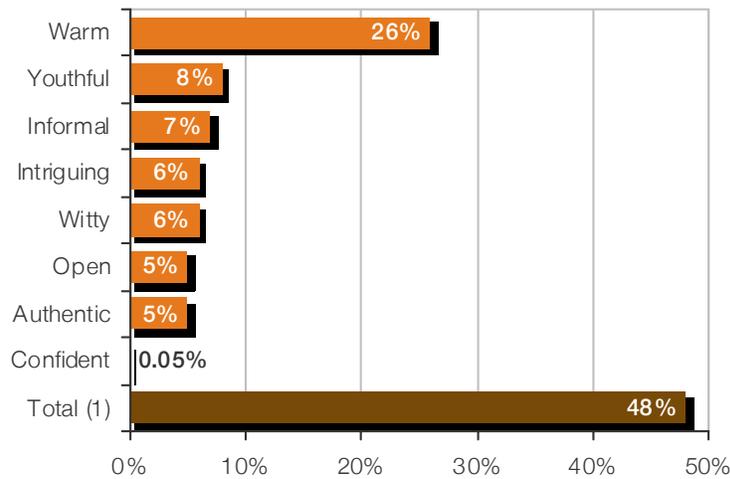
- Youthful (e.g., energetic, lively, young at heart, vigorous, fun, vibrant, peppy); and
- Informal (e.g., casual, relaxed, easy-going, laid-back, approachable);
- Intriguing (e.g., fascinating, interesting, exciting, appealing, engaging);
- Witty (e.g., humorous, quick, entertaining, clever, bright, intelligent);
- Open (e.g., accepting, liberal, open-minded, flexible, accessible); and
- Authentic (e.g., genuine, sincere, honest, down-to-earth, trustworthy).

While Canada has made a start in reengineering its image to one that is more lively, exciting and fun, the small percentages indicate that there is still a long way to go.

Interestingly, less than 1% of the market describes Canada as Confident (e.g., self-assured, sure, secure, poised, positive), likely due to the US's strong self-identification with that trait. In fact, this may underscore a more general challenge in the US – that of being compared to Americans and found lacking when it comes to fun and excitement.

Just under half (48%) of travellers mentioning one of the eight Brand Canada personality traits on an unaided basis.

### Exhibit 10 – Unaided Brand Personality Perceptions



Base: International pleasure travellers (n=3,041).

Note: (1) Percent who mentioned any of the 8 Brand Canada personality traits (or synonyms thereof).

Exhibit 11 shows other personality traits that are associated with Canada in the American market. Most commonly, Canada is viewed in relation to nature, as is evident in the widespread mentions of Canada as “beautiful/lovely/pretty” (20%), “nature/natural” (11%), “expansive/large/ vast” (7%), “scenic/picturesque” (3%) and “breathtaking/impressive/spectacular” (3%).

There is also some recognition that Canada is an outdoor lover’s paradise that remains in a partially wild or natural state for those adventurous enough to explore it. “Rugged/wild/ outdoors” (17%) scores more mentions in the US than in any other market, accompanied by relatively frequent mentions of “adventurous/adventuresome” (5%).

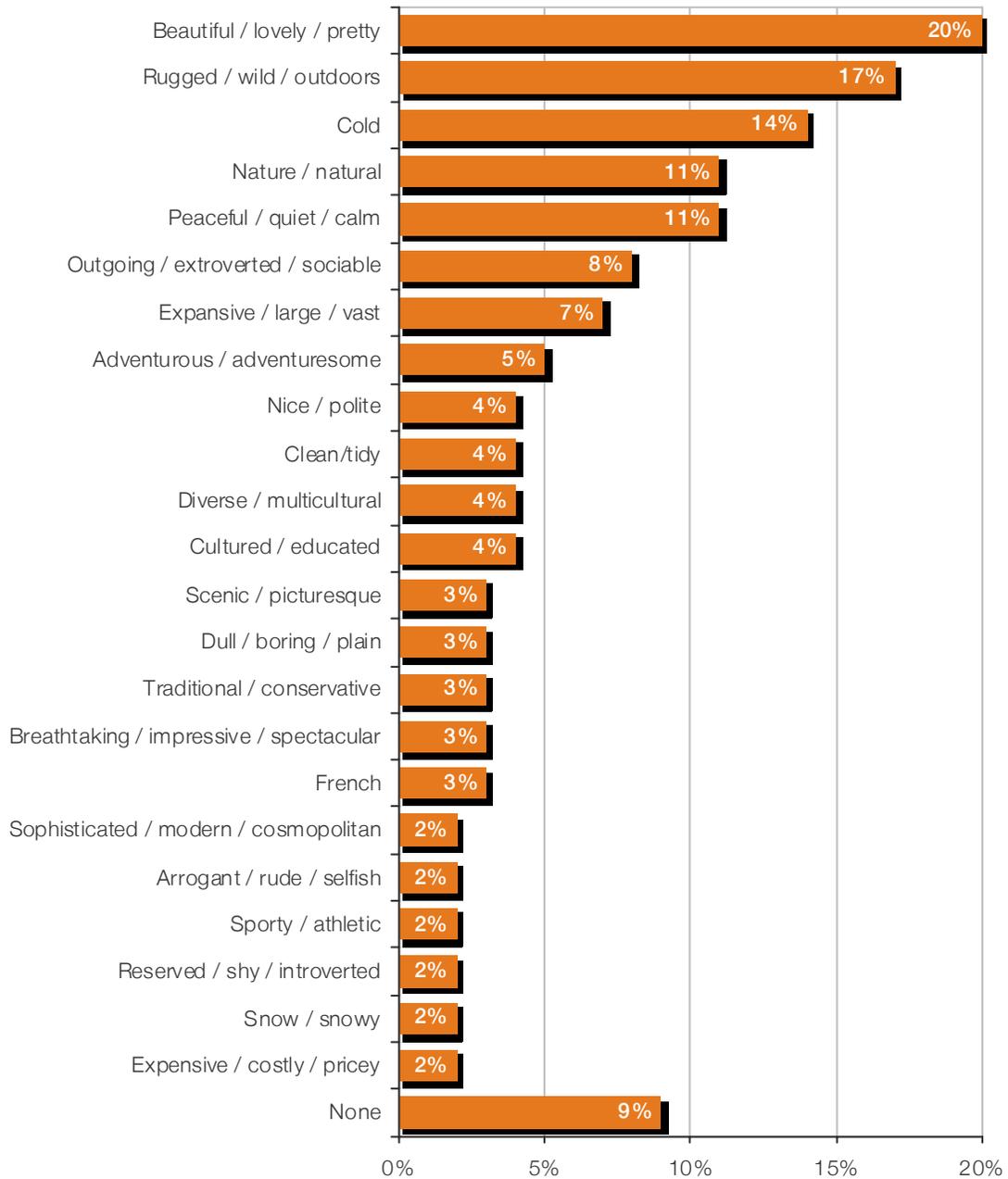
Also top-of-mind is perceptions of Canada as a cold country. With “cold” mentioned by 14%, and “snow/snowy” by an additional 2%, winter emerges as a strong association with Canada in this market. Rounding out the top five mentions is “peaceful/quiet/calm” (at 11%), which is consistent with the image of Canada as a relaxing and tranquil place to visit.

Generally, these perceptions of Canada are consistent with its old image of being a beautiful, relaxing place to visit with abundant nature and outdoors experiences. Moreover, the traditional view of Canada as somewhat dull and unexciting continues to abound in the marketplace, as evident by the mentions of “nice/polite,” “clean/tidy,” “dull/boring/plain,” “traditional/ conservative” and “reserved/shy/introverted” (each at between 2% and 4%).

As for traits more prominently mentioned by US travellers than by those in other markets, only one stands out (apart from “rugged/wild”):

- “Arrogant/rude/selfish” is mentioned by 2%, which although low, is notably higher than in other markets. Some Americans may see Canadians’ polite or reserved nature as stand-offish or unfriendly. For others, the characterization may relate to Canadian criticisms of the US over trade-related or political issues.

**Exhibit 11 – Unaided Brand Personality Perceptions – Other Mentions**



Base: International pleasure travellers (n=3,041).

## Value Perceptions

Destination success cannot be measured only by the degree to which the brand has established itself in the marketplace. Even if brand awareness is high, it is important for a destination or brand to be perceived as offering value to travellers. For a destination to have value, it should:

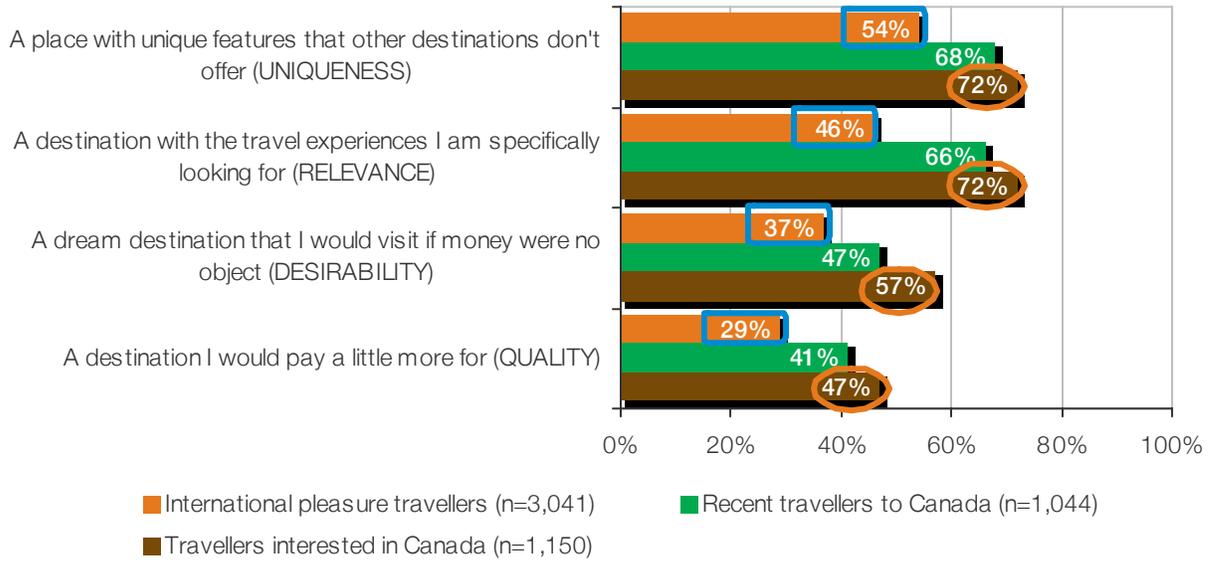
Have an inherent desirability or appeal;

- Offer high quality experiences and travel products;
- Be relevant to travellers, with the experiences they are specifically looking for; and
- Offer a unique product relative to other destinations.

To assess value perceptions of Canada in the US, respondents were asked to rate Canada on four value-related statements that embody each of the above criteria.

Exhibit 12 shows that Americans generally have fairly poor perceptions of the value of the Canadian travel experience, with ratings ranging from 29% to 54%. In fact, US travellers give the lowest ratings of any CTC market on three of the four value attributes – relevance, desirability and quality. Fortunately, recent visitors to Canada, and those interested in visiting in the future, have better perceptions of the value of the Canadian travel experience, especially when it comes to relevance.

## Exhibit 12 – Value Perceptions



Base: International pleasure travellers.

Notes: Top 2 Box refers to a rating of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale. Blue squares indicate a result that is significantly **lower** than another group; orange circles indicate a result that is significantly **higher** than another group.

Recent Travellers to Canada: those who have visited Canada in the past 3 years (pleasure trip, one or more nights, one or more nights in paid accommodations).

Travellers Interested in Canada: those who are very interested in visiting Canada in the next 2 years.

## Price Perceptions

In addition to brand image and destination value, cost obviously plays a major role when it comes to destination decision-making. Exhibit 13 shows how Canada is perceived by US travellers on various travel cost components.

Although the ratings are not that strong on an absolute basis, ranging from a high of 60% for airfare down to 52% for hotel costs, they are on the high side when compared with other markets. Even with the drop in the dollar, a trip to Canada represents a less expensive proposition for US travellers than an overseas trip, offering Canada some competitive advantages on price. So while brand and value perceptions of Canada are not particularly strong, it is at least viewed as a relatively affordable destination.

In the event of further declines in the US dollar or a full blown recession, Canada's competitive advantage on price could come into play, causing some US travellers to substitute travel to Canada for overseas trips. However, to make this happen, the CTC may need to improve value and brand perceptions in order to make Canada a more attractive proposition for US travellers, as Americans facing higher travel costs and economic difficulties may opt for a domestic trip without further persuasion.

Recent visitors tend to view Canada more favourably on cost, with ratings in the range of 61% to 67%. Travellers interested in Canada have even better perceptions, ranging from 65% to 70%.

**Exhibit 13 – Price Perceptions**



Base: International pleasure travellers.

Notes: Top 2 Box refers to a rating of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale. Blue squares indicate a result that is significantly **lower** than another group; orange circles indicate a result that is significantly **higher** than another group.

Recent Travellers to Canada: those who have visited Canada in the past 3 years (pleasure trip, one or more nights, one or more nights in paid accommodations).

Travellers Interested in Canada: those who are very interested in visiting Canada in the next 2 years.

## why do US travellers visit canada and the regions?

### Key Motivations for Visiting Canada

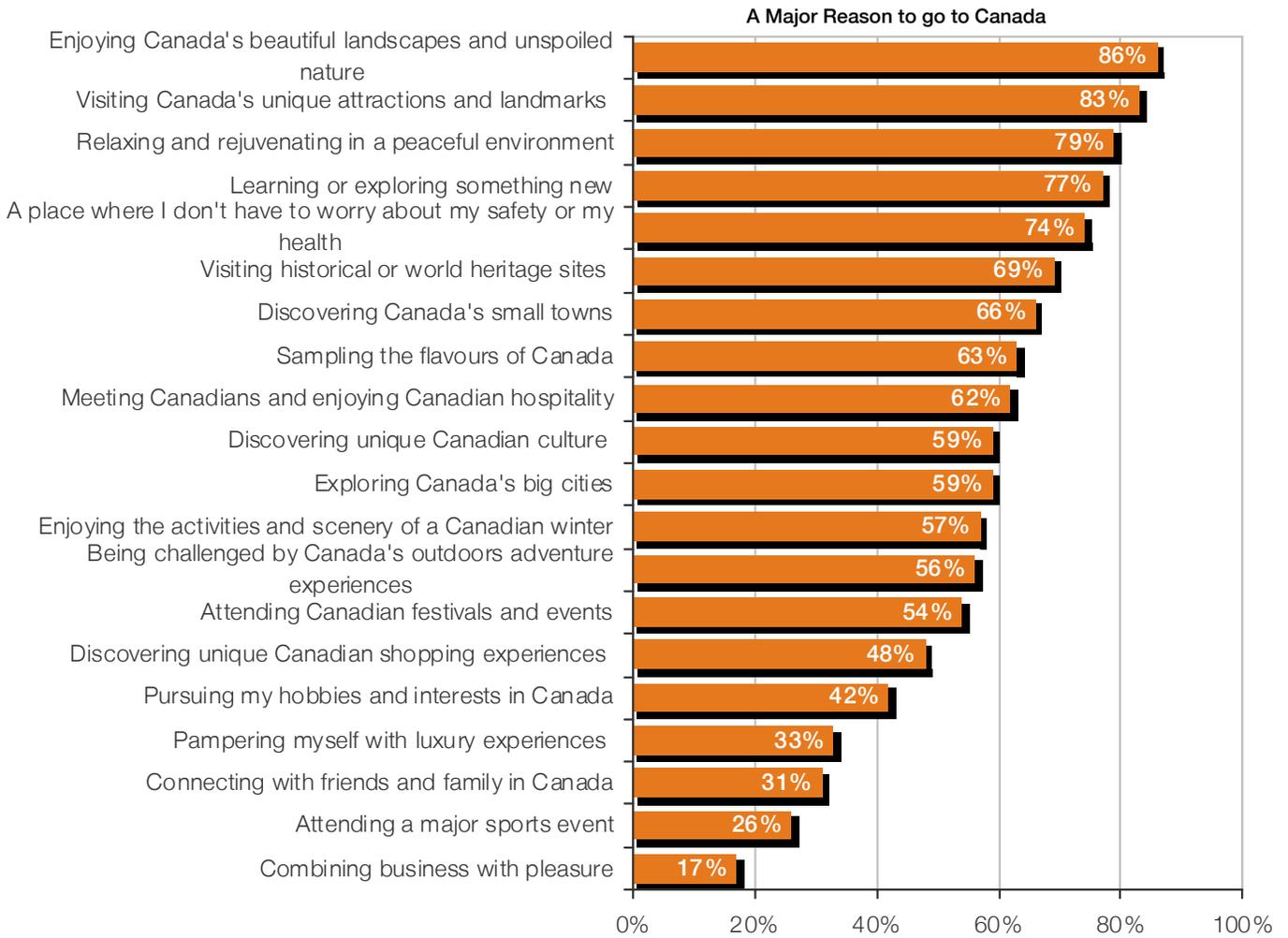
Among those likely to visit Canada (or are considering a trip there), nature/scenery and unique attractions/landmarks (e.g., Niagara Falls, Rocky Mountains) are the primary motivations for travelling to Canada, mentioned by 86% and 83%, respectively (see Exhibit 14).

Relaxing and rejuvenating in a peaceful environment is a motivator for almost 8 in 10 US travellers, and nearly three-quarters say they look to Canada as a safe place for a vacation. With both motivators rated higher in the US than in many other markets, American travellers clearly view Canada as a relaxing, worry-free environment for a getaway. While that may not be much of a draw or selling point, it is likely of some importance to a market increasingly frustrated by the hassles of travel and, according to a recent Trip Advisor poll, where 6 in 10 continue to worry about safety and terrorism when it comes to travel.

Learning or exploring something new is a motivator for over three-quarters of likely visitors to Canada, which suggests that the main thrust of the new brand – Canada as a place for exploration and discovery – will resonate well with the US market. While the exploration concept is most strongly tied to nature, about 60% to 70% say they are interested in exploring Canada's small towns, big cities, historical sites, culture/people and wine/cuisine.

Compared with other markets, relatively few Americans are interested in experiencing a Canadian winter (57%), likely because they have similar experiences at home. Moreover, US travellers generally prefer to escape winter by taking beach resort trips to warmer climes.

### Exhibit 14 – Key Motivations for Visiting Canada



*Base: Those likely to visit Canada in the next 2 years and/or those who are considering, have decided to visit or have booked a trip there (n=2,253).*

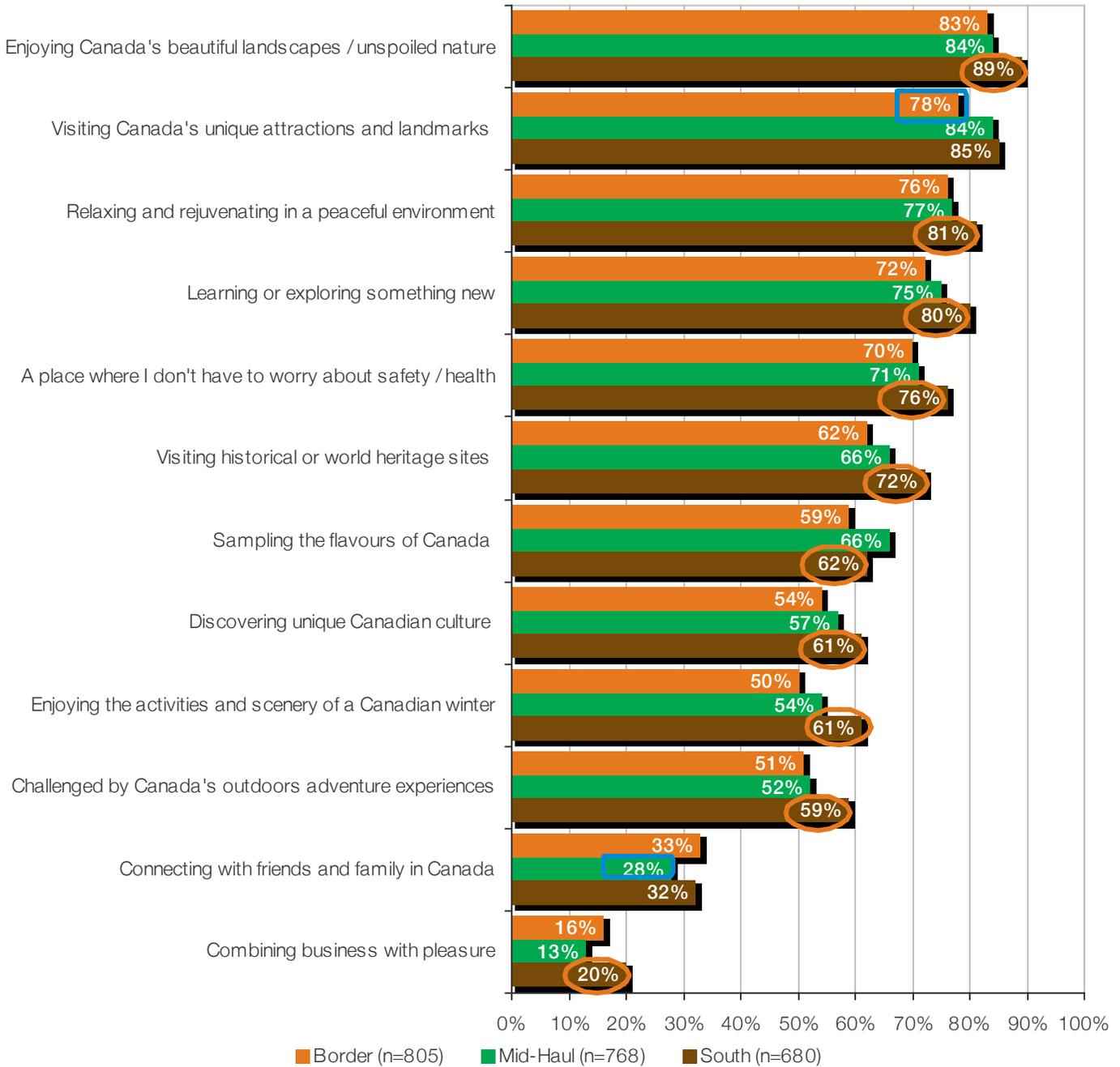
*Note: Top 2 Box refers to a rating of 4 or 5 on a 5-point importance scale.*

## Key Difference in Motivations For Visiting Canada By US Market

For travellers in the South, Canada is a more distant and unfamiliar destination, so it is not surprising that they are generally more excited about the country's attractions, features and experiences, with higher scores on many key travel motivations (see Exhibit 15). However, the fact that this group is also higher on combining business with pleasure (20%) indicates that realistically, some do not expect to get up to Canada except as part of a business trip.

Compared to the other two markets, those living in the Border area are less likely to be drawn to Canada by attractions and landmarks like Niagara Falls. As mentioned previously, the vast majority of travellers in the Border states have been to Canada before and have likely already visited the major tourist attractions. Marketing initiatives targeted at the Border region need to promote second tier destinations and more specialized experiences in order to draw travellers back.

**Exhibit 15 – Key Differences in Motivations for Visiting Canada by Market**



Base: Those likely to visit Canada in the next 2 years and/or those who are considering, have decided to visit or have booked a trip there.

Note: Top 2 Box refers to a rating of 4 or 5 on a 5-point importance scale. Blue squares indicate a result that is significantly **lower** than another group; orange circles indicate a result that is significantly **higher** than another group.

## Regional Motivations

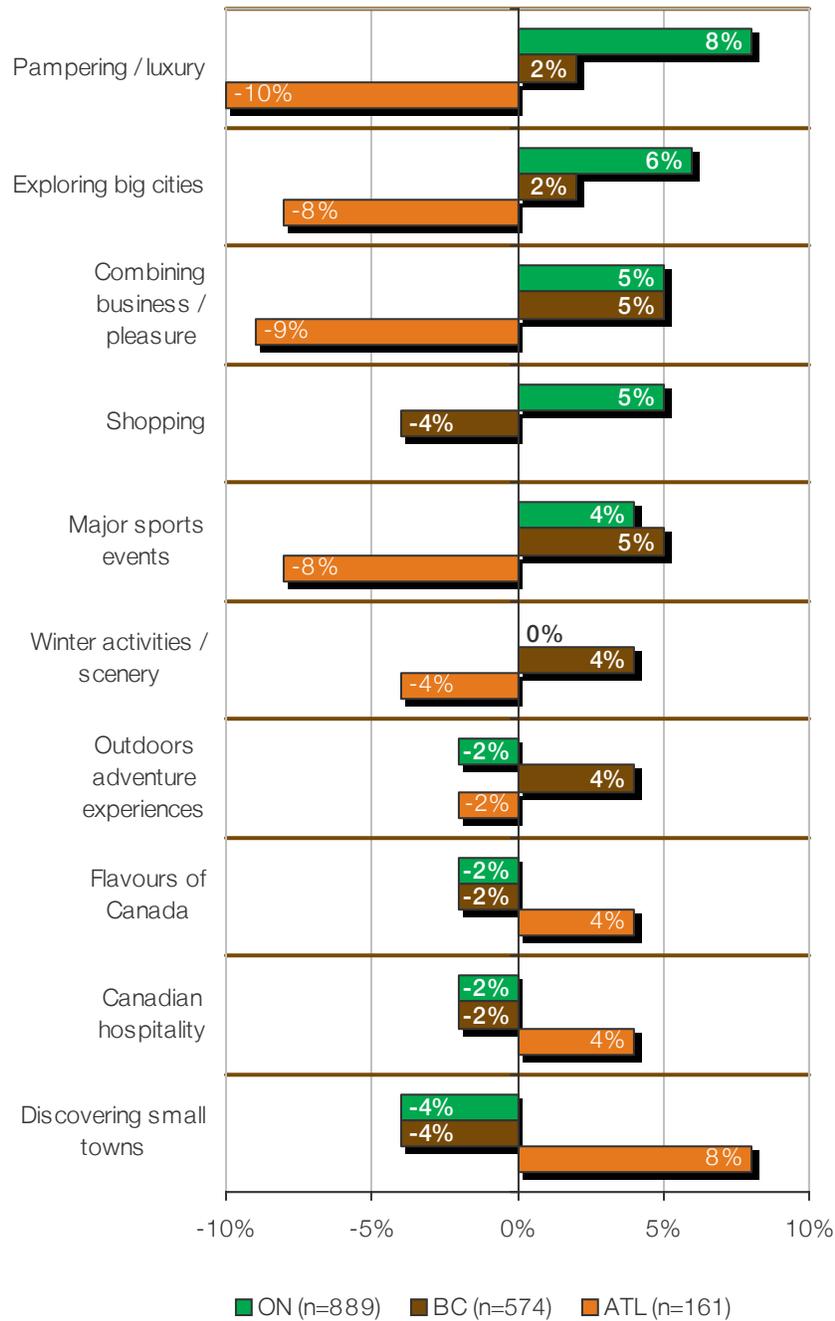
Exhibit 16 shows how travellers that are likely to visit each of the regions are differentiated from each other in their motivations for visiting Canada (only GTW partners are included). Note that motivational scores have been re-calibrated to remove “group and attribute” effects to better emphasize the differences between the regions. In essence, this involves a two-way normalization of scores across both regions and attributes to pull out the differentiating motivations for travellers likely to visit each of the regions.

In the exhibit, high positive values indicate motivations that are of greater relative importance for a region, while high negative values represent motivations that are of lesser relative importance.

Overall, a higher awareness of Canada in the US results in a strongly defined image for each of the regions: Ontario for city experiences, British Columbia for outdoors activities, and the Atlantic region for small town hospitality. More specifically, the exhibit shows that:

- Travellers likely to visit Ontario tend to be motivated by urban activities, including luxury experiences, shopping and city sightseeing. While major sports events also emerge as a draw, British Columbia has the upper hand here;
- With British Columbia set to host the 2010 Winter Olympics, it is perhaps not surprising that potential travellers to this province are more likely to be motivated by an interest in major sporting events. Winter and outdoors activities also surface as a draw, with US travellers obviously aware of the countless world-class ski areas in the province, as well as the opportunities afforded by the Rockies for outdoors adventure;
- Those who wish to visit the Atlantic region are more likely to be seeking small town experiences, Canadian hospitality and a chance to experience the flavours of Canada (e.g., lobster, seafood); and
- The North and Manitoba did not have a sufficiently large sample (of those most likely to visit) to be included in this analysis.

**Exhibit 16 – Regional Motivations**



Base: Travellers most likely to visit Ontario, BC and Atlantic. Sample sizes for other regions were too small to be included.

Note: High positive values represent motivations that are of greater relative importance for a region; High negative values represent motivations that are of lesser relative importance for a region.

# what barriers does canada face in attracting visitors from the US?

## Barriers for Travel to Canada

Exhibit 17 shows why international travellers from the US are unlikely to visit Canada in the near-term. These results are important because, more likely than not, travellers that are likely to visit may have similar concerns that could ultimately lead them to select alternate destinations.

Those unlikely to visit Canada in the near future cite competition from other destinations as the top barrier (86%), with almost 7 in 10 saying it is a major barrier. This is the highest rating across all CTC markets, and underscores the need for Canada to improve brand and value perceptions in order to position Canada more favourably against other international destinations that are seen as offering more.

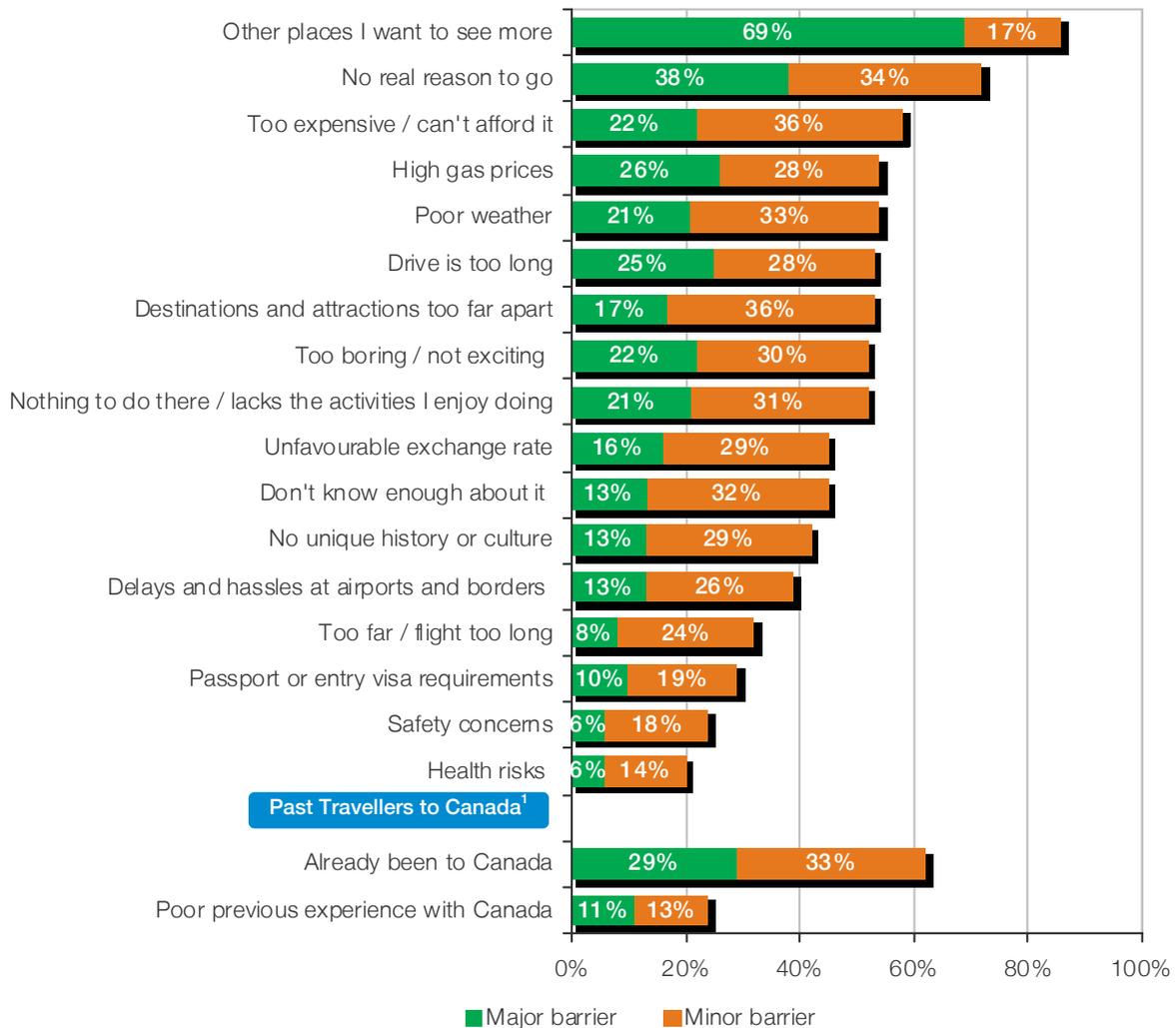
Canada's unexciting and boring image is also having a detrimental effect in the US. At over 70%, "no real reason to go to Canada" is mentioned more often in the US than in most other markets. Moreover, the fact that a fairly large proportion (almost 40%) say this is a major barrier, suggests that this is a deal breaker for many Americans. In addition, over 60% of past travellers who aren't likely to return say it is because they have already been to Canada before, alluding to the fact that there is no real reason to return. In the same vein, over half of those unlikely to visit say that Canada is too boring or that there is nothing to do there. There is clearly an immediate need to stir up excitement and buzz around Canada travel, accelerate the acceptance of the new brand, and enhance perceptions of Canada's products in the US.

Roughly 6 in 10 cite financial reasons as a barrier (i.e., that Canada is too expensive or they can't afford to go). Although the third most commonly mentioned reason, cost is in fact much less of a roadblock for US travellers than for other markets (where the percentages for this barrier are in the range of 70% to 90%).

Related to the cost barrier are mentions of high gas prices (54%) and unfavourable exchange rates (45%). Interestingly, the exchange rate does not emerge as strongly as one might expect given the dramatic shifts seen over the past few years. Perhaps this is because the US dollar has also fallen against other currencies like the Euro, which has levelled the playing field to some extent among international destinations.

Poor weather and unmanageable distances (i.e., too long a drive, destinations and attractions too far apart) are the only other barriers cited by over 50% of travellers.

### Exhibit 17 – Key Barriers for Visiting Canada



Base: International pleasure travellers who are unlikely to visit Canada in the near future (n=788).

Note: <sup>1</sup> Base is international pleasure travellers who have previously visited Canada and are unlikely to revisit in the near future (n=420).

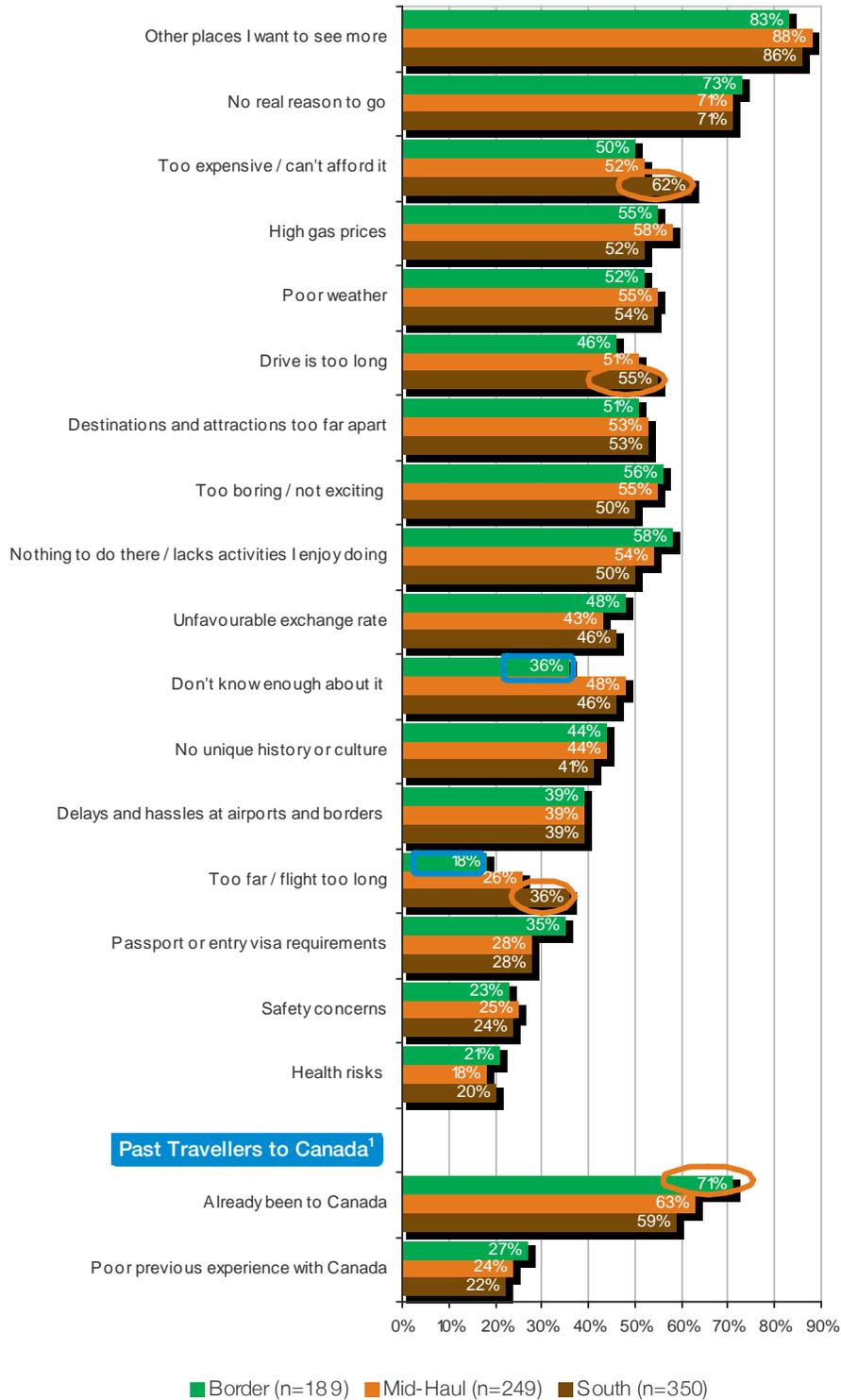
## Key Barriers By Market

As shown in Exhibit 18, travellers in the South are more likely to cite the expense as a barrier (62%), which may reflect the greater likelihood of flying from this market instead of driving. Whether driving or flying, however, travellers in this market are more likely to feel that the distance is a barrier than those from the other two US markets.

In the Border market, lack of awareness is naturally less of a barrier as travellers are more likely to be familiar with Canada or to have visited in the past. However, this is a double-edged sword as past experience is cited as a reason not to re-visit by over 70% of past visitors.

Those in the South are less likely to feel that Canada is boring or that there is nothing to do there (although not significantly so). This again implies a higher excitement level around Canada travel in this region.

### Exhibit 18 – Key Barriers for Visiting Canada by Market



Base: International pleasure travellers who are unlikely to visit Canada in the near future (n=788).  
 Note: <sup>1</sup> Base is international pleasure travellers who have previously visited Canada and are unlikely to revisit in the near future (n=420).

## where do US travellers see or hear information on Canada?

### Sources of Information on Canada

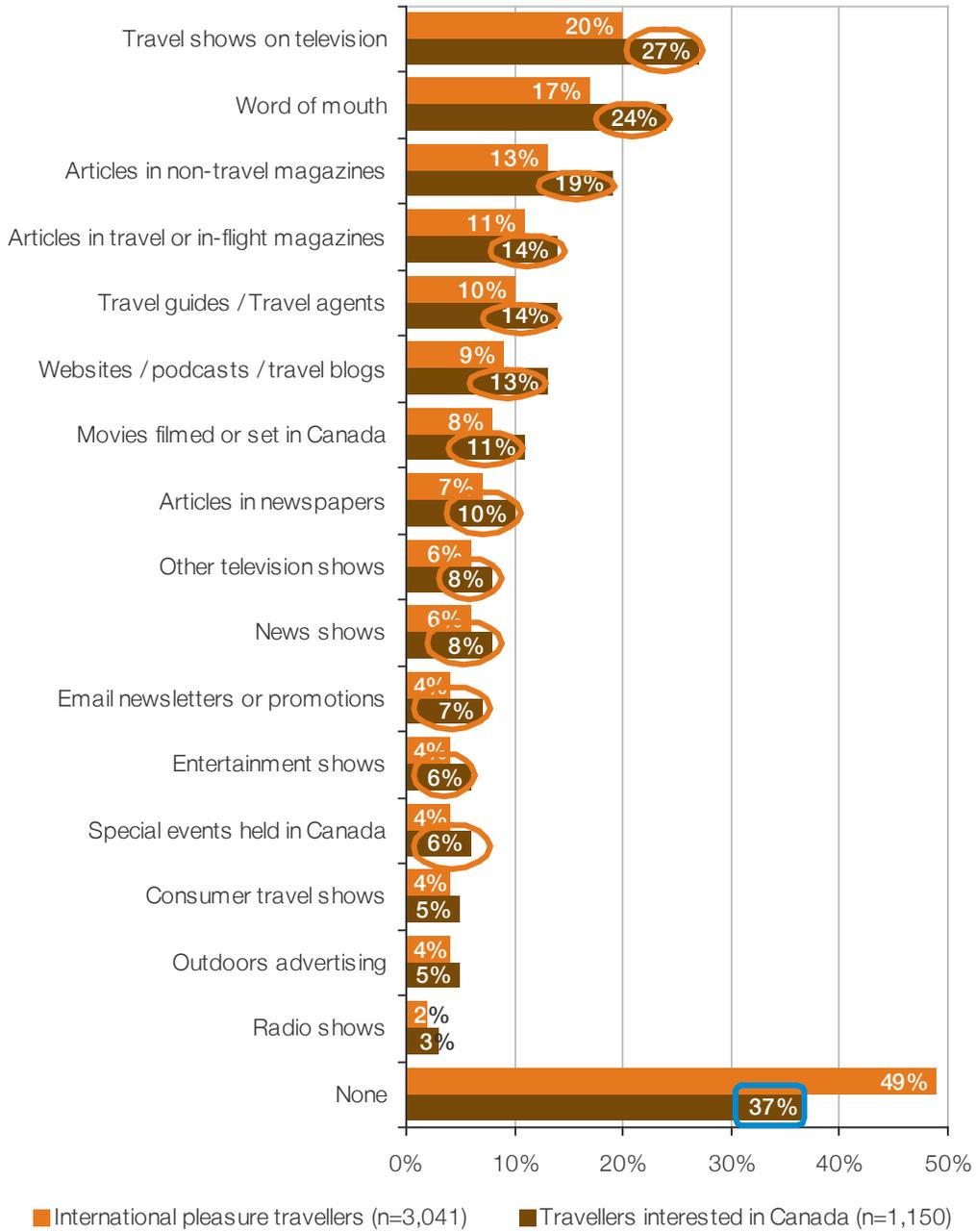
Approximately half of all international pleasure travellers in the US recall seeing or hearing information on travel to Canada in the past three months. This figure is fairly low compared to the other CTC markets, and is consistent with the low advertising awareness seen earlier. This further emphasizes the dual challenge of reaching a sizeable market with limited marketing budgets and rising above the noise in an extremely crowded marketing space.

Exhibit 19 shows that traditional information sources perform the best in terms of reaching travellers in the US over the past three months. Topping the list are television travel shows (20%), articles in both non-travel (13%) and travel (11%) magazines, and travel agents/travel guides (10%). Aside from word of mouth, all other sources are cited by less than 10%.

These channels are also the best bets for the CTC to reach potential travellers to Canada. In fact, travellers interested in Canada are even more likely to have seen information in each of these sources – not surprising given the higher salience of the information to them.

Interestingly, the 9% for online media is among the lowest of all global markets, even when those who haven't seen any information on Canada are removed from the base. This suggests that the online space may also be getting too crowded for generalized marketing initiatives to be noticed.

**Exhibit 19 – Sources of Information on Canada (past 3 months)**



Base: International pleasure travellers.

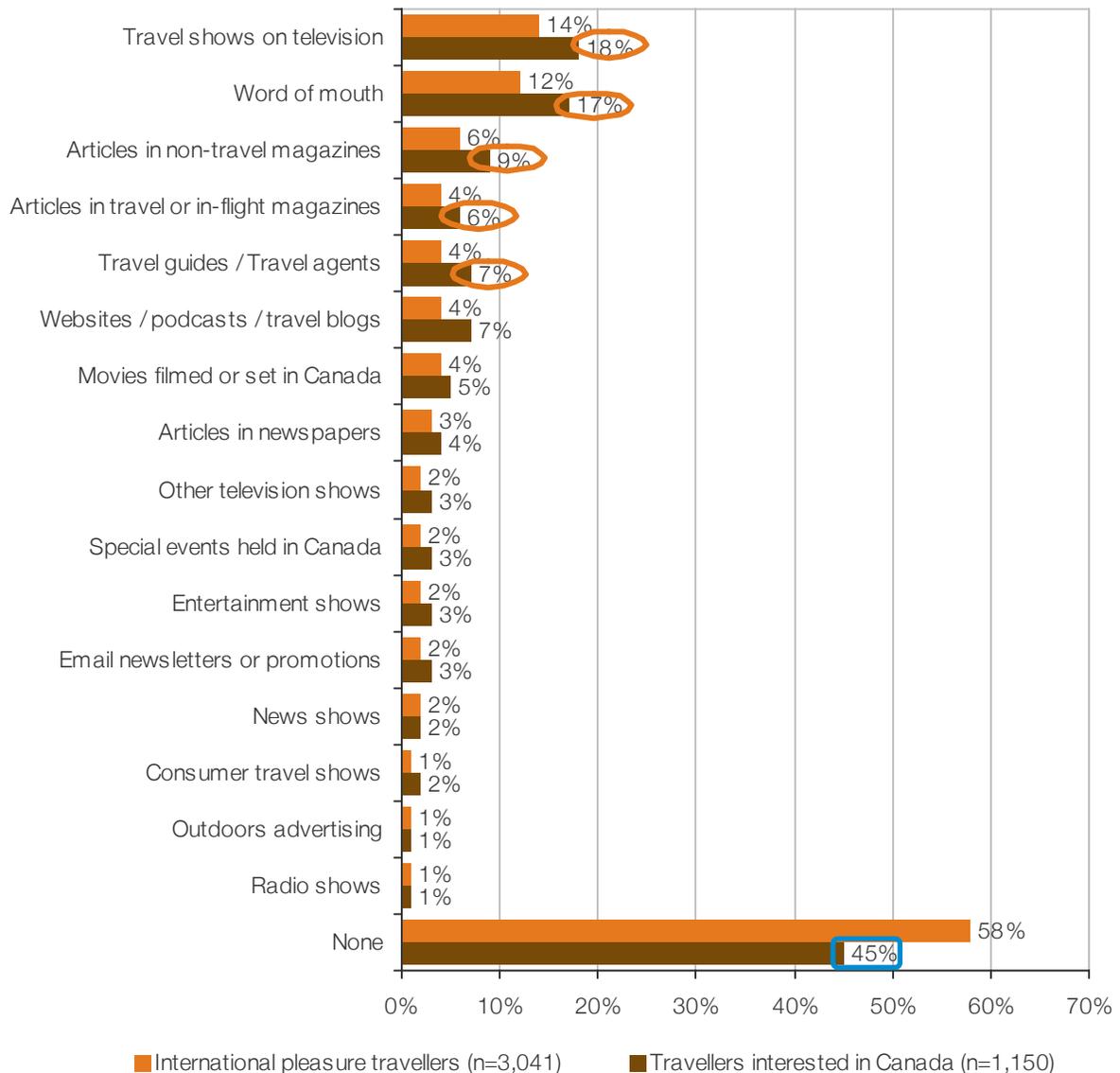
Notes: **Blue squares** indicate a result that is significantly **lower** than another group; **orange circles** indicate a result that is significantly **higher** than another group.

Travellers Interested in Canada: those who are very interested in visiting Canada in the next 2 years.

## Top Information Sources for Increasing Canada's Appeal

Potential travellers to Canada feel that the top three sources best for increasing Canada's appeal are: travel shows on television, word of mouth, and articles in non-travel magazines. The percentages are shown in Exhibit 20.

**Exhibit 20 – Top Information Sources for Increasing Canada's Appeal**



Base: International pleasure travellers.

Notes: **Blue squares** indicate a result that is significantly lower than another group; **orange circles** indicate a result that is significantly higher than another group.

Travellers Interested in Canada: those who are very interested in visiting Canada in the next 2 years.

## which icons and images inspire interest in canada?

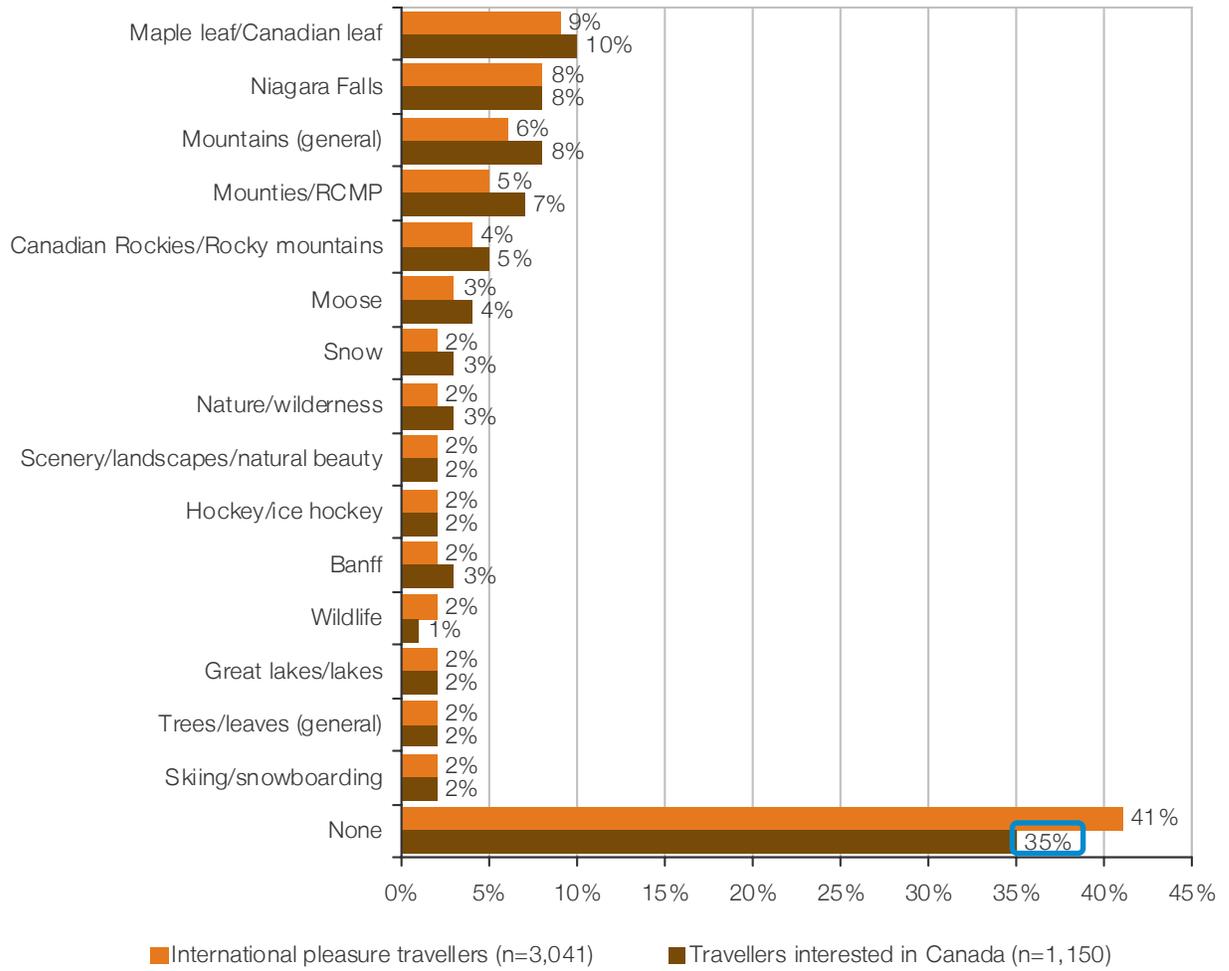
The most striking thing about Exhibit 21 is that over 40% of US travellers say that no images or icons inspire interest in Canada for them. Aside from South Korea, this is the highest of any CTC market studied. Unlike Korea, however, the issue in the US has less to do with the unfamiliarity of Canada, and more to do with Americans' overall impression of Canada as an unexciting and colourless destination. This obviously points to further challenges in marketing Canada as a vacation destination to US travellers.

For those that do find some inspiration in Canada, traditional images work best to stir up interest, with the Maple Leaf and Niagara Falls emerging as the top two icons. Many are also inspired by Canada's mountains, both generally and the Rockies in particular, perhaps because the majesty of Canada's mountain ranges are rarely seen in the US. Mounties/RCMP also make it into the top five.

The remaining icons are almost totally related to nature and outdoor imagery, including winter images (e.g., snow, hockey, skiing), wildlife (e.g., moose), lakes and trees. Aside from Niagara Falls, Banff is the only specific destination that makes it onto the list (2%), possibly because of Lake Louise's iconic appeal and prominence in campaigns for Canada.

Interestingly, the old adage of "Moose, Mountains and Mounties" still applies to the US market, and shows that the traditional image remains firmly engrained in the minds of Americans. Although nature/outdoor is obviously Canada's strong suit, the CTC may benefit by incorporating more urban imagery into its campaigns to enhance its cultural appeal and introduce Americans to a side of Canada that they may not be familiar with. Indeed, the focus groups that Harris/Decima conducted in the US last year revealed that US travellers would definitely find this appealing.

**Exhibit 21 – Icons or Images that Inspire Interest in Canada**



Base: International pleasure travellers.

Notes: Blue squares indicate a result that is significantly lower than another group; orange circles indicate a result that is significantly higher than another group.

Travellers Interested in Canada: those who are very interested in visiting Canada in the next 2 years.

## what are US key drivers for visiting canada?

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine the key drivers of intentions to visit Canada in the next two years. Logistic regression analysis is a statistical modelling technique that assesses the relationship between a single dichotomous dependent variable and several independent or explanatory variables to determine which factors drive the dependent variable.

A model was developed with the dependent variable being whether or not travellers are likely to take a pleasure trip of four or more nights to Canada in the next two years. The independent variables that were modelled against likelihood of visiting included:

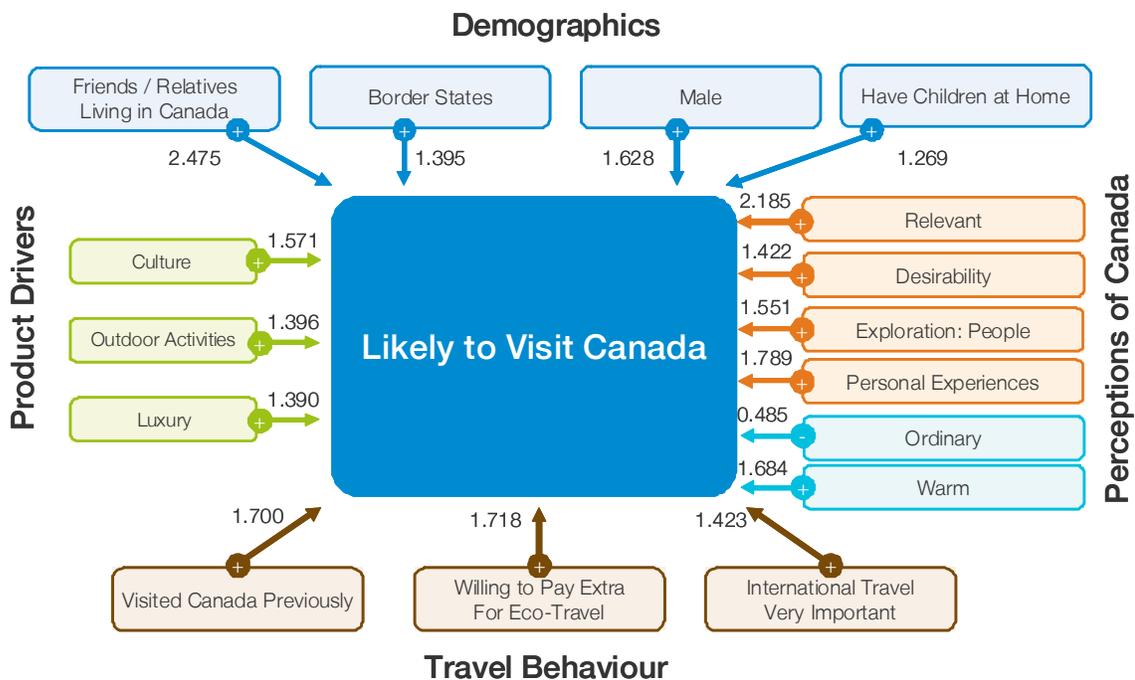
- Demographics – including region, age, gender, education, household income, children in the household and friends/relatives living in Canada;
- Perceptions of Canada – including price, value and brand image ratings, as well as brand personality perceptions;
- Product Interests – including nature, outdoors, culture and luxury/pampering (activity factors); and
- Travel Behaviour – including previous visitation of Canada, importance of international travel, and willingness to pay for environmentally-friendly tourism products.

Exhibit 22 summarizes the results of the key drivers model, with key findings discussed below:

- VFR emerges as the strongest driver of future travel to Canada in this market. All things considered, those who have friends or relatives in Canada are almost two and a half times as likely to say that they will visit Canada in the next two years than those who do not have connections in the country.
- Demographics also influence potential visitation to a large degree. Not surprisingly, travellers in the Border states are more likely to visit, but so are men and those with children at home (suggesting that Canada may be viewed as a good family destination).
- As is the case in virtually every CTC market, outdoors activities are a strong pull factor for travel to Canada. This comes as no surprise as Canada is the hands-down favourite in the US market for these types of activities. However, those interested in culture and luxury products (likely older travellers), are also more likely to want to visit, suggesting that Canada should take immediate steps to strengthen perceptions of these products to ensure realization of these trips. What these results show, essentially, is that having a well-rounded complement of products will help to drive visitation.
- Perceptions of Canada also have a strong influence on the purchase decision. In particular, those who view Canada as having travel products that are directly relevant to them are more than twice as likely to visit, which is not surprising.

- Travellers who agree that Canada inspires them to explore its people, or who view Canada as a warm and friendly place, are more likely to visit, again showing the importance of reinforcing the people dimension of the brand.
- Similarly, Canada should focus on bringing the central promise of the new brand to life in the US, as travellers who feel that Canada enables them to take home extraordinary personal travel experiences are more likely to want to visit.
- On the other hand, Canada’s staid and rather boring image in the US factors in as a negative driver, with those who look upon Canada as “ordinary” being less interested in Canada.
- Looking at travel behaviour, those who have visited Canada previously are more likely to visit in the next two years, although the influence of past travel is significantly weaker in the US than in the overseas markets, where it is often the single most important determinant of future travel. The difference may be due to the generally higher awareness of Canadian travel experiences in the US (hence past experience is less of a differentiating factor).
- Finally, those likely to visit Canada are generally more committed international travellers who are concerned about the environmental impacts of such travel.

**Exhibit 22 – Key Drivers for Likelihood to Visit Canada**



Base: International pleasure travellers.

Notes: Numbers are odds ratios. Odds ratio is the exponentiated value of B. If >1, the odds ratio is the factor by which the odds of being likely to visit Canada increase as the independent variable increases; if <1, it is the factor by which the odds of being likely to visit Canada decrease.

## conclusion and considerations

Despite the many downward pressures on consumer confidence and travel sentiment in the US (e.g., a declining US dollar, deepening economic woes, soaring fuel costs and increasing hassles at airports/borders), a third of the adult population plans to take an international trip in the next two years. Moreover, among international travellers, 44% say they plan to travel more over the next three years than they have in the last three years, indicating that the mood in the marketplace remains optimistic.

There is even greater enthusiasm among potential travellers to Canada, with almost 90% who plan to take an international trip in the next two years, and Canada being their destination of choice. All told, there are almost 67 million travellers in the US who are interested in visiting Canada, making the US by far the largest and most important international market for Canada.

However, there are considerable challenges for Canada in realizing the full potential of the US market. For one, market conditions have worsened considerably since the survey was conducted, with a recession looming on the horizon and consumer confidence hitting a record low. Obviously, this could affect the current market outlook, not only by shrinking the size of the market as travellers substitute domestic trips for international ones, but by making those that do continue to travel internationally more critical about quality and value in their destination choices.

Unfortunately, the GTW results indicate that Canada's brand health is currently quite poor in the US, with old stereotypes still entrenched in the marketplace. Canada may benefit by strengthening brand and value perceptions and increase top-of-mind consideration among US travellers if it wants to hold its own in the face of worsening market conditions.

The fact that the already sluggish US market hit an all-time low in terms of arrivals to Canada this past January suggests that some of the aforementioned issues have already begun to take their toll on US travel to Canada, and hints at further challenges ahead.

Specific marketing implications arising from this study that the CTC and/or its regional partners may wish to consider, depending on its mandate, priorities and budgets are as follows:

### Key Performance Indicators

**Enhance top-of-mind awareness.** When it comes to aided awareness and interest as a travel destination, Canada emerges at or near the top of the competitive set, which is indicative of its general appeal to US travellers. Moreover, both the incidence of past travel to Canada and the likelihood of future travel is among the highest of any CTC market, which is at least partly due to its convenient, next-door location. But US travellers also have one of the lowest scores when it comes to unaided destination awareness and consideration, indicating that Canada lacks a top-of-mind presence in this market. Canada could explore ways to enhance its excitement value and inherent desirability so that it immediately springs to mind as a vacation spot, rather than as a fall-back destination due to convenience and cost.

**Consider increasing the level of investment in the US.** The US is a tough market to get noticed in, with a myriad of travel destinations competing in a crowded advertising space. At 6%, unaided recall of Canada’s advertising in the US is the lowest of any CTC market, with aided recall also on the low side. If Canada wants to turn this market around, it may be beneficial to further enhance its presence and acceleration of the establishment of its new brand. To do this, Canada will need a higher and more sustained level of investment to cut through the noise, reach a greater number of travellers, and more effectively deliver its messages.

**Build awareness in the South.** While the South represents a larger and relatively untapped market, it poses greater challenges in terms of weaker awareness and interest, as well as more practical roadblocks in the way of distance and cost. In many ways, the South is akin to a long-haul market and should be treated as such in terms of marketing considerations. Accordingly, making headway in this market is likely contingent on a strong injection of funds to boost overall awareness of Canada and improve specific knowledge of tourist attractions and travel experiences. Without the proper financial backing, the CTC’s efforts in this US region will likely become mired in a sea of competitor initiatives.

**Focus regional efforts where interest is strongest.** Beyond the Border market, current interest patterns suggest that Canada’s regions should consider targeting different areas of the US. For example, British Columbia and the North could focus on the Southern region of the US where interest is relatively higher. Similarly, Atlantic Canada could focus on the Mid-haul market, while Ontario could concentrate its efforts in both regions.

## Brand Performance

**Accelerate promotion of Brand Canada.** The GTW study suggests that Canada’s brand health in the US is one of the weakest of all markets, driven by anemic perceptions of both its value and its brand. Although some elements of the new brand have begun to filter through, the US is the market where the old image of “moose, mountains and Mounties” is most strongly entrenched, and Americans continue to think of Canada as reserved, unexciting and a little boring. The tough market conditions call for immediate action to eradicate this lifeless image and accelerate the promotion of the new brand. In particular, the CTC may wish to examine ways to promote the central brand promise of “extraordinary personal travel experiences,” as it currently lacks credibility in the US. The key drivers model suggests that bringing this brand promise to life and ridding Canada of the “dull and ordinary” stigma are critical to drive future US travel to Canada.

**Strengthen the Culture and People brand pillars.** Brand Canada is supported by three brand pillars – Geography, Culture and People. While Canada is relatively well-perceived on its physical attributes, it could strengthen perceptions of its culture and people for a more well-rounded brand image. This finding is emerging in virtually every market, from the UK to Korea, and shows a uniformity in the way Canada is perceived around the world.

**Improve value perceptions of Canada.** Among the components that make up the brand health index, perceptions of destination value have the greatest impact on the decision to visit Canada (60%), yet the US has a VPI of 56 out of 100 – by far, the lowest of any market. The CTC could try to convey a better sense of the value of the Canadian travel experience and to drive home the message of quality. This is extremely critical to keep Americans travelling to Canada at a time when travellers are facing higher travel costs as a result of the devalued dollar.

**Turn the economic situation into an advantage for Canada.** While impressions of value and brand may be poor, the good news is that cost perceptions are relatively strong. Travel to Canada will likely always be seen as being more reasonable than an overseas trip, giving Canada a strong advantage over competitors like Australia and Europe. Moreover, further declines in the dollar or a full-blown recession could cause US consumers to become more price-conscious and substitute travel to Canada for overseas trips. However, for this to happen, the perceived value of Canada travel has to be strong, otherwise Americans facing higher travel costs could decide to simply stay at home.

## Product Opportunities

**Fortify the positioning of Canada's nature products.** While Canada has a clear leadership position in the outdoors arena, its positioning on nature lags behind that of Australia and could be substantially strengthened. While Canada's cost and proximity give it a strong advantage over Australia that may partly compensate for lesser impressions, it has a strong disadvantage too, with Australia seen as infinitely more exciting and its nature products more unique. To combat this, Canada may want to market its nature products in the Southern part of the US where they would be seen as more exceptional. Canada could also encourage Americans to go beyond the border area to explore the hinterlands of regions like Ontario and British Columbia, which offer nature in a more wilderness state.

**Enhance awareness of cultural products.** Canada fares poorly with respect to its cultural offerings, particularly in relation to European competitors who are seen as being rich in culture and history. This perceived gap strongly undermines Canada's ability to appeal to US travellers, for whom culture is a primary and universal interest. Historical and cultural attractions and local lifestyles are popular with this crowd, so Canada would likely benefit from highlighting its museums and galleries, cultural festivals and exhibitions and unique local communities. It could also showcase its historical sites, particularly those that have played a significant role in US history.

## Strategic Marketing

**Broaden out Canada's appeal.** While recent visitors to Canada tend to be an older, more affluent group, US travellers as a whole span all demographics. Moreover, those interested in visiting Canada mirror the overall market rather than actual visitors, suggesting that Canada has a much wider appeal. Canada's regions may wish to consider broadening their marketing initiatives in the Border market, to find a new audience where high incomes are less important for cross-border travel. To some extent this will happen naturally as the new brand takes root and Canada's image evolves into one that is more exciting. However, given that almost a third of the potential market is 18 to 34, and a good proportion earn less than \$50,000 per year, media buys may need to be adjusted as well.

**Use traditional information sources to reach the potential market supported by online campaigns.** Traditional information sources still perform best in terms of reaching potential travellers and enhancing Canada's appeal. Television travel shows, travel and non-travel related magazines and travel guides/agents remain the top information sources in this market, and are a good choice for general awareness and brand building. Despite having the highest Internet penetration among the CTC's eight markets studied, awareness of websites, podcasts and blogs in the US is one of the lowest, indicating that online media may be more appropriate for highly targeted campaigns and calls to action.

**Balance the use of traditional icons with new brand imagery.** Over 4 in 10 US travellers say that there are no images or icons that inspire interest in Canada for them, which further underscores the perceptual issues and challenges in this market. While the study results suggest that the CTC should use traditional symbols (e.g., Niagara Falls, maple leaves) and nature imagery (e.g., mountains, moose, lakes and trees) as the centerpiece for US marketing campaigns, Canada should also incorporate some urban/cultural imagery to convey a more multi-dimensional experience, enhance its cultural appeal, and generally further the new brand.

**Address weaknesses for each EQ segment.** Free Spirits are a key market for Canada, as they have high interest, strong intentions and great impressions of Canada on all fronts. However, as favourable as they are towards Canada, they find other vacation spots equally appealing, resulting in an unimpressive sixth place ranking for Canada on their consideration list. As such, the CTC may benefit from strengthening Canada's competitive positioning and working harder to make Canada top-of-mind. Authentic Experiencers are also a good target, as their interests are a good fit with Canada's brand and product strengths, and they have a strong history of past visitation to the country. However, given the strong penetration of this segment, it may be necessary to highlight new natural wonders and cultural experiences to encourage a return journey. Canada is currently not as well positioned among Cultural Explorers, given its perceived weaknesses on culture, however, there is good potential here due to this segment's strong interest in outdoors experiences and winter activities. Enhancing cultural perceptions may go a long way to putting Canada on their consideration list and improve its competitive positioning.

**Leverage the 2010 Olympic Games.** Despite being next door, and only two years away, relatively few Americans are aware that Canada will be hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics. However, with 4 in 10 US travellers saying their desire to visit Canada is enhanced by the Games, there are good opportunities to target the US for Olympics-related travel, both during and after the event. However, the CTC may wish to start building awareness, and get Americans thinking about a possible trip to the Games. In addition to major urban centres like Los Angeles and New York, the western border states are an obvious target area. The Games also offer Canada a dream opportunity to significantly accelerate the development of the new Brand Canada and enhance its positioning and image impressions in the US.