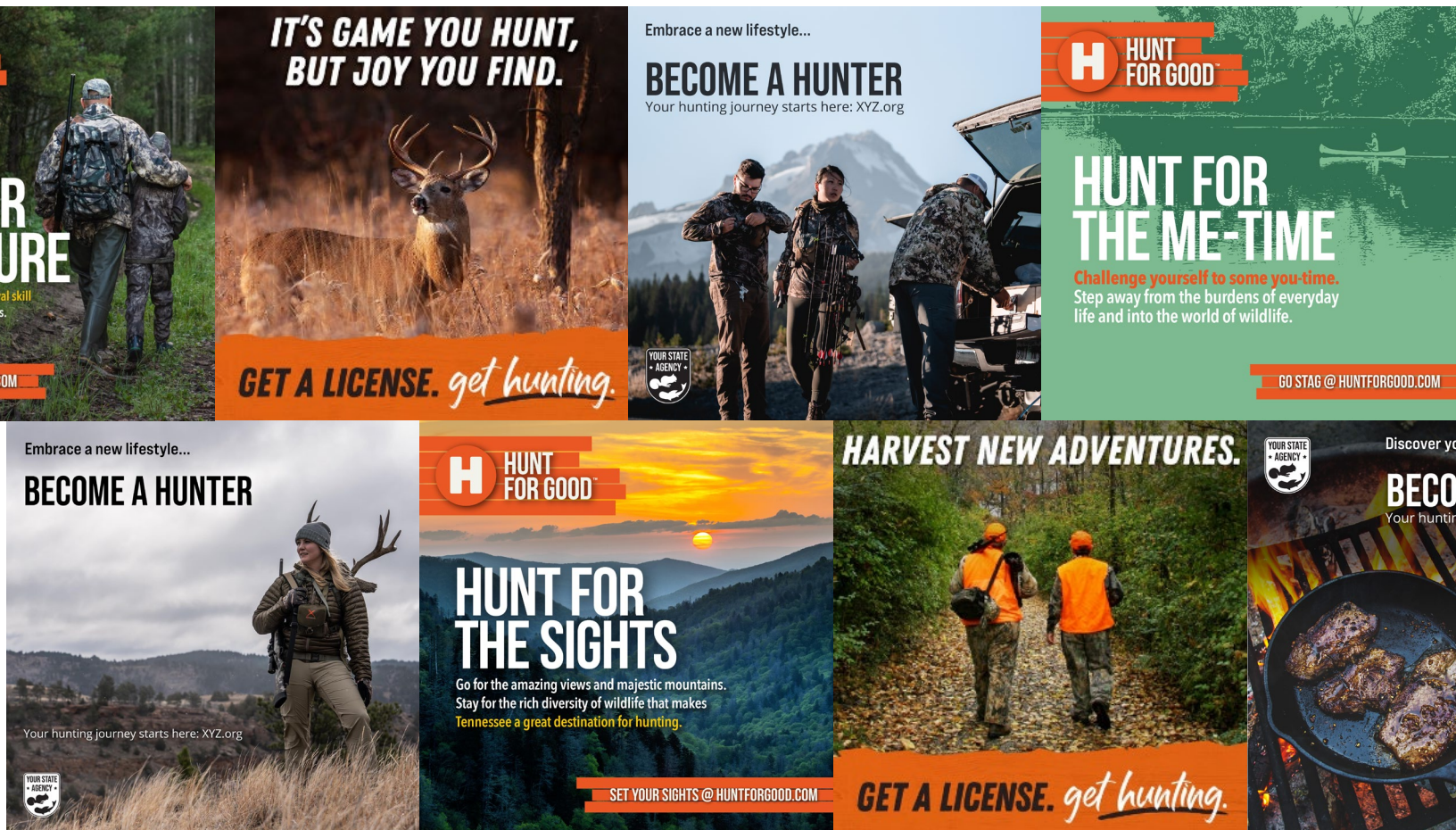




Practitioner's Guide to R3 Hunting Messaging



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Executive Summary

Recruiting new hunters is a vital component of sustaining conservation funding and participation in America's outdoor heritage. As interest in hunting evolves and traditional recruitment pathways decline, effective marketing has become an essential tool for reaching today's prospective adult hunters—especially those without familial ties to the tradition.

Research Project - This report synthesizes insights from a focused analysis of three social media ad campaigns—*Hunt for Good*, *Tennessee Go Hunting*, and *Become a Hunter*—DJ Case & Associates conducted interviews (n=42) and an online survey (n=960) with outdoors-oriented new adult hunters or non-hunters interested in trying hunting. The study evaluated how various images and messages influenced willingness to click on an ad and take a next step.

A key finding was the importance of imagery to effectiveness of social media ads. Image composition and quality had a greater impact on ad engagement than slogans or copy. Successful ads featured high-quality, emotionally resonant visuals—often close-up shots, smiling subjects, diverse representation, visible hunting gear, and a sense of action or accomplishment.

Implementation Guide - Based on results from this project and six other recent projects that had similar goals and/or methods, this Implementation Guide offers practical, evidence-based recommendations for R3 practitioners on how to optimize audience targeting, message design, and media placement. By using relatable imagery, tailoring content to specific motivations, and leveraging paid digital media, agencies can more effectively inspire non-hunters to take the first step toward participation.

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Implementation Recommendations

This section of the report presents practical implementation recommendations for R3 practitioners. Readers interested in methodology and analysis of the interviews and survey will find them in the *Research Process* section below.

These recommendations are a combination of results from this project and six others to create a guide outlining the best practices for hunting R3 marketing campaigns:

- [2022 MAFWA Small Game Hunting Focus Group Report](#), prepared by DJ Case & Associates
- [2021 MAFWA Small Game Hunting Diversity & Inclusion Marketing Toolkit](#), prepared by GUD - New Hunter Message Testing
- [2024 Engaging New Adult Hunters with YouTube Advertising – Phase 1](#), prepared by DJ Case & Associates
- [2024 Engaging New Hunters with YouTube Advertising – Phase 2](#), prepared by DJ Case & Associates
- [Hunting Mentor Communication Strategy 8 Pilot State Implementation](#), prepared by DJ Case & Associates

2025, Relevancy Communication Toolkit, prepared by DJ Case & Associates (incomplete at the time of this report)

All marketing efforts come down to three elements:

- Audience
- Message
- Media

We will cover each in turn in the recommendations.

Audience

Motivations – In marketing, a **persona** is a semi-fictional profile that represents a key segment of your target audience. It's built using real data—like demographics, behaviors, goals, and pain points—combined with educated assumptions. The personas below were developed through a multi-phase research effort focused on new and prospective hunters. Here's a brief description of each of the four NEW ADULT HUNTER personas:

- **Recreationalists** are primarily motivated by the enjoyment of outdoor life. They value the adventure, challenge, and social excitement of hunting.
- **Family Firsts** see hunting as a way to spend time with family. They hunt to create lasting memories with loved ones and view hunting as a shared, bonding experience.
- **Self-Sufficient**s are motivated by the desire for food independence. They enjoy the notion of securing their own food and reducing reliance on commercial food supplies.
- **Locavores** are driven by environmental and sustainability concerns. They hunt to obtain locally sourced, unprocessed food and to reduce their carbon footprint.

The motivations of the target audiences are very important when creating marketing messages of any kind.

The **Demographics** of new adult hunter personas are similar at the time they start hunting. It is important to recognize that these are not the demographics of all hunters or even all new hunters but rather of the *typical* adult who decides they are interested in becoming a hunter.

- **Age:** 30–49 years old
- **Gender:** While most new adult hunters are male, Family-First is a nearly gender-balanced segment—so inclusive messaging works best
- **Education:** *College or technical school graduates* (especially among Locavores and Recreationalists)
- **Household Income:** *Under \$100,000* for Family-Firsts and Self-Sufficient, but Recreationalists and Locavores skew higher, with many earning \$100K+
- **Marital/Family Status:** *Married or in a long-term relationship*, many with children
- **Location:** *Suburban or rural areas* are predominant across all segments, with Self-Sufficient more urban than others

Demographics are useful in two primary ways. They allow you to focus on media channels favored by your audience and tell you what sort of people should be featured in messages.

Message

A marketing message should *grab attention, spark interest, and inspire action*. The only tools your messages have to do this with are images and words.

Images

The image in an ad should instantly capture attention and visually reinforce the ad's core message. It should evoke an emotional response—whether it's excitement, trust, nostalgia, or curiosity. Ideally, it tells a story at a glance.

In general, here are features of hunting promotional images that are most likely to attract and keep the attention of adults considering hunting:

- High quality, attractive, technically correct photos
- Depicting a successful harvest
- Featuring happy, smiling people facing or quartering toward camera
- Contain at least two models of different genders and ethnicities
- Capture an activity in action with at least some equipment
- Close-up shots where the subject is dominant
- Light with earthy tones
- Women prefer images that depict women
- Non-white respondents favor images featuring non-white models
- Younger adults prefer images of bowhunting more than older adults do

Words

Words in an ad are the *engine* that drives the message home. They do more than inform—they persuade, evoke emotion, and spark action. Here's how they work:

- **Headline:** Grabs attention fast. It might promise a benefit or stir curiosity.
- **Body copy:** Builds interest and desire. This is where you share the benefits of hunting or tell a quick story.

Great ad copy uses emotionally charged, benefit-focused language. When paired with the right image, they create a one-two punch that's hard to ignore.

In general, the hunting promotional copy most likely to attract and keep the attention of adults considering hunting were:

- Short.
- Easy to understand.

Call-to-Action

Your call-to-action should be short, active, and emotionally aligned with the outdoor lifestyle—inviting the viewer to take immediate action while reinforcing the spirit of readiness and adventure.

Previous projects offered individuals who had clicked on an ad about hunting the option to go to one of five places from the landing page:

- Watch a video
- Licensing
- Certification
- Read an article
- Take a class

The two most popular were watching a video and purchasing a license. Use watching a video as your call-to-action if you believe your viewers are just beginning to explore the idea of hunting.

Recommendations for Specific Personas/Motivations

If you are developing messages for a particular audience, then you will want to match them with the most applicable persona(s) and use messages targeted to the persona's specific motivations. Here are copy and image tips and sample ads for each of the four new adult hunter personas.

- Recreationalists
- Family Firsts
- Self-Sufficients
- Locavores

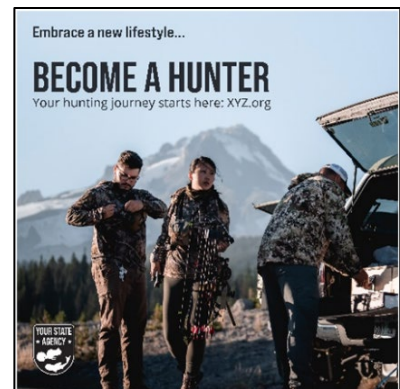
Recreationalists enjoy the experience of hunting, being outdoors, learning new skills, and the challenge of the hunt. You should feature images that capture hunting action and equipment. Images showcasing the hunter in a rough environment would also appeal to this persona.

Text Tips

- Use phrases like
 - “Become a hunter.”
 - “Embrace a new lifestyle.”

Image Tips

- Include gear.
- Use shots featuring hunters in the field.
- Depict a sense of lifestyle or adventure.
- Campaigns should feature a mix of firearm and archery types and a variety of huntable species.



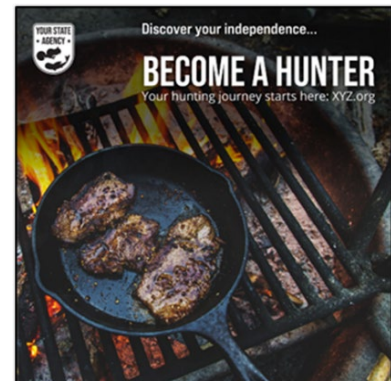
Self-Sufficients hunt to become more independent for themselves and their families and avoid depending on Big Retail or Big Agriculture for their food.

Text Tips

- Use phrases like:
 - “Discover your independence.”
 - “Source your own meat.”

Image Tips

- Include successful harvests.
- Depict meals made/being made from wild game.



Family-Firsts hunt to spend time with their family and prioritize time together over a successful harvest. Include multiple individuals in the images and focus on the interaction between them.

Text Tips

- Use phrases like:
 - “Family memories.”
 - “Make lasting memories with your family.”

Image Tips

- Depict various “familial units” including:
 - multi-generational families
 - parent/child
 - older siblings
 - couples



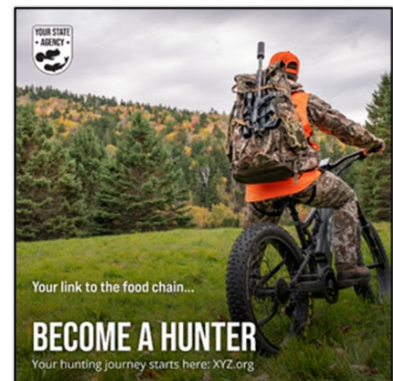
Locavores hunt to reduce their carbon footprint and try to eat food sourced within 100 miles of home.

Text Tips

- Use phrases like:
 - “Be part of the food chain.”
 - “Eat local.”

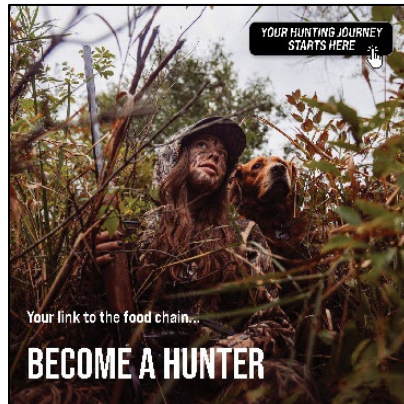
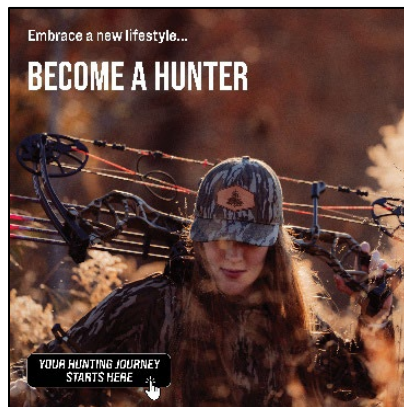
Image Tips

- Illustrate a sense of being “embedded in” or “surrounded by” nature.
- Use images depicting “green” activities or equipment.



Mixed Motivations

In general, you should target your audience as specifically as possible. However, if you aren't recruiting an audience with a specific motivation, then use a series of messages that highlight each of the personas. Most adults are a blend of the four personas, and this approach is likely to appeal to audiences on multiple fronts. By including archery and firearms in the series as well as a variety of potential family relationships, you can speak to a wide variety of interests and motivations.





Media

Media is critically important to effective marketing. Even strategic and well-curated messages will prove ineffective if they don't reach your intended audience.

Recruiting Media

The secret to understanding recruiting media is in the word RECRUITING. Since you are trying to recruit *new* people into the hunting community, you can't rely on media used by people who are already in the hunting community. Avoid media choices like your agency's website/social media and instead use PURCHASED media that will get your message in front of new people.

When buying media to recruit new adults into hunting, the following are your most effective media choices:

- Paid Search
- Paid Social Media
- Display Retargeting

Paid search allows you to bid on keywords and display your ads in search engine results. These ads appear alongside or above organic results and are typically pay-per-click (PPC), meaning you pay only when someone clicks on the ad. You don't pay at all if the person that sees your ad is not interested.

- Paid search is a great way to reach people that are interested in a specific subject, like hunting.
- Although paid search has a medium cost-per-click compared to other platforms, leads generated through paid search will be your highest quality leads because they are from people who are actively searching for the type of content you are offering through your ad.

Key words/search terms for deer hunting include:

- Deer
- Whitetail
- Hunting
- Learn hunting
- Deer hunting
- Learn to hunt
- Whitetail hunting
- Deer season
- Firearm deer season
- Muzzleloader deer season
- Rifle deer season

Social media marketing is the use of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn, and others to advertise to a given audience. At this time, Facebook and Instagram (both owned by Meta) are the most likely platforms you will be using due to their market dominance.

- Social platforms can put your message in front of the right kind of people because they store so much data about their users.
- The Meta ads platform is “Self-Optimizing,” so even without your input, the platform will find the people who are most likely to click on your ad.
- This media platform has a low cost-per-click and provides quality leads.
- If you can only run one ad platform, the Meta Suite is likely your best bet.

Display retargeting enables you to show ads to users who’ve previously visited your website or interacted with your content. By using cookies or tracking pixels, it helps re-engage those potential customers across other websites, reminding them of your brand and nudging them to return and take action—like completing a purchase, signing up, or exploring more.

- Retargeting should not be your first media strategy, but it is an excellent way to get a second crack at individuals who interacted with your add but did not complete the associated call-to-action.
- Display retargeting has a higher cost-per-click than paid search and the Meta Suite, but the leads are high-quality “second chance leads” that may result in more conversions.

Retention/knowledge gap program media

The strategy for retention media is the exact opposite of recruiting media. Because you want to RETAIN hunters you already have, agency-owned media platforms are most often your best option. Since this audience already exists in your state’s hunter license database, you know what their past behaviors were and can address present and future behaviors accordingly with targeted media placement in agency-owned:

- Emails
- Websites
- Regulations books
- Social media accounts

Knowledge gaps are barriers that hunters encounter on their journey to becoming a confident hunter. You can increase your retention by using agency-owned platforms and licensing lists.

Knowledge Gap Recommendations

Many potential hunters never get started or stop quickly because they don't feel comfortable or know how to get started. The key for these individuals is to offer programs to fill their knowledge gap(s). The top five knowledge gaps among new adult hunters are:

- Firearm safety/proficiency
- Game processing
- General hunting skills
- Where to hunt
- Lack of familiarity with regulations/licensing

We'll walk through each knowledge gap below and share message tips.

Firearm safety/proficiency

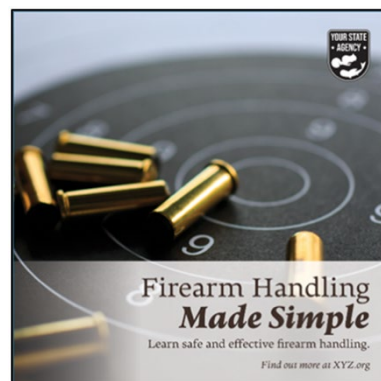
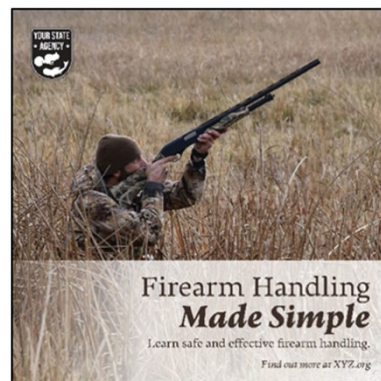
Some new adult hunters feel unprepared to safely handle firearms. They are afraid they might wound the prey, hurt themselves, or hurt someone else. This is a reasonably common fear and can keep an individual from ever truly considering hunting.

Text Tips

- Use phrases like:
 - “made simple”
 - “made easy”
- But also speak specifically to “safety” and “effectiveness.”

Image Tips

- Show firearms in action.
- The firearm should never be pointed at another person or the camera.
- A rifle or shotgun with a traditional wooden stock is seen as less threatening than a pistol or a modern sporting rifle.
- If you are concerned about social media restricting ads containing firearms, switch to shell casings, bullets, targets, or other common equipment that alludes to shooting without showing an actual firearm.



Game Processing

Game processing is another component of hunting that causes fear or trepidation among potential new hunters. This fear is often due to a strong desire to handle the meat respectfully and minimize waste. New hunters want to know how to field dress, butcher, and store their harvest.

Text Tips

- Appeal to folks with this knowledge gap using key phrases like:
- “made simple”
- “get the most out of your wild game”

Image Tips

- Images used to promote processing a single type of animal (rabbit, duck, deer) should include that animal.
- Images used to promote the general concept of processing should include a variety of game species.



General hunting

The “general hunting” knowledge gap is related to new adult hunters feeling unsure about general hunting tactics like where to set up, how to find wild game, where to shoot, species behavior, etc. This is another gap that can prevent a prospective hunter from getting started or cause a new hunter to quit after unsuccessful trips into the field.

Text Tips

- Use phrases like:
 - “made simple”
 - “step-by-step guide”

Image Tips

- Images used to promote hunting a single type of animal (rabbit, duck, deer) should include that animal.
- Images used to promote the general concept of hunting should include a variety of game species. Try to include at least one small game and big game species in the variety of species you portray.



Finding Places to Hunt

The “finding places to hunt” knowledge gap is related to new adult hunters not knowing how and where to find land where they can legally hunt.

Text Tips

- Use phrases like
 - “made simple”
 - “made easy”
- Be sure to include a phrase like “public land hunting”
- Don’t use slang, jargon, or acronyms like WMA or FWA. Always spell out the entire phrase, and add a description if necessary



Image Tips

- Don’t just use hunting images
- Try to feature signage, maps, program logos and other ways to communicate that the area is public land
- Ensure any signs or program names are from your state, not stock photos



Understanding Hunting Regulations

License requirements, seasons, and regulations are a big concern of new hunters who don't have friends and family to introduce them to the concepts.

Text Tips

Use phrases like:

- “made simple”
- “your guide to the hunting rulebook”

Image Tips

- The images that are used should help convey that there's no reason to fear the law
- Include smiling and/or welcoming conservation officers



Research Process

Content Collection

We started the project by requesting marketing campaigns from state agencies and conservation non-profits specific to new hunter recruitment, and by scouring the R3 Clearinghouse maintained by the Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports. We asked several state agencies and conservation non-profits to submit examples of marketing efforts to recommend for testing. The response was more than we anticipated. We received 458 submissions including 300 social media posts, 3 email campaigns, 116 posters or flyers, 27 videos or voice clips, and 12 photos. Many of these were pulled from existing catalogs.

The volume of response exceeded the project's capacity to consider all the submissions. Consequently, we narrowed our focus to assess social media campaigns that were similar in design and composition for testing messages and results. In our analysis and reviews, three campaigns seemed to have enough overlap to allow for direct comparisons:

- Tennessee's Get Hunting / Get Outdoors
- WMI/DJ Case's *Become a Hunter* Campaign
- NWTf/The Truth's *Hunt for Good* campaign

Tennessee's Get Hunting / Get Outdoors



For many years, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency has run advertisements around the theme "Go Outdoors". The goal was to target people who were lapsed license holders utilizing lookalikes and various other inclusion and exclusion targeting methods on Meta. The ads were developed by Brandt Information Services and distributed across Tinder, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, Reddit, Google, and other media platforms. Messages included license sales, education and special event advertising, fishing themes, combo messaging, and hunting.

WMI/DJ Case's Become a Hunter Campaign Toolkit



This collection of readymade ad templates was designed to target new hunter “personas” or motivations that attract new people to try hunting based on previous research. These motivations are useful in developing marketing messages to engage different audience segments in the project. The campaign also provides ads to target the five most common knowledge gaps shared by new hunters. To learn more about the new hunter personas, view the final report and access the toolkit [here](#).

NWTF/The Truth's Hunt for Good campaign



The National Wild Turkey Federation partnered with The Truth/Fisher Design and Responsive Management to develop of a single, cohesive marketing campaign designed to increase cultural support for hunting with non-hunters across the United States. Its goal is to help these non-hunters/shooters see and understand the unique and memorable attributes of hunting. This foundation builds awareness and solidifies cultural support for hunting—a critical first step in creating state-specific engagement and participation. More on the campaign can be found [here](#).

Objective for Comparisons

Our intent in this project was to discover the aspects of messaging—words and pictures—that drew positive response from our study respondents. Not all ads from these campaigns were utilized in testing. We selected ads across all three campaigns that had similar message themes: food for joy, paired hunters, hobby or adventure, sightseeing or natural beauty, family or generational representation, and successful harvests.

We evaluated the messages in three ways:

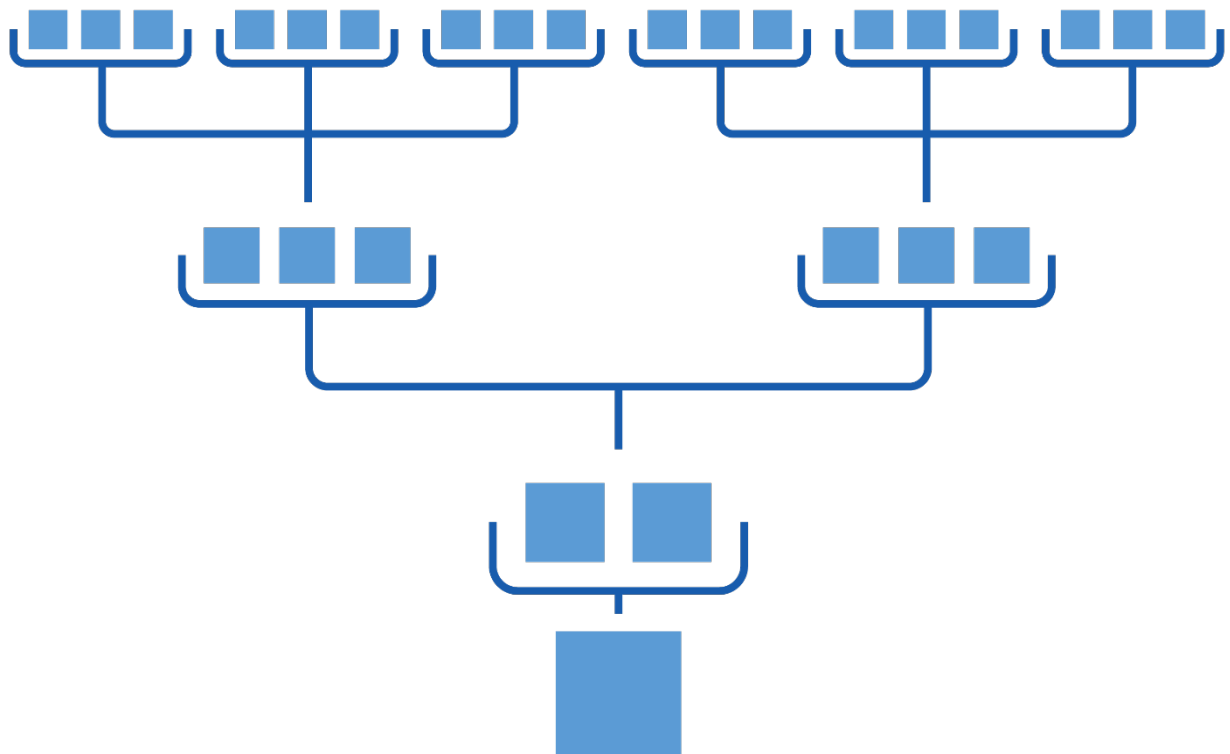
- virtual one-on-one interviews with non-hunters interested in hunting
- online panel survey
- expert opinion provided by an experienced advertising designer

One-on-One Interviews

Methodology (One-on-One interviews)

We conducted 42 interviews. Participants received a \$150 gift card to compensate them for their time. The participants spanned race, age, and gender categories ([Appendix X](#)). We recruited interviewees from the last three years of NDA Field to Fork graduates and supplemented that with a third-party panel provider to book more interviews and to include individuals who had not yet taken the step to try hunting. Panel participants were pre-screened to have outdoor recreation interests but never to have hunted. A secondary question tested their interest and acceptance level of hunting by asking if they would consider hunting in the future. Only individuals who had never hunted but were interested in participating were invited to the Zoom interviews.

During online interviews, participants were shown sets of three ads (one from each campaign) and asked to provide feedback. All three ads were based on a similar theme. The participant was asked which one they would be more likely to click on to learn about hunting and why. Their comments are summarized below. This was repeated until 6 sets of 3 ads (18 total ads) were reviewed. From there, the 6 “winning” ads from their first round were randomly grouped in threes and the process was repeated. Ultimately, the two ads that had survived both rounds of review were tested against each other to determine which ad was most appealing, and why.



Results (One on one interviews)

We calculated scores for each ad by assigning points as follows: 1 point for advancing from the first round, 3 points for surviving the second round, and 6 points for being selected as the final round winner (Table 1). The total score of each ad was used to identify the highest performers. Table 1 shows the ads from highest to lowest scores; however, a great deal of data was also captured from the reasoning people gave for selecting certain ads. Both data points proved useful.

Table 1. Total points accrued by advertisements in interview “tournament”.

Ad	Points
Hunt for Good - Sights	73
Become a Hunter - Female/deer antlers	57
Hunt for Good - Harvest	55
Become a Hunter - Group	49
Hunt for Good - Bond	35
Hunt for Good - Cookout	34
Become a Hunter - Family	32
Hunt for Good - Me Time	31
Hunt for Good - Future	31
Become a Hunter - 2 Females	30
Get Hunting - Buck	28
Become a Hunter - Cast Iron	23
Here's Your Shot	20
Become a Hunter - Turkey	17
Get Hunting - Silhouette	13
Get Hunting - Father/Child	10
Get Hunting - Hobby	5
Get Hunting - 2 Men	3

Table 2. Summary of interview observations made by participants. Advertisements are shown in order of highest to lowest scoring (n=42).



What they liked

- Looks like a magazine cover
- Beautiful scene
- High contrast
- Appealing information
- Hunting is solitary for new folks, most likely to draw in
- Focuses on experience
- Bright colors
- Want to be there/present
- Touches that there is more to hunting than the harvest

What they didn't like

- Too much text
- Not as clear of a connection to hunting. Adding a hunter might improve the image as long as it doesn't take away from the natural image



What they liked

- Want to be there with her
- Described as: Adventure, strong, courage, limitless, epic, superhero, challenge, empowering
- Successful harvest
- Gear present
- Nice environment/ background
- Lifestyle, journey, embrace, become are strong vocabulary
- Related to for most females; liked by males as well

What they didn't like

- What is on her back? Isn't distinguishable at first
- Little too zoomed out
- Darker colors



What they liked

- Looks good
- Sharing the meal
- Eco-friendly
- Traditional meat and potatoes
- Clear grill lines
- Field to table – knowing where food comes from

What they didn't like

- Harder to connect with hunting
- Corny
- Want more on the HOW
- Looks like a restaurant ad or meal
- End result, not the process of hunting



What they liked

- Landscaping
- Group is appealing – support system
- Camo and gear – realistic / in the moment
- Getting ready is exciting
- Want to be a part of it
- Mixed group – men and women, different ethnicity
- Archery equipment

What they didn't like

- Looks too staged
- Camo makes it hard to see the archery equipment
- Better if they had a harvest or were in the action of hunting
- Mountains make it seem too far away
- Not a lot of information
- Lacks color / contrast



What they liked

- Not solitary
- The dog
- Attractive clear text
- Ambiguous on family or friends
- Strong message
- Layout is nice
- Hunting in action
- Bright coloring

What they didn't like

- Traditional white males
- Bro-bond
- Hunters are a little far away



What they liked

- More food present, has a side dish
- More information included
- Want those bragging rights
- Brings people together to bond, connecting
- Colorful
- Connection to hunting is clear
- Layout is nice
- Message is more than just hunting
- Shows end result of hunting

What they didn't like

- Formatting is hard to read
- Busy / too crowded
- Too much like a food or restaurant ad at first glance
- Less connection to hunting at first appearance



What they liked

- Whole family is encompassed
- The dog
- Seeing hunting in action
- Relates to a larger audience
- Like the hunter orange – safety
- Like the framing
- Wide age range to those participating
- Building family memories is a strong message

What they didn't like

- Not as realistic in own situation due to spousal support
- New hunters may not think of orange until after a safety class; they see camo
- Lacking more information
- Little too busy



What they liked

- Green color – retro call-back
- Everyone needs more me time / escape
- Wider audience to attract

What they didn't like

- Green color not appealing or hard to read
- Canoe isn't hunting; not clearly connected to hunting
- More advanced hunting message potentially
- Too much text; difficult to read
- Human not easily visible / want more



What they liked

- Desires that for own kids
- Apparent bond
- Heritage, survival, future strong vocabulary
- Lightens a potentially scary topic
- Like the layout and the additional text

What they didn't like

- New folks might not know/see hunting as a group or partner event
- Don't like seeing the backs of the people



What they liked

- Not solitary
- Female representation
- Smiling / having fun
- Attractive clear text
- Ambiguous relationship – could be friends too
- Start here, family memories
- Want to join them

What they didn't like

- Dark coloring
- Not clear what they are doing



What they liked

- Clear hunting message
- Clear and simple
- Drawn to natural image with wildlife and environment
- Hunter point of view / in the moment
- Like the layout
- Shows more than the end result
- Call to action
- More exciting seeing the animal

What they didn't like

- Could be perceived as unobtainable for a new hunter
- Doesn't make sense / could be negative with "joy"
- Basic
- Hard to see the animal alive knowing the intent to kill – could be a turn off



What they liked

- Appetizing food
- Independence, become, journey, are strong vocabulary
- Rustic outdoorsy look
- Shows end result of hunting

What they didn't like

- Dark coloring is grim, not as attractive
- Missing more information
- Not as appetizing / burnt
- Not as clear of connection to hunting
- Not a wise use of space



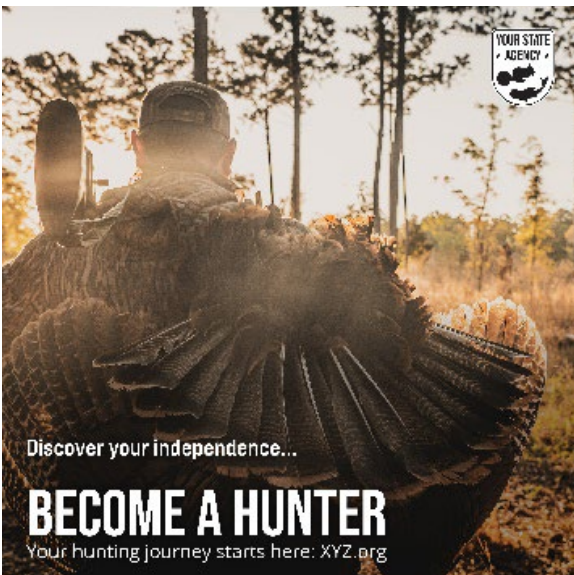
What they liked

- Piques interest with “Here’s your shot”
- The dog
- Female representation
- Hunting in action / environment
- Hunter and dog are central focus of the image
- Sense of urgency with the call to action (date)
- Smiling / having fun

What they didn’t like

- Waterfowling is intimidating
- Not colorful
- Little too busy
- Looks staged

Note from interviewer: No participants pointed out she had a duck successfully harvested in her hand despite preferring successful harvest pictured in others.



What they liked

- Successful harvest
- Sexually ambiguous
- Artistic image
- Encourages a click to learn more
- Simple text
- Discover, independence, become are strong vocabulary
- Participant feels like part of the experience

What they didn’t like

- Don’t like seeing the back of the person
- Backlighting makes it hard to see or distinguish what is going on
- Lacks information



What they liked

- Artistic image
- Successful harvest
- Natural looking
- Simple and clear message
- Colorful
- Contrast of silhouettes on light background

What they didn't like

- Weaker message
- Potentially too advanced for a new hunter
- Basic



What they liked

- Teaching/hunting in action is apparent here
- Ambiguous gender and relationship
- Simple clear message

What they didn't like

- New hunters may not think of orange until after a safety class; they see camo
- Not a lot of information
- Basic
- Feels outdated
- Darker colors



What they liked

- Colorful
- Simple, clear message
- Liked the cleverness on the play on words “hunting” for a new hobby

What they didn't like

- Looks like he is lost
- Not clear on what he is doing
- Not necessarily a message for new hunter – more directed to advanced hunters
- Alone is intimidating
- Older gentleman is hard to relate to
- Basic
- Feels outdated



What they liked

- Ambiguous genders

What they didn't like

- Basic
- Too demanding
- Seems it is for a more advanced hunter
- Not sure what they are doing – gear is not clear other than orange
- Facing away / don't like seeing backs
- Traditional white males
- Harvest can mean different things

Summary of Results (One-on-one interviews)

While the sample size was relatively small (n=42), researchers conducting interviews believe saturation was met (meaning that no new ideas were being generated) by the time these interviews were completed.

1. Females or those identifying as female preferred the images with females being represented.
2. Females selected food-driven messages in both tests, whereas males selected the image of a buck instead (when it was the animal vs. the food).
3. Males selected bonding messages and group images over female representation in all cases except the one where the female is pictured with antlers on her back.
4. The viewers' ethnicity/race had little impact on ad selection.
5. The viewers' age had little impact on ad selection.
6. Images including women and/or people of color were preferred over images depicting only white males regardless of the race or gender of the viewer.
7. Images of technically high quality (good photos) were preferred.
8. Images of attractive scenes were preferred.
9. Pictures depicting a successful harvest were preferred.
10. Pictures of happy people (presumably having fun) were desired.

Online Survey

An online survey was employed to verify if our interview findings held up at scale.

Methodology (Online Survey)

We conducted an online panel survey where respondents were presented with a series of paired images and asked which photo they would be most likely click on if shown in an online ad. We used many of the same images from the interview phase and supplemented with additional photos from Council for the Advancement of Hunting and Shooting Sports (CAHSS) clearinghouse. In the case of images that included campaign slogans (e.g., Hunt for Good series), we removed all text in order to isolate the effects of images themselves. In designing our survey, we tried to pair photos of similar composition but differing in one aspect. Some of the elements we contrasted were:

- Male vs. female subjects
- Archery vs. firearm depictions
- Minority vs. White subjects
- Camo vs. hunter orange
- Scenery alone vs. scenery with hunters
- Close ups vs. wide angle shots

Participants were selected based on age, outdoor participation, and interest in hunting. Ideal candidates were outdoorsy, non-hunting adults with at least some interest in learning about hunting. People who already hunted, participated in two or fewer outdoor recreation activities, or indicated no interest in hunting were removed from the survey pool. We also removed those under age 20 or over age 60. We collected 960 completed surveys. A demographic breakdown of the respondents is shown in Table 3 below.

Data analysis (online Survey)

We performed Chi-square tests to see whether picture preferences differed significantly by gender, age, or race of respondents. We used the following four categories to test for age associations: 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, and 50-59. We used male and female as gender categories omitting respondents who selected the non-binary response option (less than .05%). The survey provided the standard U.S. Census categories for race and ethnicity as response options. For crosstabs, we collapsed all categories of Non-white participants into one variable in order to have sufficient cell sizes for testing. Statistical significance was determined at $P < 0.05$. We report on significant results only in the observations section of Table 3 below. .

Results (Online Survey)

The “winners” and selection frequencies are displayed in Table 3 below. Notable statistical differences, if any, among demographic grouping are noted. We had several paired comparisons that matched White hunters and hunting from minority groups, our hypothesis was that minority respondents would choose pictures with minority participants. The results did not fully support that hypothesis. There was a very modest bump in one choice and adults and one with a pair of children) were selected at the same frequencies for both White and minority respondents. These findings are, however, limited by several factors. First, our sample size of individual race and ethnic groups was small, requiring us to pool all non-white participants into a single category which may have diluted any potential effects of same group affinity (e.g., Hispanics choosing images featuring Hispanics) Second, the race/ ethnicity of subjects in some of our photos may not have been obvious to survey takers.

We also tested a similar hypothesis regarding gender; we expected women to select images showing female hunters more than images featuring males. The data supports the hypothesis but with modest effect sizes. In other words, all things being equal, women will gravitate toward depictions of women hunters so long as the other aspects of good image composition are present.

Experienced Ad Designer Review

We tapped into DJ Case in-house design expert Dan Baldwin to review the results of the online panel matchups and give us his assessment of the winning ads. Dan’s illustration work has been recognized by The Society of Illustrators New York, The Society of Illustrators Los Angeles, and American Illustration, and his animation work has won multiple international awards. Dan has delivered presentations on illustration, animation preproduction, and the incorporation of design principles with storytelling to national and international venues. His comments on the ads we tested are provided in an upcoming results table.

Table 3. Results of the online, paired image comparisons. (Images were randomized for the survey; they are provided in the pairs as designed for testing with results and commentary from DJ Case & Associates Design Expert).

Picture 1

23%



Picture 2

77% Winner



What the stats tell us

- Non-whites choose picture 1 at a slightly higher rate (27% to 21%) compared to White respondents.

Designer Notes

Composition and Engagement:

- Picture 2 features two hunters actively walking, creating a sense of movement and engagement that aligns with traditional hunting imagery.
- Picture 1 shows two individuals standing still and looking upward, making the image feel less dynamic.

Experience and Authenticity:

- Picture 2 subjects appear older, more experienced, and comfortable in the hunting environment. Their smiles convey enjoyment.
- Picture 1 subjects seem younger and less experienced, which may resonate less with a broad hunting audience. The lack of visible smiles makes it unclear if they are enjoying the activity.

Color and Season Alignment

- Picture 2 has warm, earthy autumn tones, reinforcing a strong association with the perception of traditional hunting season.
- Picture 1 has bright summer greens, which may feel less connected to the perception of traditional hunting season.

Firearm Handling and Readiness

- Picture 2 subjects carry firearms in a relaxed, confident, and purposeful manner.
- Picture 1 subjects appear more hesitant, with less confident firearm handling.

Why Picture 2 was preferred (77%)

- The subjects' movement, confident firearm handling, and smiles create a more dynamic and inviting scene that aligns with traditional hunting imagery.
- The earthy autumn tones and experienced-looking hunters reinforce the perception of an authentic hunting experience.

Picture 3

49% Tie



Picture 4

51% Tie



What the stats tell us

- Women chose Picture three 57% of the time; men picked picture four 57% of the time, supporting the idea that same-gender selection influences choice of ads.

Designer Notes

Setting and Atmosphere:

- Picture 3 depicts hunters in an open field, reinforcing the adventure and tradition of the hunting experience.

- Picture 4 tightly crops hunters and places them on the back bed of a quad emphasizing the social and storytelling aspects of hunting.

Engagement and Social Interaction:

- Picture 3 shows a group of hunters smiling and conversing, but the objective camera angle limits the viewer to seeing only one side of the conversation.
- Picture 4 highlights camaraderie and casual conversation, resonating with those who see hunting as a social tradition. The composition allows the viewer to see both participants, reinforcing the sense of connection.

Perceived Experience and Readiness:

- Picture 3 features hunters holding firearms in a way that conveys confidence, familiarity with safety, and active participation.
- Picture 4 captures hunters in a pre- or post-hunt discussion, suggesting experience, planning, and reflection.

Emotional and Relational Appeal:

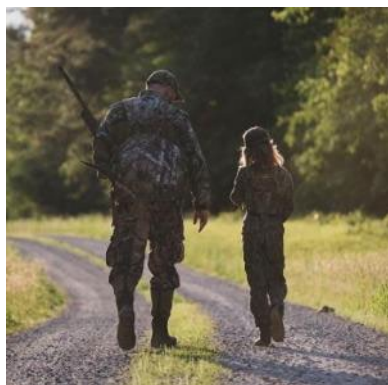
- Picture 3 may appeal to those who view hunting as an independent, action-driven pursuit.
- Picture 4 is likely preferred by those who value the group dynamic and the shared traditions of hunting.

Why the Close Preference Split?

Both images highlight different aspects of the hunting experience—adventure and action (Picture 3) vs. camaraderie and tradition (Picture 4)—leading to a nearly even vote.

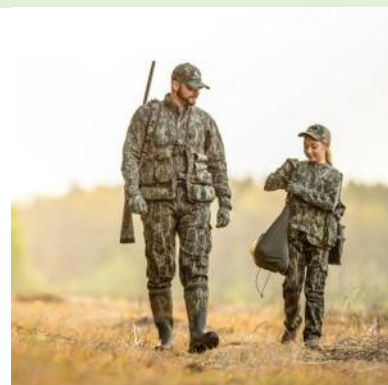
Picture 5

40%



Picture 6

60%- Winner



What the stats tell us

- 20–29-year-olds saw this as a toss-up. Selection of Picture 5 increased with each successive age group, topping out at 70% for 50–59-year-olds.
- Men picked picture six more often than women did (64% to 56%).

Designer Notes

Setting and Atmosphere:

- Picture 5 features a hunter and a child walking down a gravel road in a shaded environment, creating a peaceful, traditional hunting scene.
- Picture 6 presents a hunter and a child in an open, sunlit field, giving a brighter, more engaging feel with a focus on mentorship and connection.

Engagement and Interaction:

- Picture 5 captures a more distant perspective, with the subjects facing away from the camera, making it feel observational rather than immersive.
- Picture 6 is more engaging, with both subjects facing each other, visually reinforcing a sense of teaching, bonding, and shared experience.

Perceived Experience and Emotion:

- Picture 5 may feel nostalgic or reflective, but the lack of direct interaction might make it less compelling to some viewers.
- Picture 6 conveys mentorship and encouragement, which may appeal to those who value the family aspect of hunting.

Why Picture 6 Was Preferred Overall (60%):

- The brighter lighting and direct engagement between subjects likely made Picture 6 feel warmer and more inviting.
- The stronger sense of interaction may have better conveyed the familial, mentorship aspect of hunting, appealing to older audiences.

Picture 7

59% -Winner



Picture 8

41%



What the stats tell us

- Seven out of ten women preferred the female bow hunter in Picture 7. A majority of men (52%) picked the male bowhunter.

Designer Notes

Setting and Visibility:

- Picture 7 shows a clear, well-lit archer in an upright stance, making the subject (hunter and gear) and action more visible and easily identifiable.
- Picture 8 has a low, concealed shooting position, which aligns with stealth but makes the subject (hunter and gear) less visible and the scene more visually cluttered.

Perceived Skill and Readiness:

- Picture 7 presents a confident, stable stance, reinforcing skill and control, which may appeal more to audiences valuing technique.
- Picture 8 showcases a ground-level, camouflaged approach, emphasizing stealth and concealment, which may attract those who prioritize tactical hunting.

Engagement and Composition:

- Picture 7 is framed with the archer and full bow in sharp focus, making the subject more immediately engaging.
- Picture 8 integrates the hunter into the tall grass, which adds realism but reduces immediate visibility and clarity.

Why Picture 7 Was Preferred Overall (59%):

- The clearer composition, well-lit subject, and strong stance likely made Picture 7 feel more professional and aspirational.
- Picture 8's concealment-focused approach may appeal to experienced bowhunters but is less immediately engaging for a broader audience.

Picture 9

13%



Picture 10

87% - Winner



What the stats tell us

- Older respondents were even more likely than younger ones to select picture 10

Designer Notes

Framing and Focus:

- Picture 9 is a wide shot where the landscape dominates the frame, making the subjects appear smaller, less defined, and less central to the composition.
- Picture 10 is a close-up, emphasizing facial expressions, interaction, and detail, making it more engaging and emotionally resonant.

Emotional Connection and Engagement:

- Picture 10 captures a clear mentorship moment, with the older hunter guiding the younger one, reinforcing themes of tradition and learning.
- Picture 9 depicts two individuals walking together but lacks the same level of direct engagement, making it feel more observational.

Visual Clarity and Subject Emphasis:

- Picture 10 brings the subjects forward, allowing viewers to connect with their facial expressions and body language.
- Picture 9 positions the subjects farther back, blending them more into the environment, which may feel less personal.

Demographic Preference for Close-Up Shots:

-
- Interview feedback confirmed that people prefer closer shots of individuals, which is reflected in the overwhelming selection of Picture 10.
 - Older respondents were even more likely to prefer Picture 10, likely due to its emphasis on mentorship and connection.

Why Picture 10 Was Strongly Preferred (87%):

- The close-up framing, emotional connection, and clear subject interaction made Picture 10 more engaging and impactful.
- Picture 9's wider composition and lack of direct engagement made it less compelling by comparison.

Picture 11

48%



Picture 12

52%- Winner



What the stats tell us

- Respondents who were 30-39 selected picture 57% of the time. While two out of three 50-59 year olds opted for picture 12.

Designer Notes

Composition and Action:

- Picture 11 depicts the subject walking down a path with a relaxed posture, carrying a cross-bow across their shoulders, creating a casual and confident presence.
- Picture 12 shows the subject crouched and using binoculars, adding a sense of active scouting and engagement in the hunting process.

Perceived Hunting Readiness:

- Picture 11 presents a more leisurely, post-hunt or pre-hunt feel, which may appeal to those who appreciate the lifestyle aspect of hunting.
- Picture 12 suggests immediate action and awareness, reinforcing a sense of purpose and skill.

Environmental and Visual Appeal:

- Picture 11 features a darker, forested background, which provides contrast but may not highlight the hunter as clearly.
- Picture 12 is set in an open, earthy-toned environment, making the hunter appear more blended into the surroundings, reinforcing stealth.

Why Picture 12 Was Preferred (52%)

- The active scouting posture and heightened sense of engagement made Picture 12 more compelling for those who prioritize strategy in hunting.
- Picture 11's casual stance and darker background may have been less engaging compared to the clear readiness and purpose depicted in Picture 12.

Picture 13

67%- Winner



Picture 14

33%



What the stats tell us

- Majorities of both men and women like the picture of the two women carrying ducks. Females chose the image 73% of the time compared to 60% among men.

Designer Notes

Emotional Connection and Engagement:

- Picture 13 features smiling women amidst a conversation and holding harvested ducks, conveying a sense of success, enjoyment, and camaraderie.
- Picture 14 shows two hunters, pre or post hunt, with a firearm, but the body language and expressions are more neutral, making the image feel less emotionally engaging.

Perceived Authenticity and Firearm Preference:

- Picture 13 aligns with traditional hunting imagery, highlighting the harvest and satisfaction of the experience.
- Picture 14 portrays a gear-focused, preparation moment, which may not evoke the same level of connection or accomplishment as an image of a completed hunt.

Why Picture 13 Was Preferred (67%):

- The positive expressions, clear depiction of a successful hunt, and relatable traditional hunting scene made Picture 13 more engaging.
- Picture 14's focus on gear and preparation may not have resonated as strongly as the sense of accomplishment depicted in Picture 13.

Picture 15

57%- Winner



Picture 14

43%



What the stats tell us

- Male respondents were slightly more likely to prefer 15 compared to females (60% to 54%).

Designer Notes

Emotional Connection and Engagement:

- Picture 15 features two hunters smiling and interacting, creating a sense of camaraderie and enjoyment.
- Picture 14 shows a more gear-focused moment, with participants engaged in preparation rather than direct interaction.

Perceived Hunting Experience and Setting:

- Picture 15 takes place in a familiar hunting setting, with a truck, harvested game, and traditional firearms, reinforcing the social and celebratory aspects of hunting.
- Picture 14 portrays gear maintenance and readiness, which may resonate more with those focused on preparation rather than the hunt itself.

Why Picture 15 Was Preferred (57%):

- The smiling hunters and successful hunt depiction made Picture 15 feel more relatable and engaging.
- Picture 14's focus on equipment and preparation was less compelling to those who prioritize the social and outcome-based aspects of hunting.

Picture 16

68%- Winner



Picture 17

32%



What the stats tell us

- White respondents chose picture 16 at a slightly higher rate than Non-Whites (70% to 62%).

Designer Notes

Scenic Composition vs. Direct Engagement:

- Picture 16 (68%) features a dramatic sunset backdrop, creating a striking and visually engaging scene. The lighting, colors, and depth add an aspirational quality, potentially making it feel more cinematic and memorable despite the subject not facing the camera.
- Picture 17 (32%) is more of a direct engagement shot, with the subject facing the camera while actively glassing the landscape. This type of image usually scores well in terms of viewer connection, making the wide margin for Picture 16 somewhat unexpected.

Influence of Environmental Aesthetics:

- The skyline and warm lighting in Picture 16 may have overridden the usual preference for subject engagement, drawing attention to the setting rather than just the hunter.
- Picture 17's more neutral background lacks the same dramatic visual appeal, possibly making it feel less compelling in direct comparison.

Why Picture 16 Was Preferred (68%):

-
- The scenic backdrop and lighting made the image feel more immersive and aspirational.
 - The dramatic composition added a sense of adventure and storytelling, making it stand out.
 - Despite previous trends favoring images where subjects face the camera, the emotional and aesthetic pull of Picture 16 appeared to take precedence.

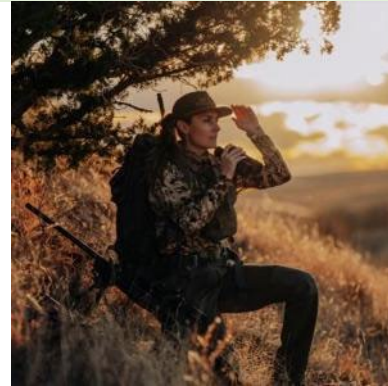
Picture 12

35%



Picture 18

65%-Winner



What the stats tell us

- There were no significant differences among any demographic comparisons.

Designer notes

Scenic Impact and Composition:

- Picture 12 has a neutral, earthy background with dense vegetation, keeping the focus on the hunter and gear.
- Picture 18 features a dramatic sunset and open landscape, creating a more visually striking and cinematic composition.

Subject Visibility and Engagement:

- Picture 12 clearly showcases the archer's bow and hunting stance, reinforcing an active hunting moment.
- Picture 18 has a more relaxed, scouting posture, with the firearm not immediately visible, shifting the focus toward the environment and the hunter's presence in it.

Why Picture 18 Was Preferred (65%):

- The warm lighting, open landscape, and dramatic atmosphere made Picture 18 more visually appealing and engaging.
- The less obvious firearm presence in Picture 18 may have caused respondents to focus more on the overall scene rather than the hunting equipment.

Picture 19

62%- Winner



Picture 20

38%



What the stats tell us

- There were no significant differences among any demographic comparisons.
- Notably, the kids in the winning picture are of Hispanic descent, but Non-Whites and Whites selected the image at similar, high rates

Designer notes

Composition and Emotional Tone:

- Picture 19 features two young hunters looking upward, conveying a sense of wonder, anticipation, and connection to nature.
- Picture 20 focuses on a harvested turkey with a child in the background, creating a more focused, outcome-driven moment rather than an immersive experience.

Engagement and Relatability:

- Picture 19 presents a broader moment of observation and participation, which may resonate with those who appreciate the journey and experience of hunting.
- Picture 20 centers on post-hunt reflection and the result of the hunt, which may feel less dynamic or immersive in comparison.

Why Picture 19 Was Preferred (62%):

- The sense of anticipation and connection with nature made Picture 19 feel more engaging and emotionally resonant.
- Picture 20's focus on the harvested turkey may have felt more niche, appealing specifically to those emphasizing the result rather than the experience of the hunt.

Picture 21

52%- Winner



Picture 22

48%



What the stats tell us

- Non-white respondents chose the image of the Black archer 61% of the time; White respondents were split 49/51 in their choice.

Designer Notes

Composition and Hunting Posture:

- Picture 21 presents the archer in a fully drawn stance with a clear, steady posture, emphasizing focus and control.
- Picture 22 also captures a drawn bow but from a slightly different angle, with a more dynamic positioning that may feel less balanced.

Relatability and Representation:

- Picture 21 was chosen more frequently by non-white respondents (61%), indicating that representation may have played a role in preference.
- Picture 22 had a nearly even split among white respondents (49/51), suggesting that both images resonated similarly with that group.

Why Picture 21 Was Preferred (52%):

- The strong, focused stance and clear posture may have made Picture 21 feel more composed and technically refined.
- The higher selection rate among non-white respondents suggests that representation played a role in engagement and preference.

Picture 23

39%



Picture 24

61%- Winner



What the stats tell us

- Majorities of both men and women picked the guy shooting from a tripod, but men selected it at a significantly higher rate (69% to 54%).

Designer Notes

Action and Engagement:

- Picture 23 presents a hunter from behind, observing the landscape, which conveys anticipation and preparation rather than direct action.
- Picture 24 captures a hunter actively aiming a rifle, creating a strong sense of engagement and immediacy.

Perceived Hunting Experience:

- Picture 23 focuses on the journey and environment, appealing to those who appreciate the broader experience of hunting.
- Picture 24 emphasizes the critical moment of the hunt, which may feel more immersive and dynamic.

Why Picture 24 Was Preferred (61%):

- The clear action and engagement of aiming a rifle made Picture 24 more compelling and visually striking.
- Picture 23's back-facing perspective and passive stance may have felt less engaging compared to the direct action in Picture 24.

Picture 25

13%



Picture 26

87%-Winner



What the stats tell us

- Backstrap cooked on open fire was the overwhelming choice regardless of gender, age or race.

Designer Notes

Presentation and Setting:

- Picture 25 features a plated dish in a controlled indoor setting, evoking a more refined, culinary-focused experience.
- Picture 26 showcases meat cooking in a cast-iron pan over an open flame, reinforcing the rugged, outdoor cooking experience associated with hunting.

Connection to Hunting and Tradition:

- Picture 25 presents a dish that, while well-prepared, may feel less directly connected to the hunting lifestyle.
- Picture 26 aligns with traditional, rustic cooking methods, likely resonating more with those who see hunting as a field-to-table experience.

Why Picture 26 Was Preferred (87%):

- The outdoor, open-fire cooking scene aligns more closely with the expectations of a hunting audience.
- Picture 25's refined presentation and indoor setting may not have felt as authentic or directly related to the hunting experience.

Picture 24

60%- Winner



Picture 27

40%



What the stats tell us

Tri-pod hunter wins again: 68% among men and 53% among women.

Designer Notes

Subject Engagement and Action:

- Picture 24 features a hunter actively aiming a rifle, creating a clear sense of purpose and engagement.
- Picture 27 showcases the same landscape but without a human subject, making it a scenic, atmospheric image rather than an action-driven one.

Connection to Hunting Theme:

- Picture 24 directly aligns with hunting, making it more relevant and immersive for respondents.
- Picture 27 highlights the environment, which, while visually striking, may not feel as directly connected to the hunting experience.

Why Picture 24 Was Preferred (60%):

- The inclusion of a hunter and the action-oriented composition made Picture 24 more engaging and relevant.
- Picture 27's lack of a human subject may have made it feel more passive or disconnected from the hunting theme.

Picture 28

67%-Winner



Picture 17

33%



What the stats tell us

- Support was highest among 20-29 year-olds (73%) and decreased with age. Still, a majority of 50-59 year-olds chose picture 28.
- Two out of three men chose the archer over the rifle hunter. Women picked the archer 57% of the time.

Designer Notes

Approachability and Perception:

- Picture 28 features a hunter using a bow, which interviewees noted as less intimidating to newcomers compared to firearms.
- Picture 17 shows a hunter with a rifle, which may feel more technical or intense, especially to those new to hunting.

Why Picture 28 Was Preferred (67%):

- The perceived accessibility of archery made Picture 28 more appealing, especially among younger respondents.
- Picture 17's firearm depiction may have felt more specialized, leading to a lower preference overall.

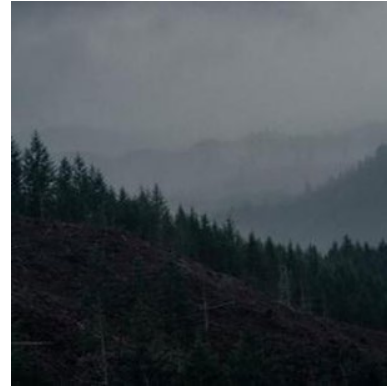
Picture 23

61%-Winner



Picture 27

39%



What the stats tell us

- Non-whites picked picture 23 at 69% frequency.

Designer Notes

Human Presence vs. Scenery:

- Picture 23 features a hunter in the landscape, adding a sense of purpose, movement, and relatability to the scene.
- Picture 27 showcases a scenic view with no human subject, making it feel more passive and less action-driven.

Engagement and Viewer Connection:

- Picture 23 allows viewers to place themselves in the perspective of a hunter, making it feel more immersive.
- Picture 27, while visually striking, may feel less relevant to respondents seeking hunting-specific imagery.

Why Picture 23 Was Preferred (61%):

- The inclusion of a person made Picture 23 feel more engaging and aligned with hunting experiences.
- Picture 27's lack of human presence likely made it feel less dynamic and relevant in this context.

Picture 3

36%



Picture 29

64%- Winner



What the stats tell us

- All demographic segments Picture 29 at similarly decisive frequencies.

Designer Notes

Social Interaction and Engagement:

- Picture 3 shows a group of hunters engaged in conversation, but the camera angle limits visibility of expressions, body language, and the entirety of the conversation group.
- Picture 29 features a mixed-gender group with clear smiles and relaxed body language, creating a stronger sense of camaraderie and enjoyment.

Emotional Connection and Approachability:

- Picture 3 has a more neutral tone, with hunters appearing attentive but not overtly expressive.
- Picture 29 presents a welcoming, friendly atmosphere, which may have resonated more with respondents looking for an inviting and social representation of hunting.

Why Picture 29 Was Preferred (64%):

- The clearer display of smiles and relaxed interaction made Picture 29 feel more approachable and engaging.
- Picture 3's less visible facial expressions and neutral stance may have made it feel less emotionally connected in comparison.

Picture 30

35%



Picture 31

65%- Winner



What the stats tell us

- Women chose picture 31 68% of the time compared to 60 % among men.

Designer notes

Participation and Interaction:

- Picture 30 depicts an adult and child in a learning moment, but the child appears to be in a more passive role.
- Picture 31 shows a father and daughter actively engaging in a hands-on hunting activity, reinforcing a sense of shared experience and participation.

Emotional Connection and Relatability:

- Picture 30 captures a structured exchange, but the body language suggests instruction rather than bonding.
- Picture 31 presents a warm, familial dynamic, with smiles and eye contact making the scene feel more personal and inviting.

Why Picture 31 Was Preferred (65%):

- The active participation and visible emotional connection made Picture 31 feel more engaging and relatable.
- Picture 30's more instructional tone may have felt less immersive or emotionally resonant by comparison.

Picture 29

63%- Winner



Picture 4

37%



What the stats tell us

- Women preferred the Picture 29 at 69% frequency. Men also preferred image 29 but at lower rate (60%).

Designer Notes

Composition and Group Dynamics:

- Picture 29 features a mixed-gender group in a relaxed, outdoor setting, with clear smiles and casual body language, reinforcing a friendly and inclusive atmosphere.
- Picture 4 captures a conversation between hunters, but the angle and framing make it feel slightly more formal and less dynamic.

Emotional Connection and Relatability:

- Picture 29 presents an easygoing and approachable social interaction, which may resonate more with viewers looking for an inviting and diverse depiction of hunting culture.
- Picture 4, while showing camaraderie, has a more structured feel, potentially making it seem less spontaneous or engaging.

Why Picture 29 Was Preferred (63%):

- The more relaxed, engaging expressions and mixed-gender representation made Picture 29 feel more inviting.
- Picture 4's framing and less dynamic interaction may have made it feel less engaging in comparison.



35



65

What the stats tell us

There were no statistical differences in preference for ad selection based on age, race, or gender.

56% of 20-29 year olds picked the left ad. It was a toss up for 30-39 year-olds. The right ad was preferred for 62% of 40-49 year-olds

Emotional Appeal vs. Call to Action:

- Left Ad (35%) emphasizes an emotional connection with hunting, portraying it as a family tradition that creates lasting memories. The phrase “Family memories that last a lifetime” and the softer, natural imagery contribute to a nostalgic and inviting tone.
- Right Ad (65%) presents hunting as a heritage-driven survival skill, with a bold, directive call to action: “HUNT FOR THE FUTURE” and “LEARN MORE @ HUNTFORGGOOD.COM.” The stronger typography and color contrast make it more visually commanding.

Age-Based Preference Differences:

- Younger respondents (20-29 years old) slightly favored the Left Ad (56%), possibly due to its softer messaging and personal connection focus, which may feel more inviting to new or casual hunters.

- Older respondents (40-49 years old) significantly preferred the Right Ad (62%), likely resonating more with the heritage, skill-building, and generational continuity themes.
- The 30-39 age group was evenly split, suggesting both messages hold appeal but with no clear preference.

Why the Right Ad Was Preferred (65%):

- Stronger, action-oriented messaging makes it more engaging and directive.
- Emphasis on tradition and survival skills aligns with deeper hunting values, particularly among older respondents.
- High contrast and bold design create a more visually striking ad compared to the softer, story-driven approach of the Left Ad.



46



54

What the stats say

There were significant differences in ad selection by age. Among those 18-35, 55% preferred the Become a Hunter ad, while the Hunt for The Me-Time ad was chosen by 59% of respondents over 50.

Women were also slightly more likely than men to choose the ad on the right, though majorities of both men and women picked it.

Designer Notes

Message Framing and Tone:

- **The left ad (46%)** presents hunting as an aspirational lifestyle shift, using “Embrace a new lifestyle... Become a Hunter” to convey broad emotional appeal.
- **The right ad (54%)** frames hunting as a form of personal escape and stress relief, emphasizing “Hunt for the Me-Time” and encouraging a retreat from daily life.

Visual Design and Complexity:

- **The left ad** applies a clean, minimal typographic treatment that keeps emphasis on the subject and landscape, preserving an open and immersive feel.
- **The right ad** uses a denser typographic treatment and a prominent call-to-action element, creating a more structured, campaign-style visual flow. A clear visual hierarchy prioritizes the phrase “Hunt for the Me-Time,” making it the dominant focal point of the composition.

Audience Resonance:

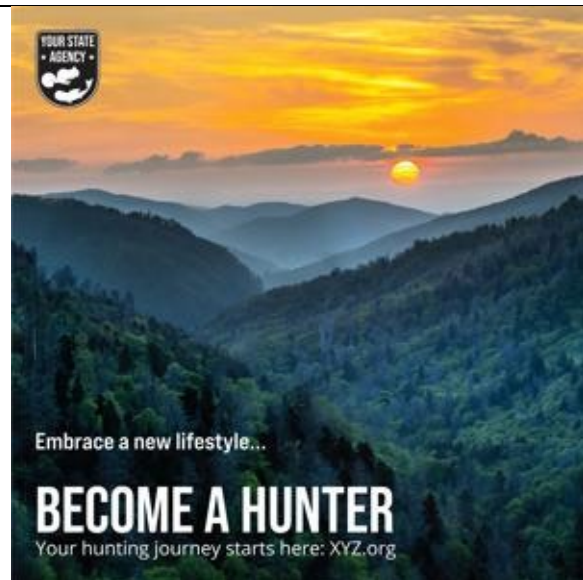
- **The left ad** feels open-ended and welcoming, inviting viewers into a lifestyle transformation.
- **The right ad** may have resonated more strongly for viewers seeking a practical, immediate benefit (solitude, relaxation) from hunting.

Why the Right Ad Was Preferred (54%):

- The “me-time” framing positioned hunting as a personal, attainable benefit, which may have connected more quickly with modern audiences.
 - The defined messaging hierarchy and clear call-to-action made the right ad easier to scan and process quickly during a side-by-side comparison.
-



45



55

What the stats say

There were no demographic differences in ad selection for this pairing.

Designer Notes

Message Density and Cognitive Load:

- **The left ad (45%)** presents a dense amount of text, combining a headline, supporting paragraph, destination branding, and a bold call-to-action. This creates more cognitive load, requiring viewers to read and process several layers of information.
- **The right ad (55%)** keeps messaging minimal, featuring a succinct and emotionally resonant tagline ("Become a Hunter") and a simple call to action, making it faster and easier for viewers to absorb the intended message.

Visual Openness and Emotional Impact:

- In **the left ad**, the heavier amount of text overlays the scenic imagery, reducing the ability of the landscape to evoke a strong emotional response.
- **The right ad** preserves more visual openness, allowing the beauty and atmosphere of the natural setting to come forward and create an emotional connection with the viewer.

Why the Right Ad Was Preferred (55%):

- The cleaner design, lighter cognitive load, and stronger reliance on the imagery itself made the right ad feel more accessible and emotionally inviting.
- The left ad's denser text treatment and layered messaging introduced visual competition, which may have made it feel more cluttered and less immediately engaging by comparison.



48



52

What the stats say

There were no statistical differences in preference for ad selection based on age, race, or gender.

Designer Notes

Message Density and Visual Balance:

- **The left ad (48%)** includes a bold headline, supporting sentence, and strong call-to-action element, creating a heavier, more segmented feel that partially obscures the image beneath.
- **The right ad (52%)** applies a lighter text treatment, allowing the full image of the hunters and natural environment to remain visually dominant and uninterrupted.

Emotional Connection and Storytelling:

- **The left ad's text** ("Hunt for the Bond") thematically matches the image but introduces an additional conceptual layer the viewer must read and connect, slightly slowing emotional response.

-
- **The right ad** ("Family memories that last a lifetime...") integrates messaging more seamlessly with the action depicted, immediately reinforcing the familial and relational aspects of the scene.

Why the Right Ad Was Preferred (52%):

- The cleaner, less text-heavy design, combined with a message that more directly complements the visual story, made the right ad feel more natural and emotionally resonant.
- The left ad's heavier layering of text and external call-to-action structure created slight visual and cognitive barriers to immediate emotional engagement.

Summary of Results (Online Survey)

We can make the following overarching conclusions about the images most preferred by survey respondents.

1. Women showed some tendency to select images that include at least one women.
2. People of color were slightly more likely than Caucasian respondents to select an image featuring a person of color.
3. Close-ups were preferred over wide-angle shots.
4. Images with people hunting were preferred over “empty” landscapes
5. Younger adults were more likely than older adults to pick images of archery hunting over firearm hunting.
6. Close-ups of smiling people are a higher preference for viewers.
7. Most often, the significant differences we found among demographic segments represented difference in the strength of preferences, rather than different preferences.
8. A bad picture (e.g., dark, subjects without action, etc.,) was rarely preferred regardless of the demographics or the type of hunting depicted in the image.

Future Research

This project helped advance our understanding of the features of advertisements that may draw the interest of new hunters. Yet, there is much left to learn. Laboratory and field research can differ just as our testing cannot predict how different images and slogans would play across different communication channels. This project focused on social media, and although these results might have application in other media, remember they may be received very differently when attached to emails, flyers, print media, etc. We strongly suggest that any marketing or outreach efforts begin and end with an evaluation plan. Decisions behind designing and implementing new hunter recruitment campaigns need to be anchored in good data and evaluation if they are to drive desired outcomes. It is also not realistic to think that non-hunters will become hunters based solely on advertisements or messages. As a community, we must also connect our marketing efforts to intentional, incremental customer pathways (e.g., signing up for more information) and next steps to truly assess the impact of this work.

Appendix 1

Tennessee Go Hunting Campaign

Launched in 2021, currently still in use.

Objective:

Drive license sales for the state.

Partners:

- Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
- Brandt Information Services

Access: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1BnHJOeJecV5zifCEyLkHXTZkMJkb85s>

Note: This was not a Multistate Conservation Grant report, it was internal within the agency and does not include a toolkit for state replication. Access provided is merely for viewing the campaign design and results.

Please contact Jenifer Wisniewski at jenifer@deerassociation.com with additional questions.

Appendix 2

Marketing Toolkit for Ads Targeting New Adult Hunters

Multistate Conservation Grant # F23AP00512

Published: 2025

Objective:

Producing images and messages that would influence the defined new hunter personas: recreationalist, locavore, family-first, and self-sufficient. Also developed ads for addressing knowledge gaps meant to retain hunters encountering barriers.

Sponsors and partners:

- Wildlife Management Institute
- Southwick Associates
- DJ Case & Associates
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

Access: <https://djcase.box.com/s/nmn1twer9vwcp3pxkaykth5zu5ibgbcu>

Appendix 3

Hunt For Good (Phase 2) Ad Creative

Multistate Conservation Grant # F22AP00350, F21AP00800, F20AP00182, F20AP12194

Published:

- June 2022 Market Initiative
- March 2024 Development Report
- April 2025 Final Comprehensive Report

Objective:

Awareness campaign for the general public in an effort to create more favorable perceptions about hunting.

Sponsors and partners:

- Archery Trade Association
- Association for Conservation Information
- Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
- Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports
- Ducks Unlimited
- Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
- National Park Service
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- Northeastern Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
- Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Ruffed Grouse Society
- Southeastern Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

Access:

- June 2022 Market Initiative:
<https://find.nationalr3community.org/l/7f352621b79bff29/>
- March 2024 Development Report:
<https://find.nationalr3community.org/l/5333719f4adc0a93/>
- April 2025 Final Comprehensive Report:
<https://find.nationalr3community.org/l/5333719f4adc0a93/>
- Hunt for Good Website and Ads for download: <https://huntforgood.com/>

Appendix 4

Recruitment Screener

Do you participate in (select all that apply from the list below):

- Camping / RV / Glamping
- Hiking/Backpacking
- Boating
- Biking/Mountain Biking
- Foraging for wild edibles
- Bird & Wildlife watching / photography
- Paddling
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Recreational / target shooting (guns or archery)
- Other
- None

How do you feel about hunting?

- I'm not interested
- I would like to try it
- I am a hunter
- I've hunted in the past but don't anymore

Basic demographics

Sex

- Male
- Female
- Other

Ethnic

- Native American or Alaska Native
- Asian (Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent)
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Middle Eastern or North African (MENA)

- Caucasian

Age

- Under 20 years old
- 20-30 years old
- 30-40 years old
- 40-50 years old
- 60+ years old

This project is to test advertisements about outdoor recreation and will require those who participate to view some advertisement images. **Do you have a viewing device larger than a phone to participate in this study? Y/N**

Those who are selected to participate will receive an incentive payment. **Are you interested in participating? Y / N**

Thank you for your response. Please watch your inbox, and potentially junk mailbox, for an email from holly.mauslein@djcase.com within the next 24 hours for information on if you have been selected. If it is a weekend, emails will be sent at the conclusion of Monday.

Appendix 5

Recruitment Communication

National Deer Association Field to Fork Participants Invitation Email message

Dear [NAME],

Would you like to participate in a study helping develop messages to recruit new hunters? As a Field to Fork graduate, we are interested in your opinion!

[DJ Case & Associates](#) is currently hosting 30-minute Zoom interviews to collect feedback on ads designed to attract new adult hunters. (We'd like to hear from you from the perspective of a newer to hunting participant). Those who participate will receive a \$150 MasterCard as a thanks for their contributions after the interview.

If this is something you would like to assist with, click the Calendly link below to register for a time slot within the next 3 days. We appreciate your time and consideration!

Schedule your interview here: <https://calendly.com/holly-mauslein-djcase/field-to-fork-new-hunter-ads>

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 402-975-5698 or holly.mauslein@djcase.com.

General Population Participant Invitation Email Message

Initial invite

Dear [NAME],

You recently said you were interested in participating in a discussion about outdoor recreation. You have been selected for participation.

Zoom interviews will last approximately 30 minutes. Those who participate will receive a \$150 MasterCard as a thanks for their contributions after the interview.

To select a time that fits with your schedule, click here: <https://calendly.com/holly-mauslein-djcase/outdoor-rec-ad-discussion>

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 402-975-5698 or holly.mauslein@djcase.com.

Appendix 6

Interview Guide with Image Pairings

Welcome [insert name] My name is Holly Mauslein, I work for DJ Case & Associates, and I will be hosting your interview this [morning, afternoon, evening]. We are scheduled to take 30 minutes during this time, but please feel free to slow us down, take your time in responding, or ask me to repeat the question as you feel necessary. I will keep track of the time so that I can be respectful of yours. This recording is solely for note taking purposes, it will only be shown to those of us who are on this project. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

We are now going to start looking at the advertisements that have been created to help recruit adults hunting. I will show you each of the ads individually, tell me when to move to the next after you have had time to look at it. After all three in the group are shown, I will show you them together and ask you a question. There will be times where we pause briefly as I prepare the slideshow for the next round of questions.

Yellow = NDA Field to Fork

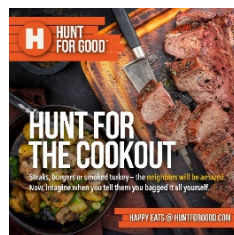
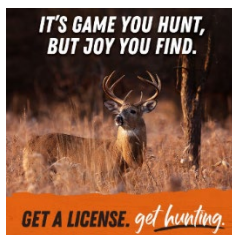
Blue = General Population

Round 1:

Successful Harvest 2

Before you started hunting, which advertisement would have been the most likely to motivate you to hunt? Why?

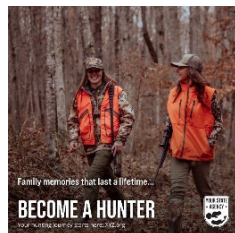
Which advertisement is the most likely to click the ad to look into hunting? Why



Same Age Hunter

Before you started hunting, which advertisement would have been the most likely to motivate you to hunt? Why?

Which advertisement is the most likely to click the ad to look into hunting? Why



Hobby/Me Time

Before you started hunting, which advertisement would have been the most likely to motivate you to hunt? Why?

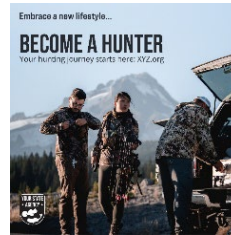
Which advertisement is the most likely to click the ad to look into hunting? Why



Sights

Before you started hunting, which advertisement would have been the most likely to motivate you to hunt? Why?

Which advertisement is the most likely to click the ad to look into hunting? Why



Generational Hunters

Before you started hunting, which advertisement would have been the most likely to motivate you to hunt? Why?

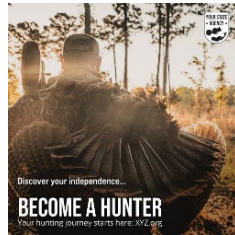
Which advertisement is the most likely to click the ad to look into hunting? Why



Successful Harvest 1

Before you started hunting, which advertisement would have been the most likely to motivate you to hunt? Why?

Which advertisement is the most likely to click the ad to look into hunting? Why



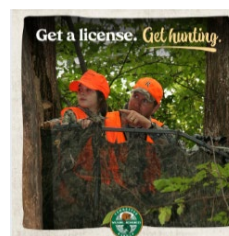
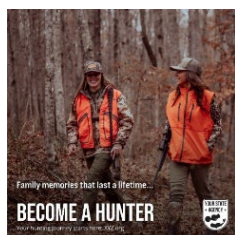
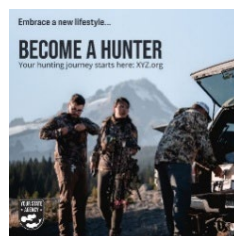
Please give me just one moment to make alterations for round 2.

Round 2:

Same Age, Sights, Generational – Winners will go up against each other here (delete all but one in each row)

Before you started hunting, which advertisement would have been the most likely to motivate you to hunt? Why?

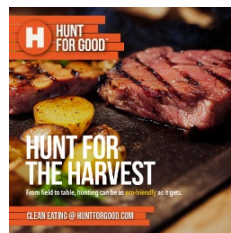
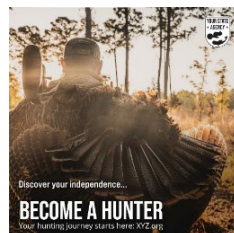
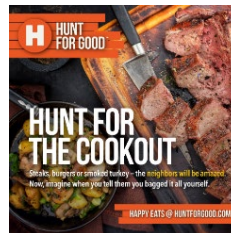
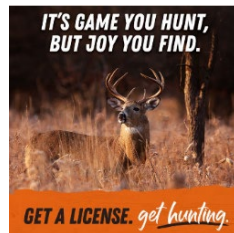
Which advertisement is the most likely to click the ad to look into hunting? Why



Hobby, Success 1, Success 2 – Winners will go up against each other here (delete all but one in each row)

Before you started hunting, which advertisement would have been the most likely to motivate you to hunt? Why?

Which advertisement is the most likely to click the ad to look into hunting? Why



Please give me just one moment to make alterations for round 3.

Round 3

Surviving 2. Copy down here

Before you started hunting, which advertisement would have been the most likely to motivate you to hunt? Why?

Which advertisement is the most likely to click the ad to look into hunting? Why

Thank you for your feedback.

- 1) If we ran digital ads like these, where would you most like to see them?
- 2) Before you started hunting, what prompted you to consider it? Or What interests you about the idea of hunting / what draws you to it?
 - a. Based on response from the first question, what type of motivated hunter is the participant ? (circle one):

Self-sufficient	Recreationist	Locavore	Social
-----------------	---------------	----------	--------
- 3) Do you have anything else you would like to add to the messages or images to be used in recruitment of new adult hunters?

That concludes our questions for the interview. Do you have any questions for me?

We appreciate your time and participation. As a thank you for your participation in this session we are providing you with a \$150 Mastercard. Please note this will come directly from Mastercard to the email you registered with. I have that down as: [insert email registered with here]. We try and process these payments once a week, so please be patient and check your junk or spam folder as they may appear there. If you do not see it within 2 weeks, please reach out to me utilizing this zoom link and email and I would be happy to help you troubleshoot from there.

Thank you again for your participation and have a wonderful [day, afternoon, evening]

Appendix 7

Interview Audience Demographics

Sex

PARTICIPANTS	42
Male	19
Female	21
Other	2

Age

PARTICIPANTS	42
20-29 Years Old	9
30-39 Years Old	17
40-49 Years Old	9
50-59 Years Old	0
Unknown	7

Ethnicity

PARTICIPANTS	42
Asian	4
Black Or African American	6
Hispanic Or Latino	3
Native American Or Native Alaskan	2
Native Hawaiian Or Pacific Islander	1
Caucasian	26
Middle Eastern Or North African	0

Appendix 8

Online Panel Survey

Screen 1

Do you participate in any of the following outdoor activities? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Camping / RV / Glamping ☐ Hiking / Backpacking
- ☐ Boating
- ☐ Biking / Mountain Biking
- ☐ Bird / Wildlife Watching / Photography ☐ Foraging for wild edibles
- ☐ Paddling ☐ Hunting ☐ Fishing
- ☐ Recreational / Target Shooting (gun or archery)

Screen 2

To what extent are you interested in hunting as a topic?

- ☐ Not at all interested ☐ A little interested
- ☐ Somewhat interested ☐ Very interested

Screen 3

What is your current age? Please check one.

☐ Under 20

☐ 20-29

☐ 30-39

☐ 40-49

☐ 50-60

☐ Over 60

Rest of Demographics

What is your gender?

☐ Male ☐ Female

☐ Non-binary / third gender ☐ Prefer not to say

How would you describe yourself?

- ☐ Native American or Native Alaskan ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander ☐ Middle Eastern or North African

Introduction

You have qualified to complete this survey based on your responses so far. We want to get your feedback on a collection of images that depict various types of hunting in various settings.

You will be shown two at a time and asked to indicate which one might interest you enough to click on to get more information. In some pairings, you may not like either choice, but we simply want you to tell us which picture you like better.

You will be shown a total of 21 pairs. The task is easy but we ask that you look closely each time before making your choice.

Lastly, states vary in their requirements to wear blaze orange while hunting with a firearm. So do not let clothing type factor strongly in your choices.

Let's get started.

Female Firearm Diverse vs White

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



All Male Group vs All Female Group

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Family Front vs Back

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Archery Male vs Female

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Far Out vs Up Close

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Female Archery Diverse vs White

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Firearm Male vs Female

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Male Firearm Diverse vs White

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Firearm Back vs Front

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Female Firearm Diverse vs White

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Kids Only Diverse vs White

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Male Archery Diverse vs White

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Landscape Hunter Far Away vs Up Close

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Meat vs Dish

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Landscape Only vs Landscape Hunter Far Away

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Male Firearm vs Archery

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Landscape Hunter Far Away vs Up Close

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Mixed Sex Group vs All Female Goup

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Parent with Boy vs Girl

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Mixed Sex Group vs All Male Group

If you were presented with these two images, which one would you most likely chose to click on?



Block 26

Okay, almost there! Now we're going to add words to the pictures.

Given a choice between these two ads, which one would you most likely choose to click on?



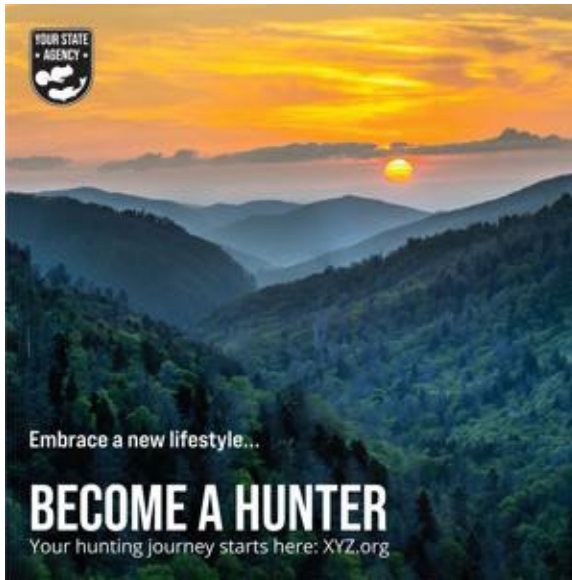
Block 27

Given a choice between these two ads, which one would you most likely choose to click on?



Block 28

Given a choice between these two ads, which one would you most likely choose to click on?



Block 29

Given a choice between these two ads, which one would you most likely choose to click on?

