



South Haven/Van Buren County CVB Brand Perceptions and Identity Final Report

📍 South Haven

The South Haven and Van Buren County Convention and Visitors Bureau (SHVBC CVB) and BVK are partnering to develop a distinctive brand identity and platform that provides a refreshed look and feel and will set the destination up for continued growth in the future.

As part of that development, BVK recommended testing 2-3 brand identity options to understand their strengths, gauge their ability to resonate with travelers and identify any opportunities for optimization.



- This survey fielded from October 16th, 2024 through November 11th, 2024.
- Two sample sources were used to obtain responses:
 - The survey was sent to respondents via an online panel provider in order to obtain a set of general population responses representative of the population
 - The survey was sent to the SHVBCVB subscriber list in order to gain responses from past visitors to South Haven, who were incentivized with a chance to win a \$25 Amazon.com gift card

**850 total
responses**

**442 past visitors
408 non-visitors**

BVK

TOP 5 TAKEAWAYS

TOP 5 TAKEAWAYS

1

No Michigan beach town is leading in markets surrounding South Haven.

The general population is fairly unfamiliar with South Haven and the other towns in the area. Despite this, there is moderate interest in visiting South Haven, showing the need to increase awareness and educate potential visitors on all the destination has to offer.

2

Those who know South Haven love South Haven.

Past visitors rate their experience highly, are very likely to recommend it, and are likely to return. Most past visitors come at least once a year, with many stating they take multiple trips per year, including during shoulder seasons.

3

South Haven delivers on the important factors of beauty, beach access, the outdoors, a sense of ease, and a small town, local feel.

It is a bit less associated with the important attributes of being inclusive or welcoming, having a variety of dining options and being good value for the money. Notably, while the beach and water access is a top decision driver for past visitors, it is relatively unimportant to non-visitors when selecting a vacation destination.

4

All three brand identity options receive high ratings among non-visitors.

Past visitors give slightly higher ratings to South Easy, however all three options are associated with a beautiful beach destination with water activities, being fun and lively, being relaxing, and appealing to families.

5

When asked to identify which option they prefer, there is preference for South Easy across traveler types.

Preference for South Easy extends across past visitors and non-visitors, family and non-family travelers, different age groups, and different geographies. Preference for South Easy stems from visual appeal, the portrayal of the lighthouse, the beaches and summer fun, that it looks calm/relaxing and that it appears fun and welcoming.

BVK

RECOMMENDATIONS + NEXT STEPS

DUE TO ITS HIGH PREFERENCE AMONG PAST VISITORS, HIGH RATINGS FROM POTENTIAL VISITORS AND APPEAL ACROSS TRAVELER GROUPS, WE RECOMMEND THE SHVBCVB MOVES FORWARD WITH:

**South
Easy**

**South Haven**

- As each logo was tested as a brand identity concept, the selected logo will be most effective when used in accordance with the full brand identity suite (messaging colors, fonts, photography, etc.). To ensure its effectiveness, it will be important to incorporate the full brand identity into creative campaigns, the South Haven website and social channels.

- Refine the chosen identity option as needed
- Develop full suite of logos, including a version with new SHVBCVB business name
- BVK to develop brand guidelines based on chosen identity option

BVK

DETAILED FINDINGS

CORE TAKEAWAY:

All three brand identity options receive high ratings among non-visitors, while South Easy receives slightly higher ratings among past visitors. All three options are associated with a beautiful beach destination with water activities, being fun while also relaxing, and being family-friendly.

Everything's Brighter

Authentic beach living without any pretense. Friendly locals mixing with like-minded folks from away. And an easygoing attitude melts the stress away. No wonder South Haven is one of the most beautiful towns in America. Whether it's a day in the sun on our unrivaled beaches or strolling through historic downtown, every moment feels just a little bit brighter.

This direction embodies the spirit of an easygoing life where everything is brighter in South Haven.



Stay South

South Haven isn't just another Michigan beach town. It's THE Michigan beach town. Because when it's time to get away from the hustle and grind of daily life, it should be easy. Easy to get to, easy to get around and easy to unwind. Stay South and find your bliss.

This direction invites visitors to stay south in South Haven. To relax and enjoy the easy, carefree vibe you experience there.



South Easy

South Haven is where the sun meets pure bliss, and time slows down for days filled with good vibes and easy living. Imagine golden mornings by the lake, soft breezes, and the sound of waves setting the rhythm for laid-back afternoons. It's a place where every moment feels like summer, and every sunset marks the perfect close to another carefree day.

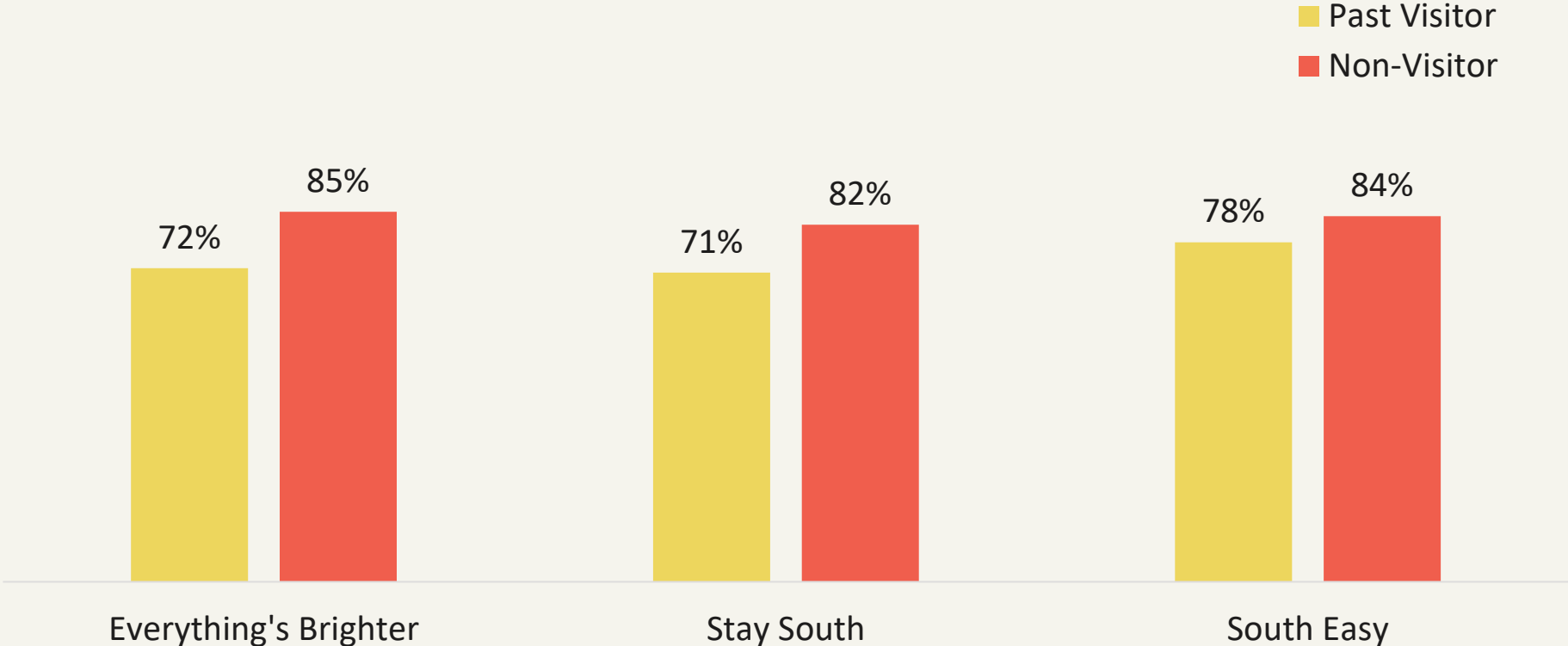
This direction is all about capturing that effortless joy and inviting everyone to experience the relaxed, sun-drenched magic of South Haven.



Most travelers find each brand identity option to be visually appealing, with responses particularly positive among non-visitors.



Visual Appeal of Brand Identity Option – Top 2 Box

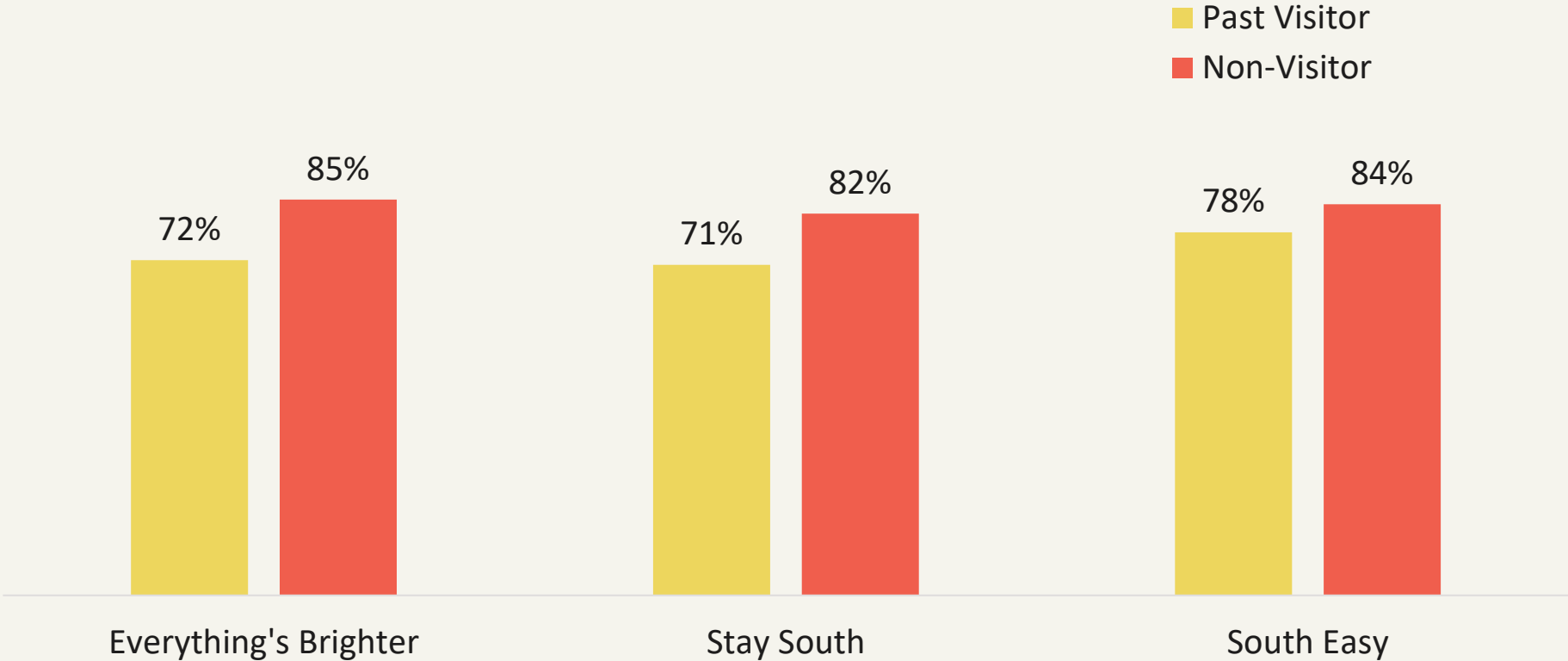


Q23. Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about these brand materials - These brand materials are visually appealing
Past Visitor n=442 ; Non-Visitor n=408

Most travelers find each brand identity option to be visually appealing, with responses particularly positive among non-visitors.



Visual Appeal of Brand Identity Option – Top 2 Box

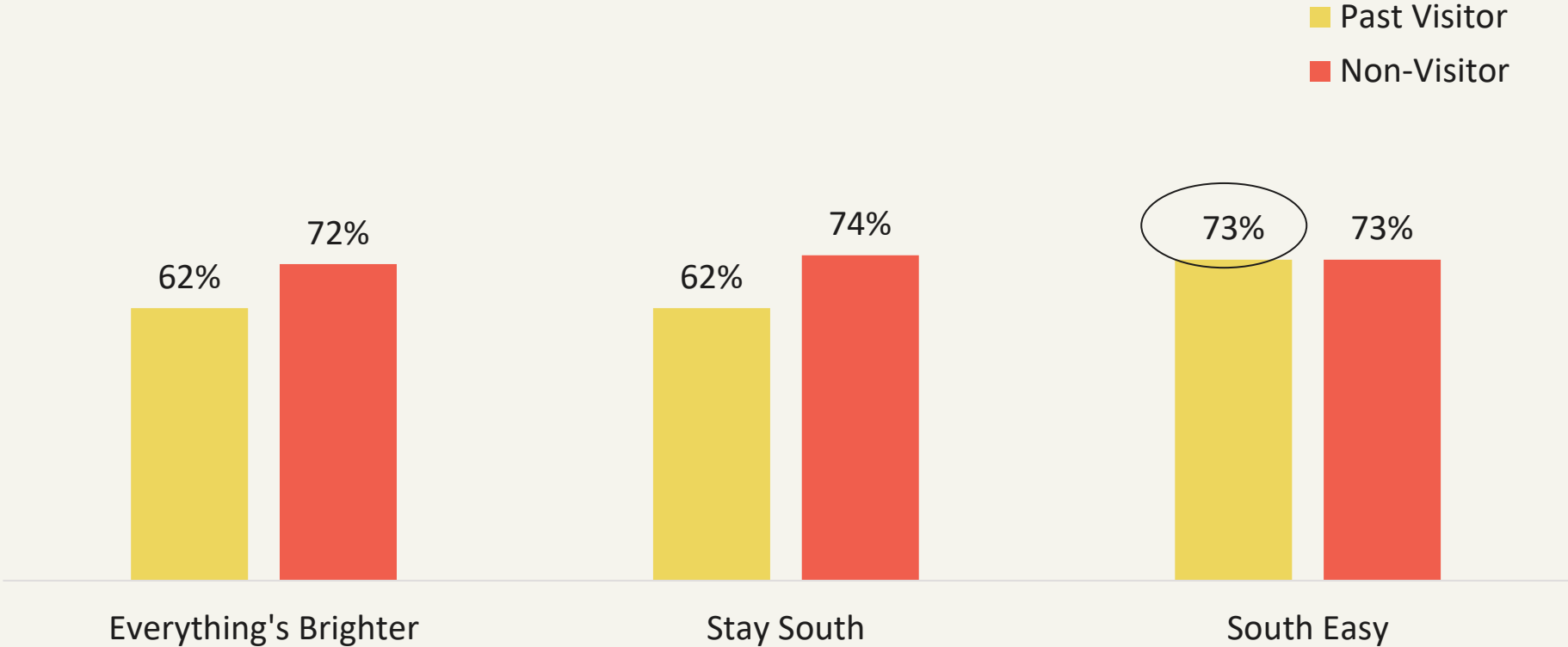


Q23. Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about these brand materials - These brand materials are visually appealing
Past Visitor n=442 ; Non-Visitor n=408

While non-visitors find each option to be equally recognizable as South Haven in Michigan, past visitors give the highest ratings for this metric to South Easy.



Recognizability of Brand Identity Option – Top 2 Box



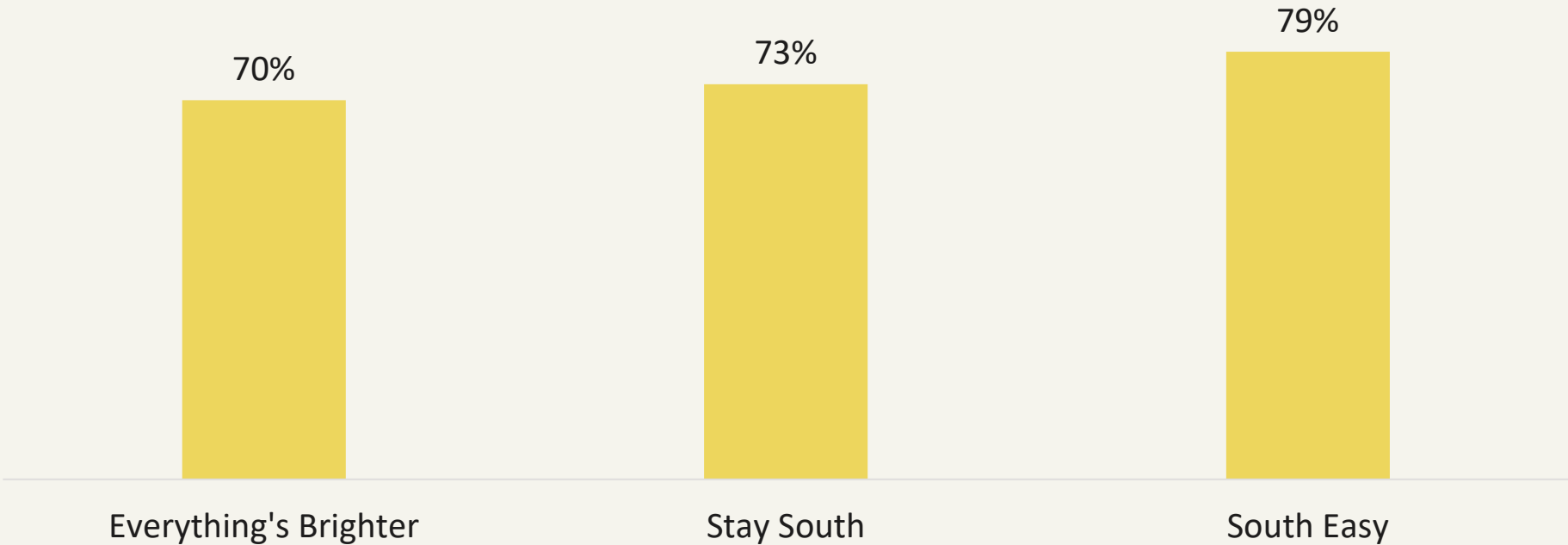
Q23. Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about these brand materials. These brand materials are easily recognizable as representing South Haven in Michigan. Past Visitor n=442 ; Non-Visitor n=408

= Indicates a statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level

Similarly, past visitors give the highest ratings for fitting South Haven to South Easy.



Destination Fit of Brand Identity Option (Among Past Visitors) – Top 2 Box

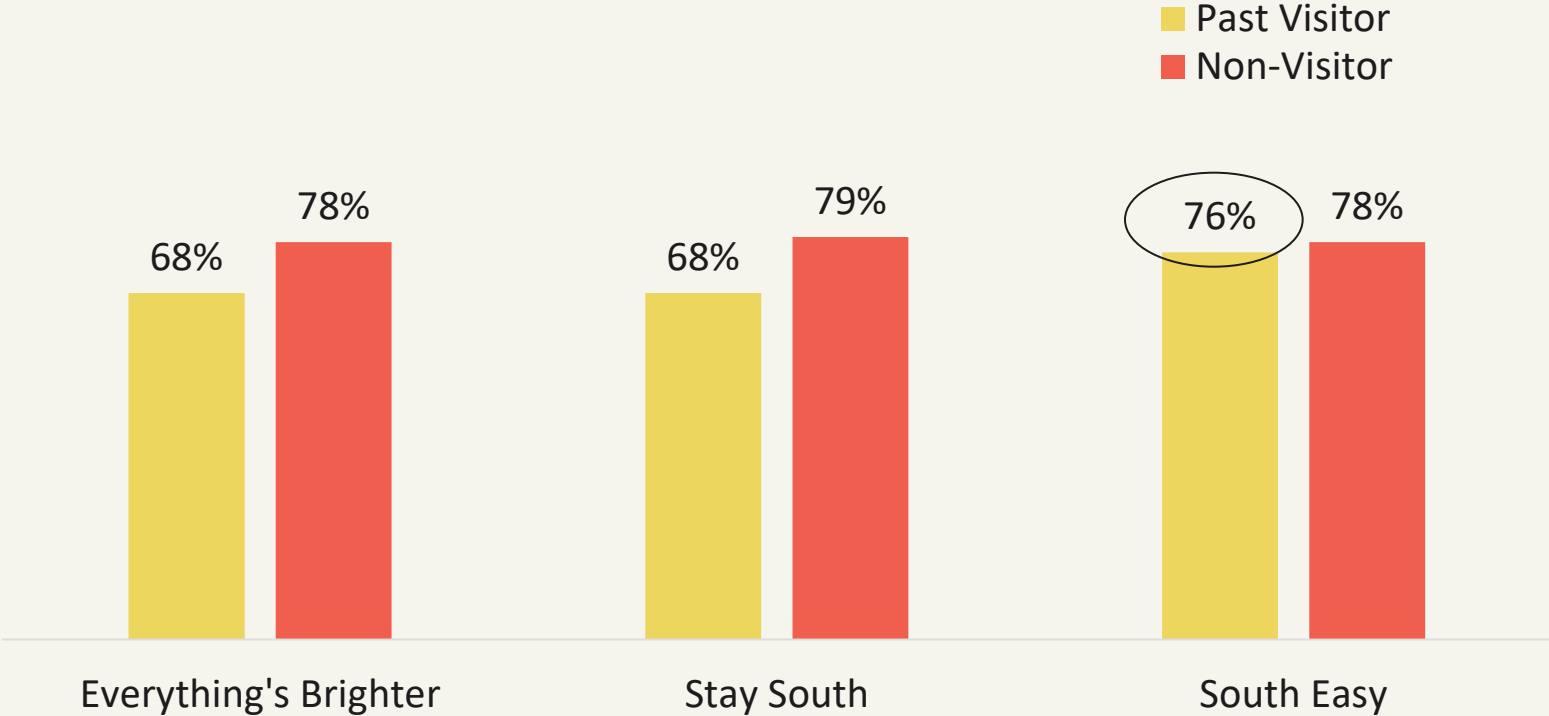


Q23. Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about these brand materials - These brand materials fit South Haven as a vacation destination.
Past Visitor n=442 ; Non-Visitor n=408

Non-visitors feel each option strongly communicates the brand positioning, while past visitors feel South Easy conveys it best.



Ability to Convey Brand Positioning – Top 2 Box



BRAND POSITIONING:

“South Haven is where you find your bliss and can always be in a carefree state of mind.”

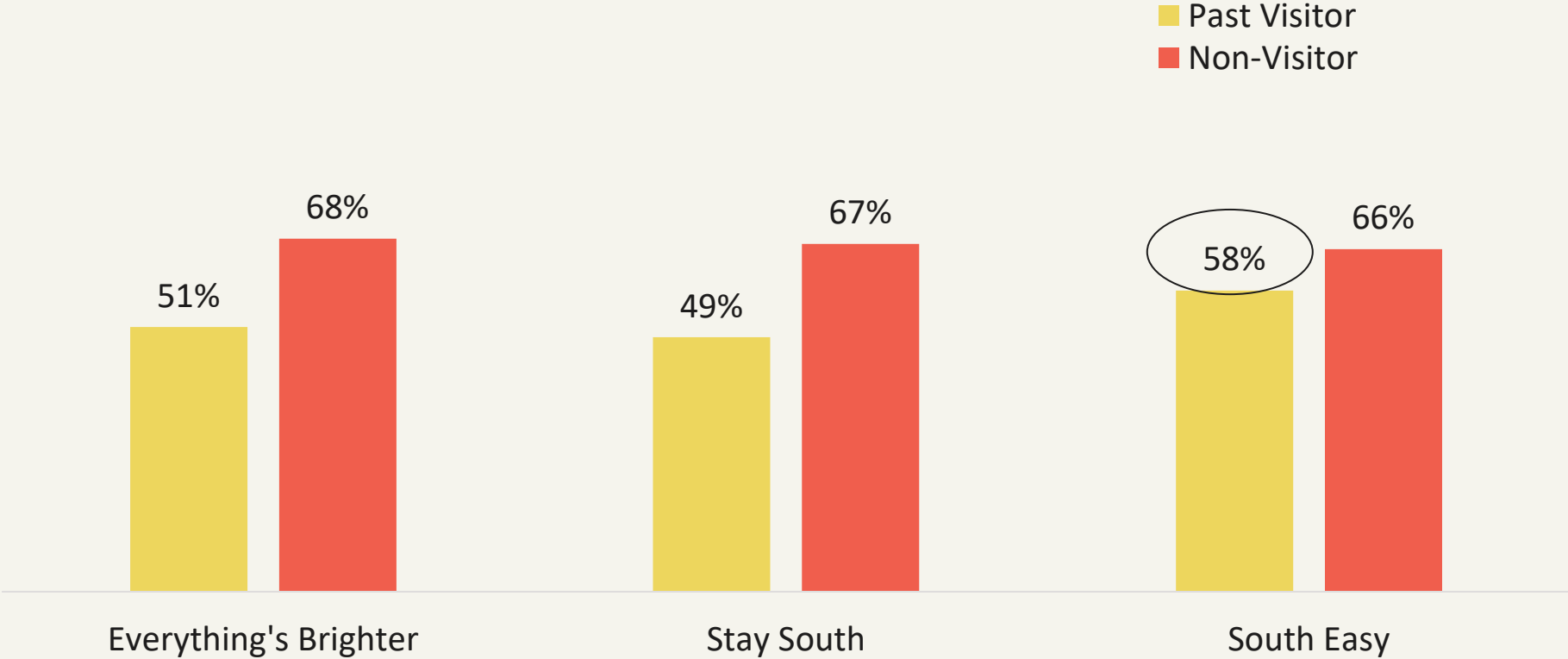
Q23. Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about these brand materials
These brand materials portray South Haven as the place where I can find my bliss and always be in a carefree state of mind.
Past Visitor n=442 ; Non-Visitor n=408

= Indicates a statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level

Travelers overall give a bit lower ratings on the options' ability to differentiate the destination, with past visitors feeling South Easy is the most differentiating.



Differentiation of Brand Identity Option – Top 2 Box



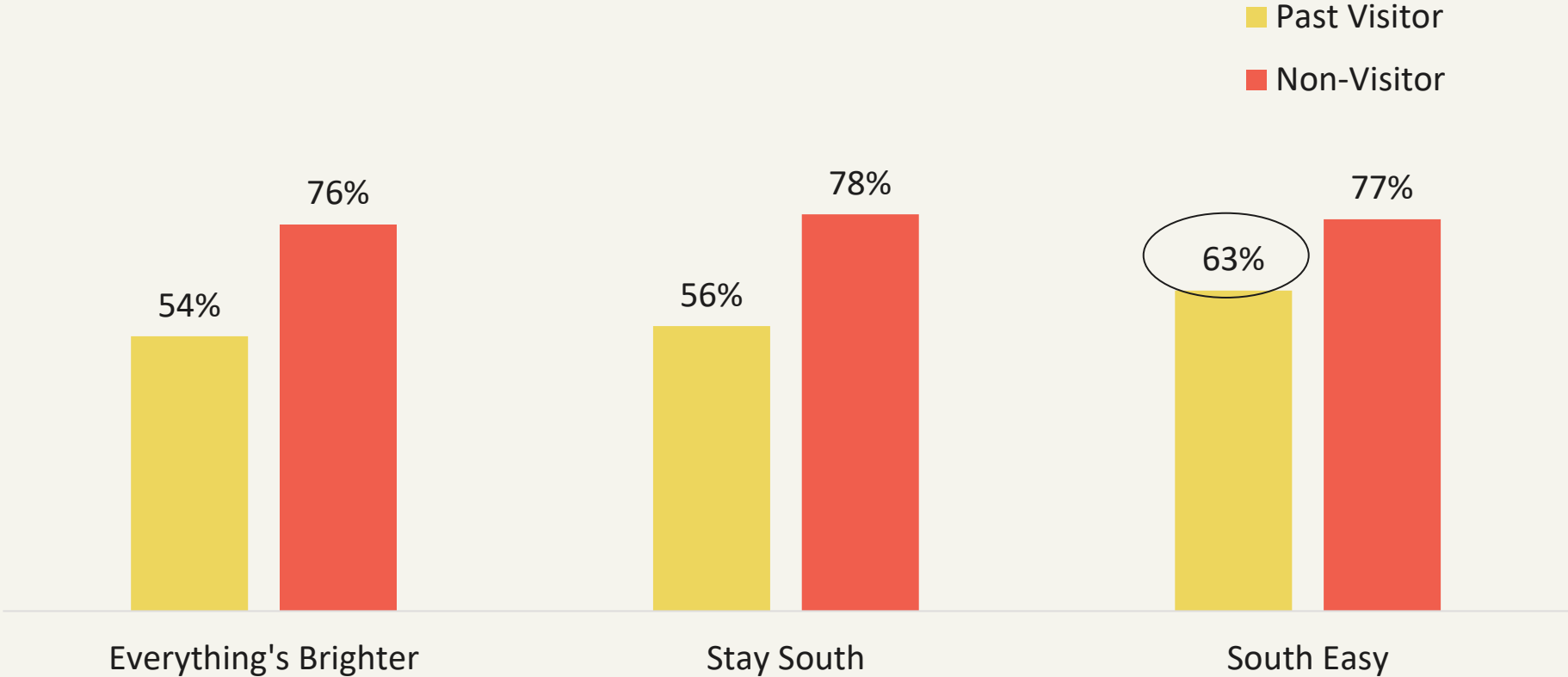
Q23. Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about these brand materials
- These brand materials differentiate South Haven from other vacation or trip destinations.
Past Visitor n=442 ; Non-Visitor n=408

= Indicates a statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level

And while all three options strongly increase non-visitors interest in visiting, South Easy is the most likely to make past visitors want to return.



Ability to Increase Visitation Interest – Top 2 Box



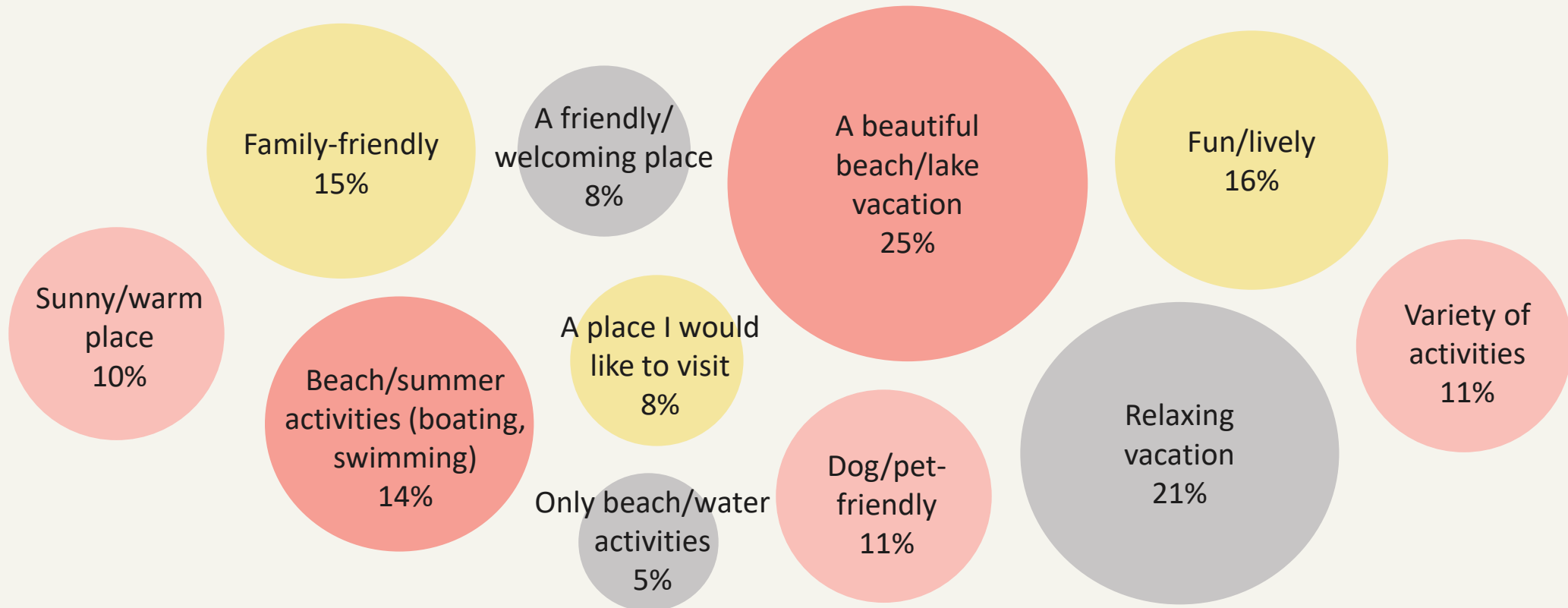
Q23. Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about these brand materials - These brand materials increase my interest in visiting South Haven.
Past Visitor n=442 ; Non-Visitor n=408

= Indicates a statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level

When asked to describe the experience of South Haven based on the Everything's Brighter option, travelers describe it as a beautiful beach or lake destination, a relaxing place, a fun/lively place, a family-friendly destination, having beach or summer activities and it being dog- or pet-friendly.



Expectation of South Haven Experience Based on Everything's Brighter

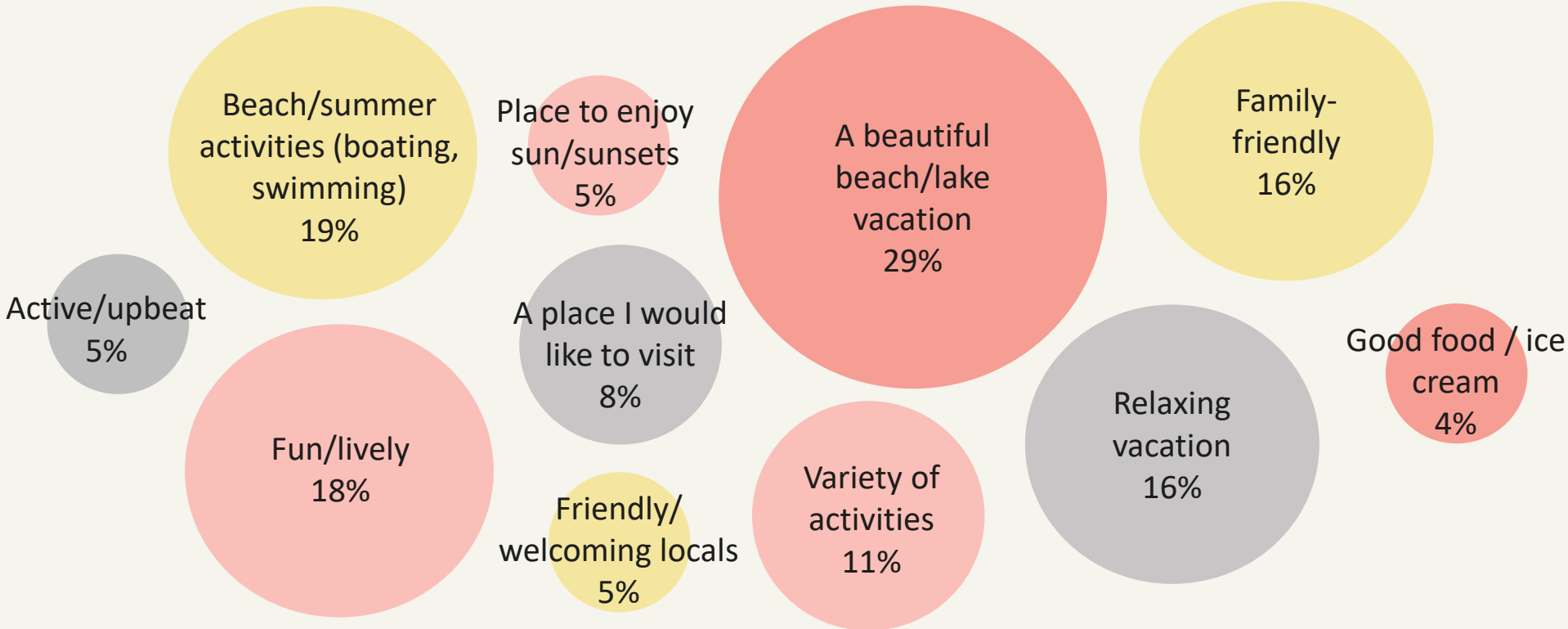


Based only on what you saw and read in these brand materials, how would you describe the experience you would expect of South Haven, MI? (Please type your answer in the space below, being as specific, detailed, and complete as possible.)¹ n=850

When asked to describe the experience of South Haven based on the Stay South option, travelers describe it similarly – as a beautiful beach or lake destination, having beach or summer activities, fun and lively, a relaxing place, it being a family-friendly destination and having a variety of activities.



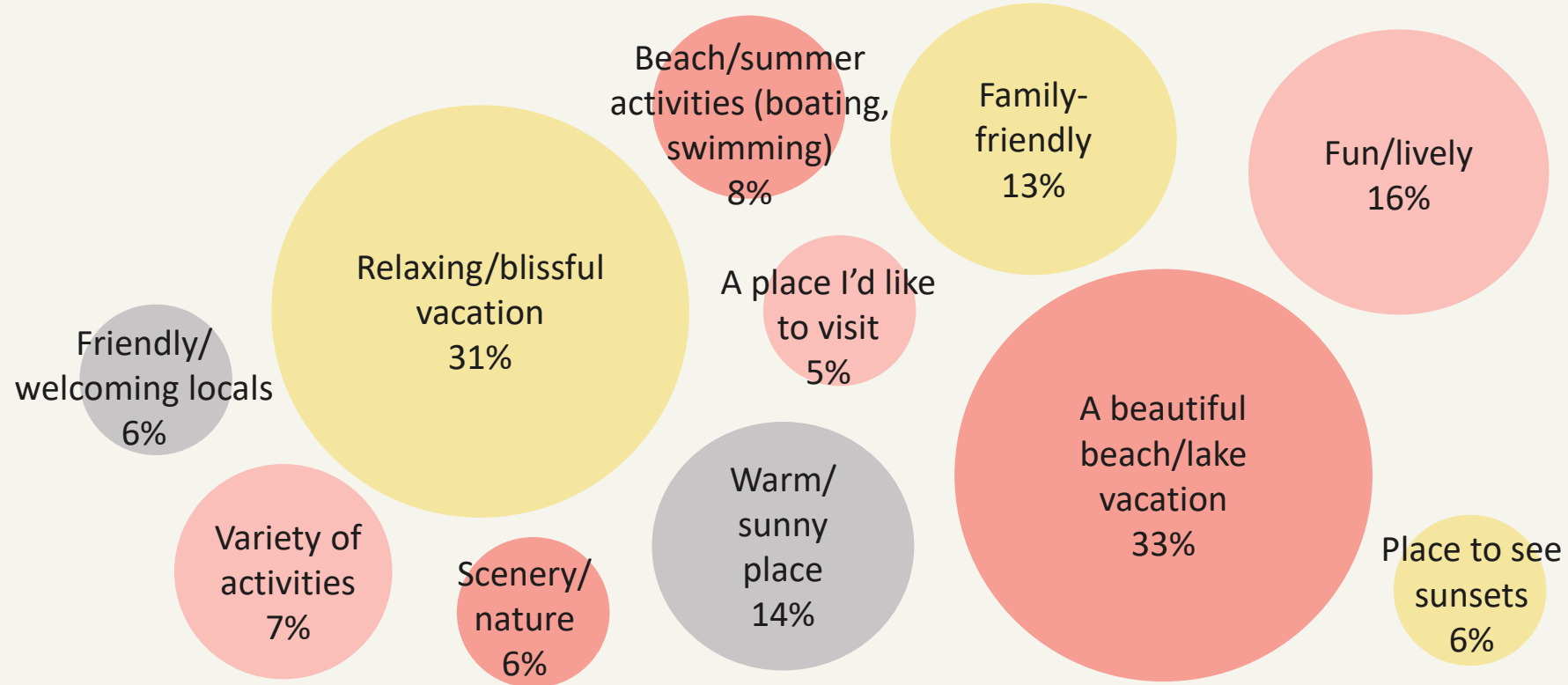
Expectation of South Haven Experience Based on Stay South



Based only on what you saw and read in these brand materials, how would you describe the experience you would expect of South Haven, MI? (Please type your answer in the space below, being as specific, detailed, and complete as possible.)¹ n=850

Travelers describe the experience of South Haven based on South Easy similarly to the other two options, however they are much more likely to have associations of “blissful” or “relaxing” with South Easy.

Expectation of South Haven Experience Based on South Easy



Based only on what you saw and read in these brand materials, how would you describe the experience you would expect of South Haven, MI? (Please type your answer in the space below, being as specific, detailed, and complete as possible.)1 n=850

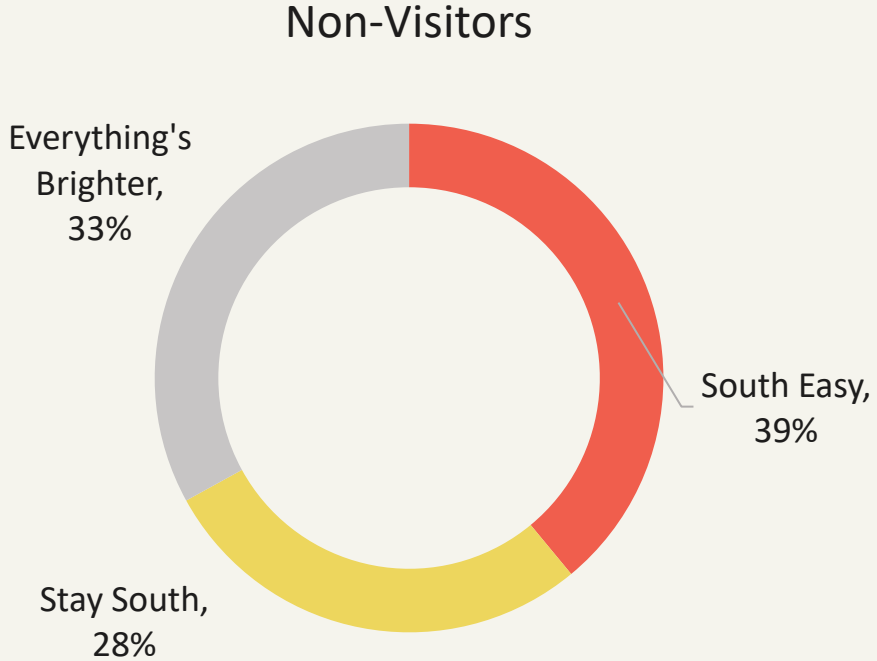
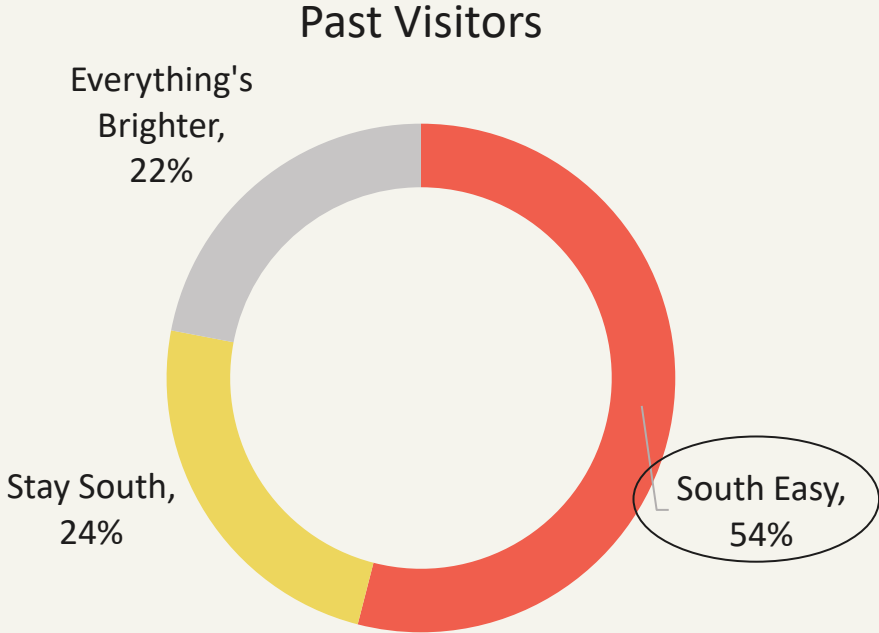
CORE TAKEAWAY:

There is preference for South Easy across traveler types, including among visitors and non-visitors, family and non-family travelers, different age groups and various geographies. Preference for South Easy stems from visual appeal, the portrayal of the lighthouse, the beaches and summer fun, and that it looks calm/relaxing as well as fun and welcoming.

South Easy has clear preference among past visitors. Preference is more mixed among non-visitors, though South Easy shows slight preference, followed by Everything's Brighter.



Brand Identity Preference



Q24. Now, looking at all three sets of brand materials, which one do you prefer overall?
Past Visitor n=442 ; Non-Visitor n=408

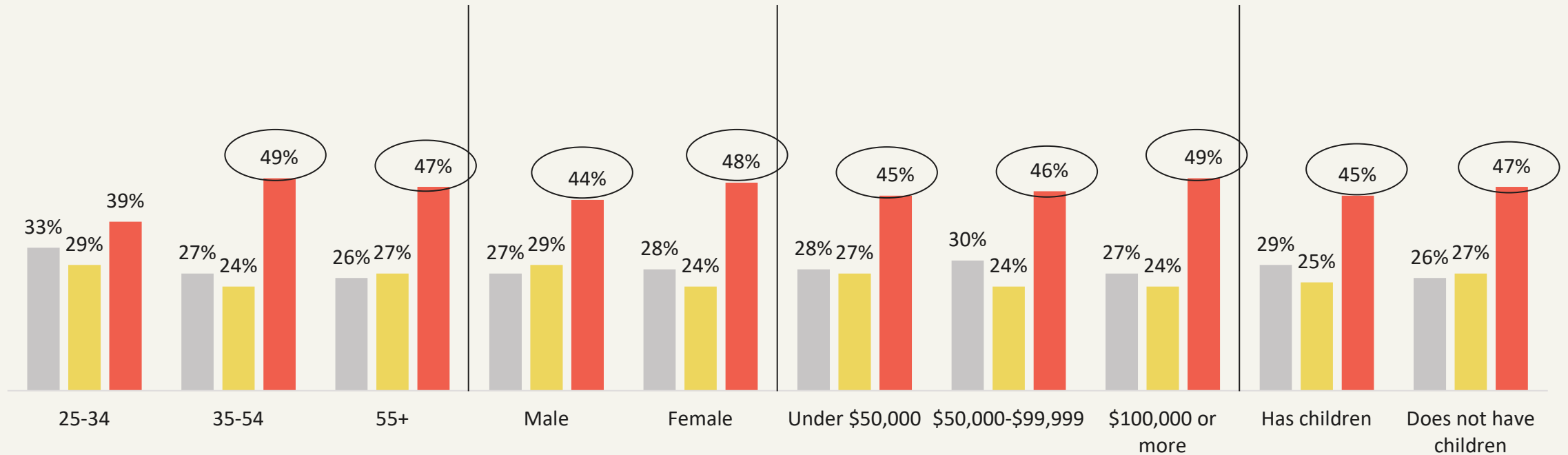
= Indicates a statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level

Preference for South Easy remains consistent across age groups, gender, presence of children and household income.



Brand Identity Preference (Among Visitors and Non-Visitors)

- Everything's Brighter
- Stay South
- South Easy



Q24. Now, looking at all three sets of brand materials, which one do you prefer overall?

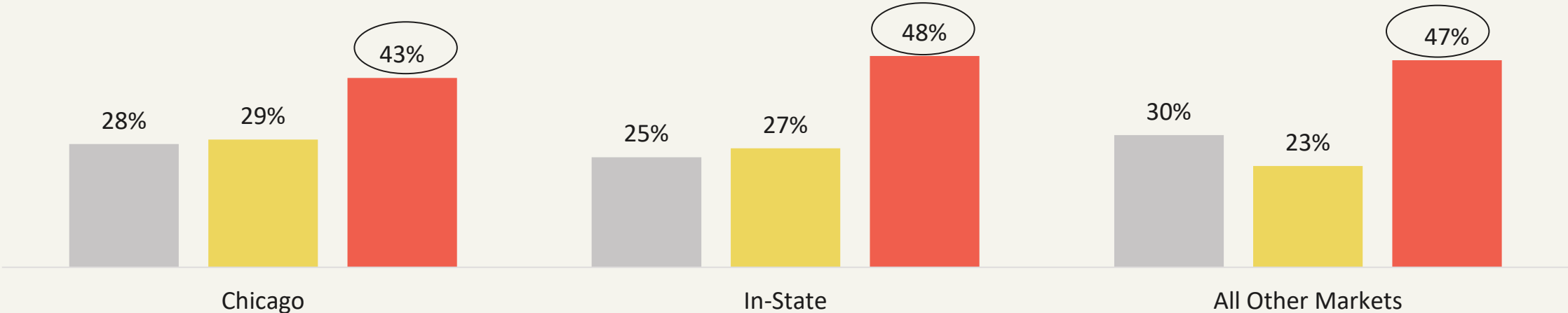
○ = Indicates a statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level

And preference for South Easy is consistent when comparing different geographic markets.




Brand Identity Preference (Among Visitors and Non-Visitors)

- Everything's Brighter
- Stay South
- South Easy

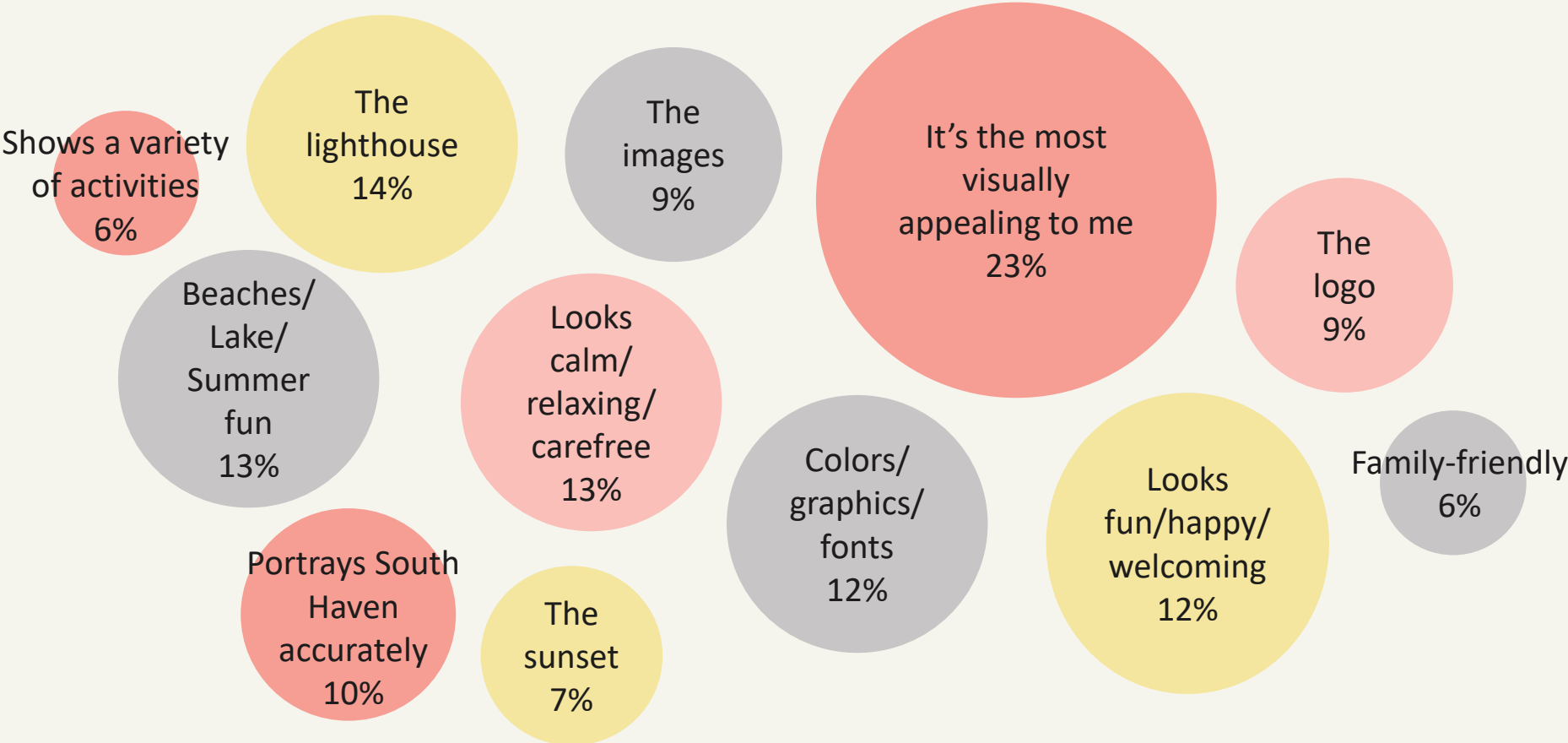


Q24. Now, looking at all three sets of brand materials, which one do you prefer overall?

= Indicates a statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level

Apart from it being the most visually appealing to them, preference for South Easy stems from the portrayal of the lighthouse, the beaches and summer fun, that it looks calm/relaxing as well as fun and welcoming. 

Reason Behind Brand Identity Preference – South Easy

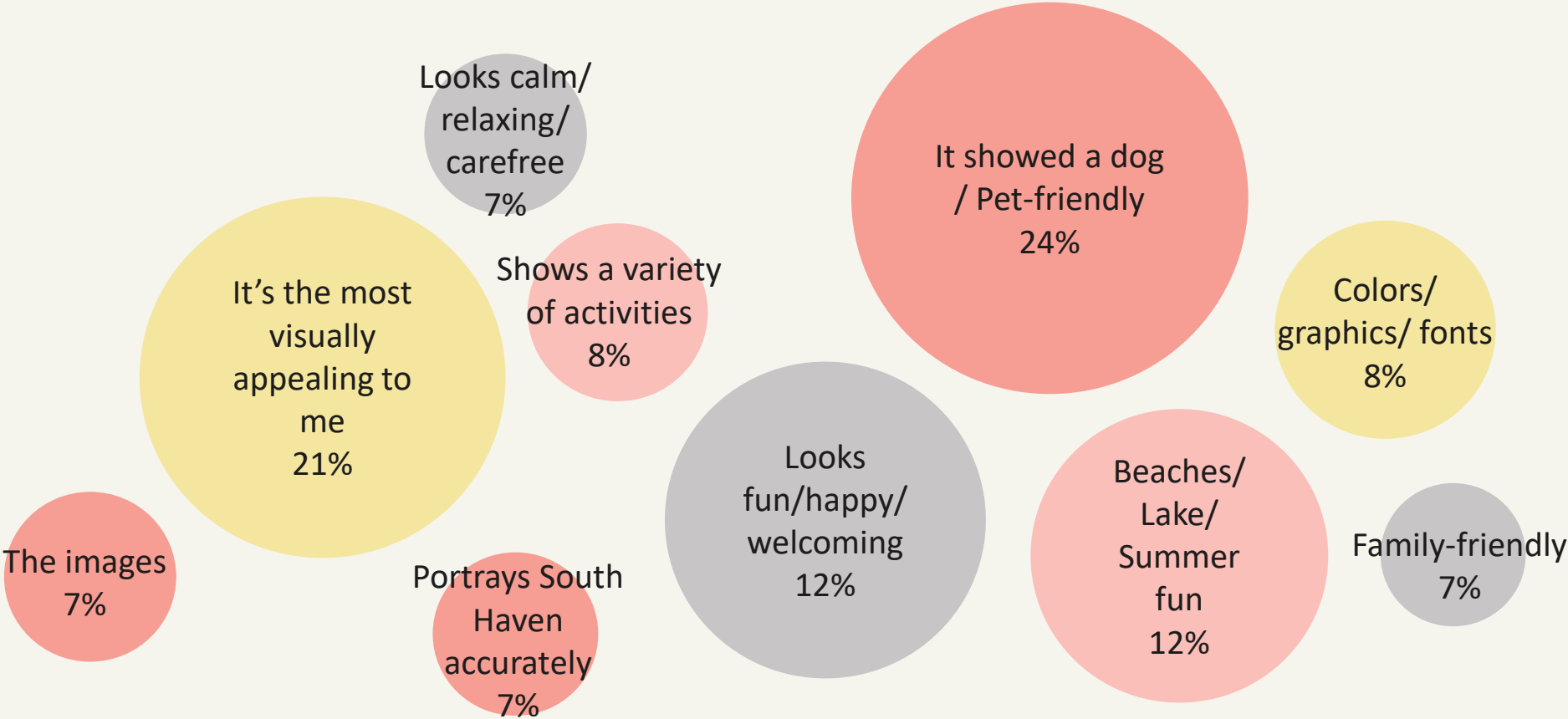


Q25. Why do you prefer those brand materials?
n=394

Those who prefer Everything's Brighter often attribute it to the portrayal of the dog on the kayak, in addition to overall visual appeal, the beaches and summer fun, that it looks fun and welcoming.



Reason Behind Brand Identity Preference – Everything's Brighter

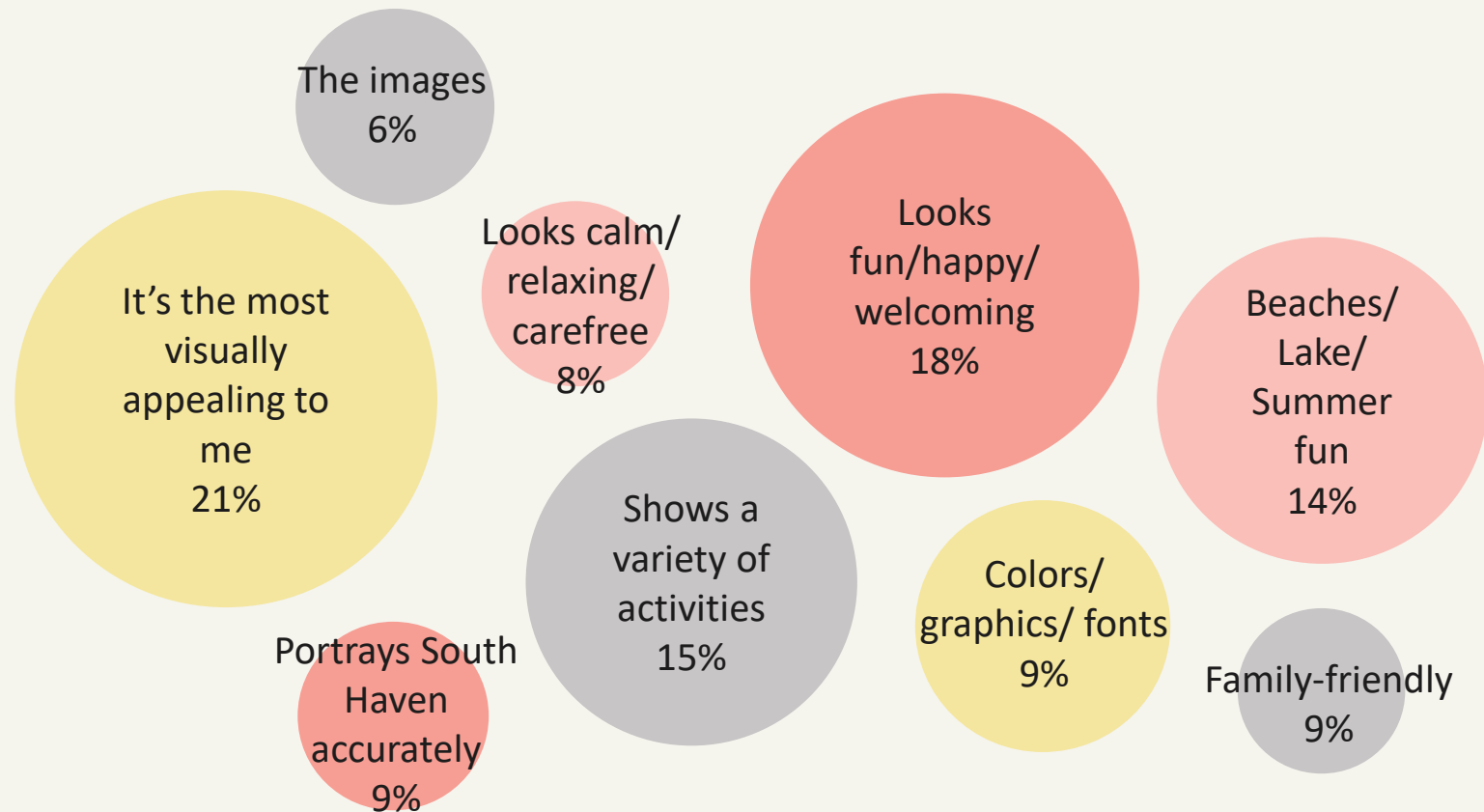


Q25. Why do you prefer those brand materials?
n=234

Finally preference for Stay South is due to its overall visual appeal, fun, happy or welcoming vibe, that it shows a variety of activities, and the portrayal of the beaches and summer fun.



Reason Behind Brand Identity Preference – Stay South



Q25. Why do you prefer those brand materials?

n=222

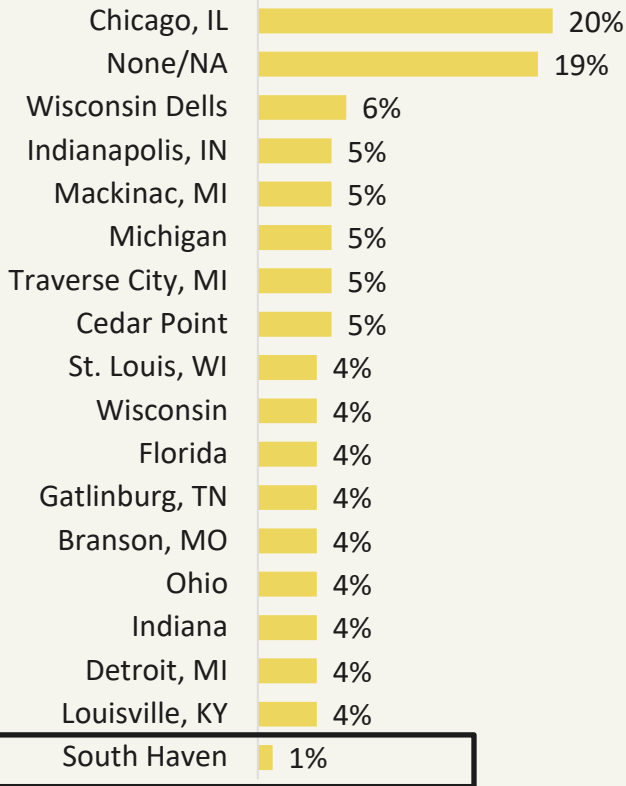
CORE TAKEAWAY:

No Michigan beach town is leading in the markets surrounding South Haven – the general population is fairly unfamiliar with South Haven and the other towns in the area. Despite this, there exists moderate interest to visit South Haven, showing the need to increase awareness and educate potential visitors on all the destination has to offer.

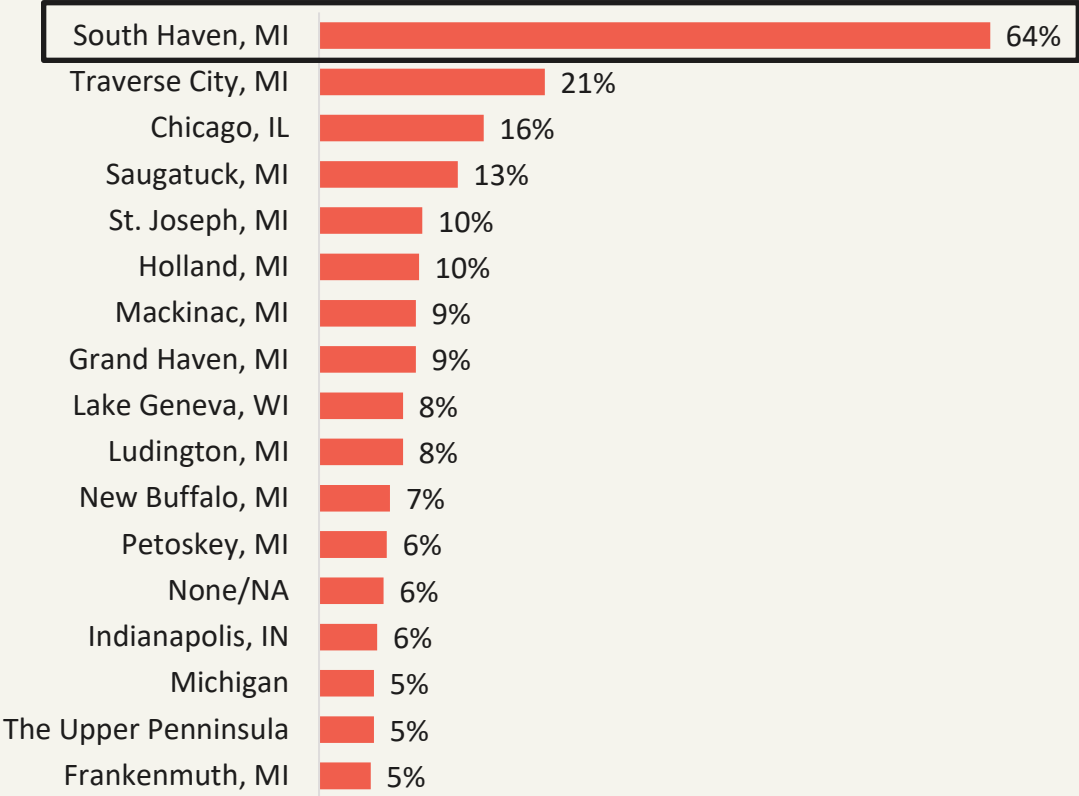
Very few among the general population name South Haven or other competing Michigan beach towns as leisure getaway destinations on an unaided basis, however South Haven is the top mention among those from the past visitor list.



Unaided Awareness of Each Destination – General Population



Unaided Awareness of Each Destination – Past Visitor List

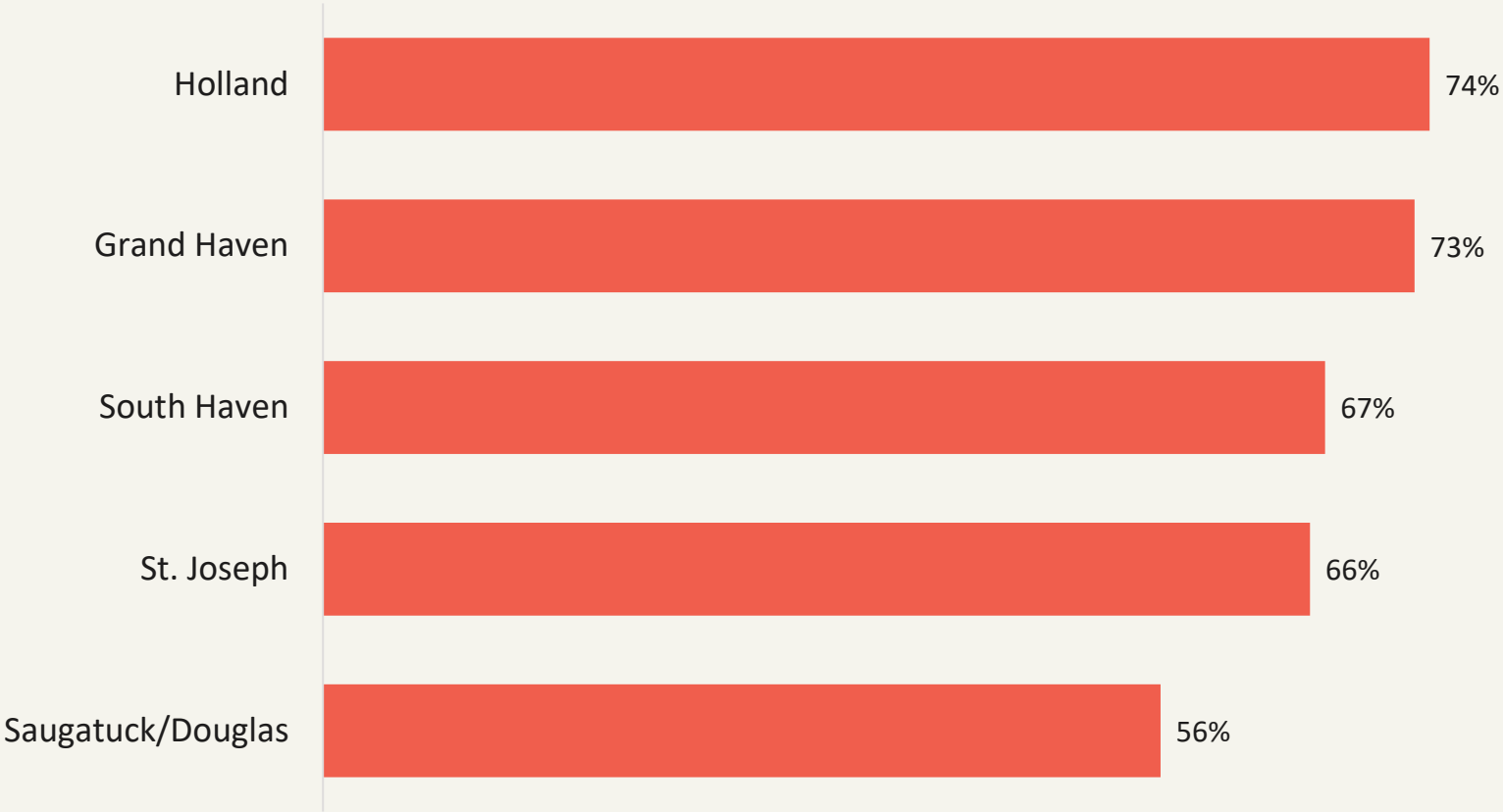


Q6. When you think of leisure getaway destinations within a few hours' drive from where you live, which come to mind? Please type one destination per line. ; destinations mentioned by 5% or more are shown. General population n=767; Past Visitor List n=325

About three-fourths of the general population is aware of Holland and Grand Haven as vacation destinations, while about two-thirds are aware of South Haven.



Aided Awareness of Each Destination – General Population

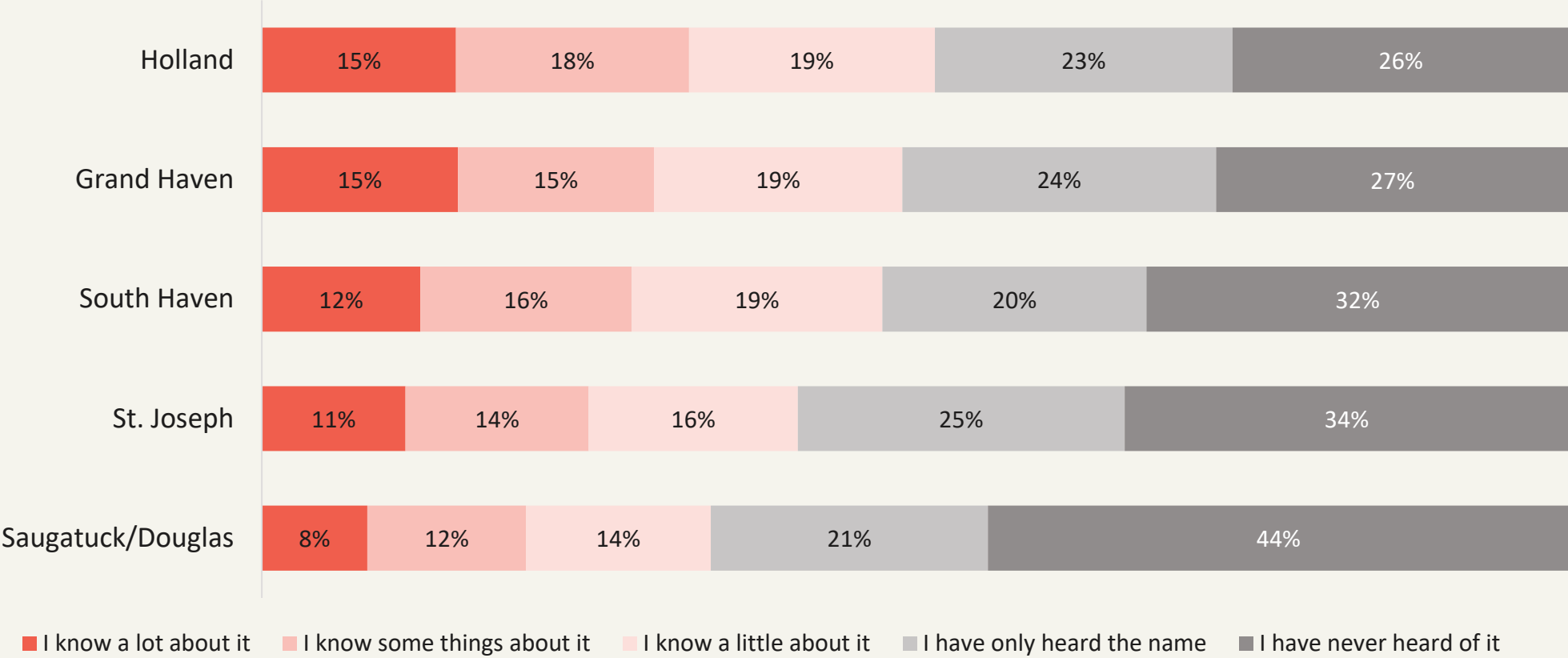


Q8. How familiar are you with each of the following destinations? Use the scale provided to indicate how familiar you consider yourself to be.
General population n=767

No competitor shows a strong level of familiarity among the general population.



Familiarity with Vacation Destinations – General Population

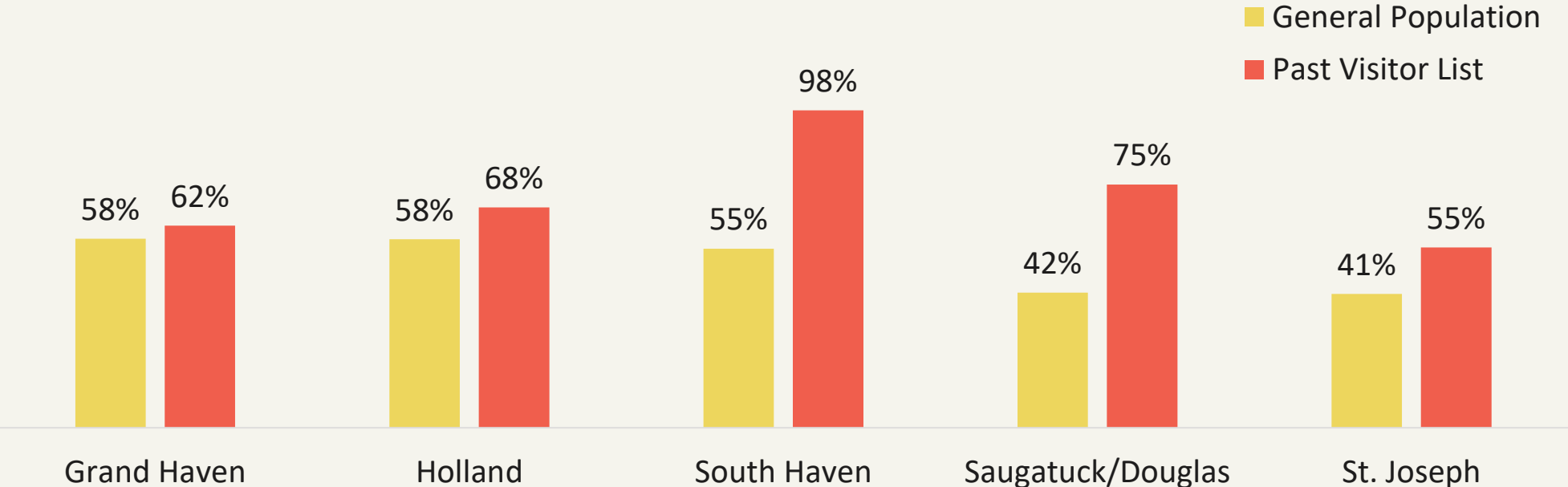


Q8. How familiar are you with each of the following destinations? Use the scale provided to indicate how familiar you consider yourself to be.
General population n=767

There is moderate interest among the general population to visit each destination. Interest is highest for Grand Haven, Holland and South Haven. Those from the past visitor list are very interested in returning to South Haven over other destinations.



Interest in Visiting Each Destination – 5 Very Interested or 4



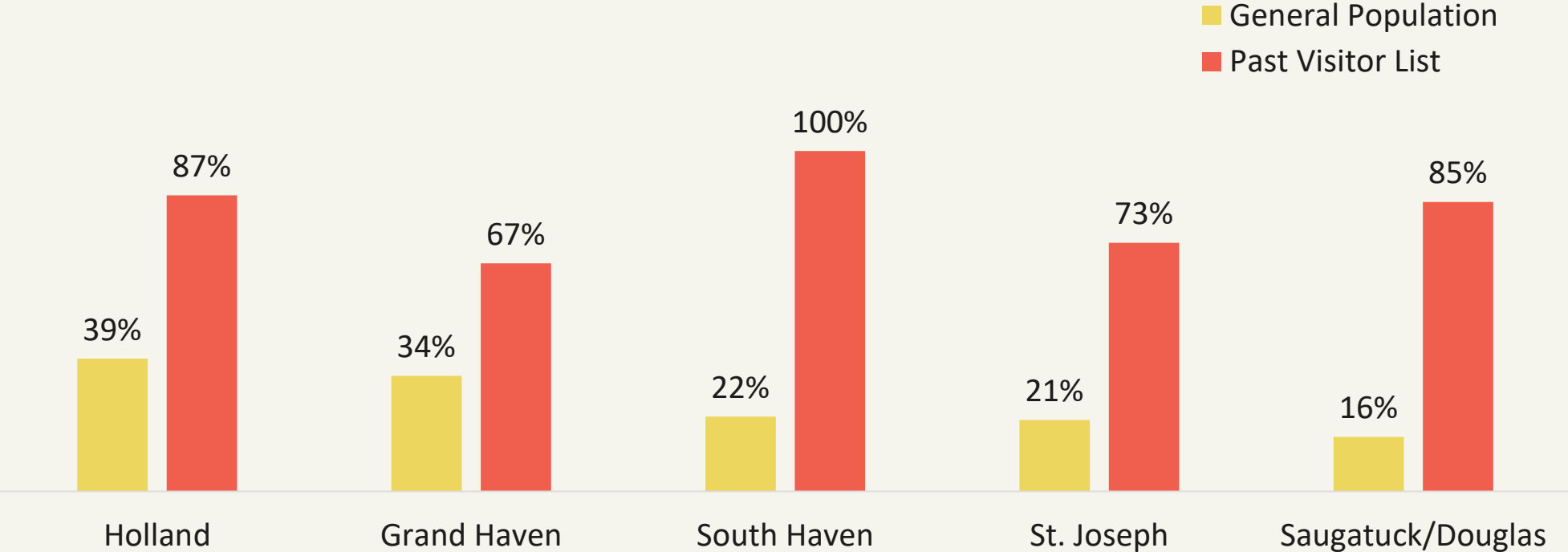
Q9. Based on any prior experience, what you have heard from others, or your expectations for the experience you would have, indicate how interested you are in visiting each of the following destinations in the future.

General Population n=525 ; Past Visitor List n=325

Holland and Grand Haven are the two destinations the general population are most likely to have visited in the past. Among those from the past visitor list, the majority have visited the other destinations in the competitive set.



Destinations They've Ever Visited

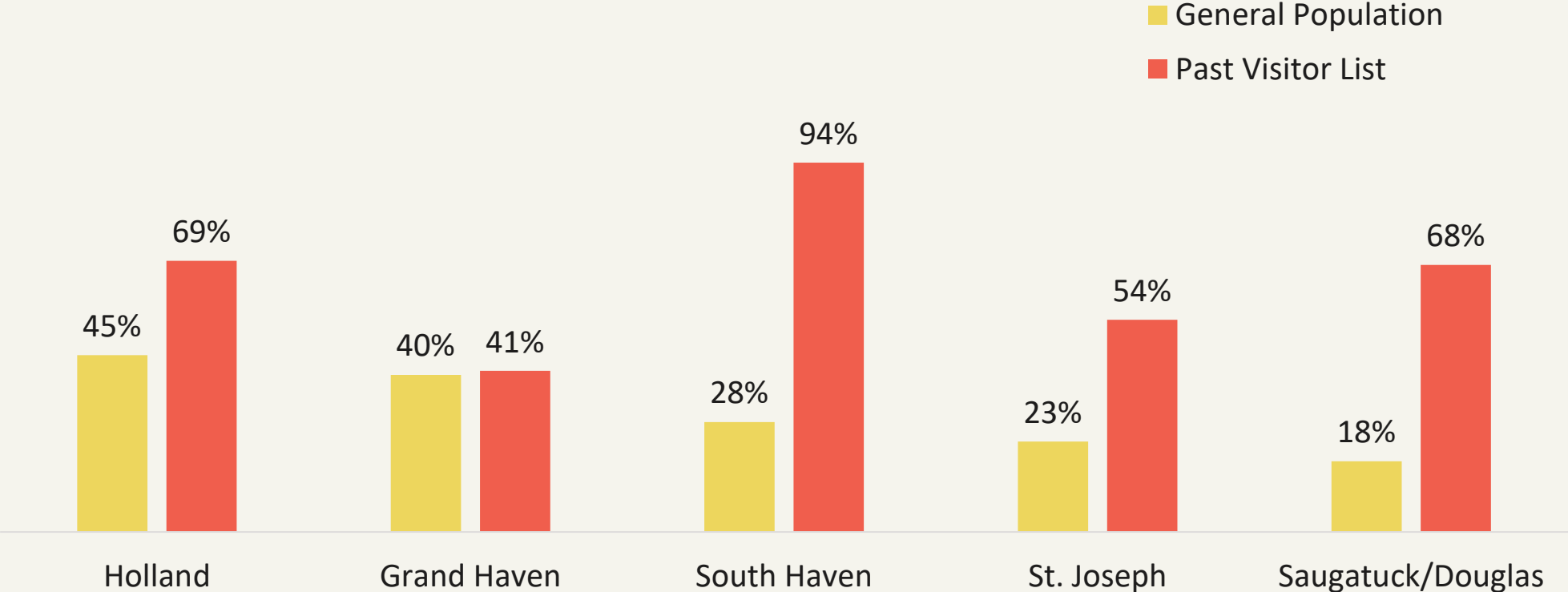


Q11. Which of the following destinations have you ever visited?
General Population n=525 ; Past Visitor List n=325

A similar trend is seen when looking at destinations the general population has visited in the last five years.



Destinations They've Visited in the Past 5 Years

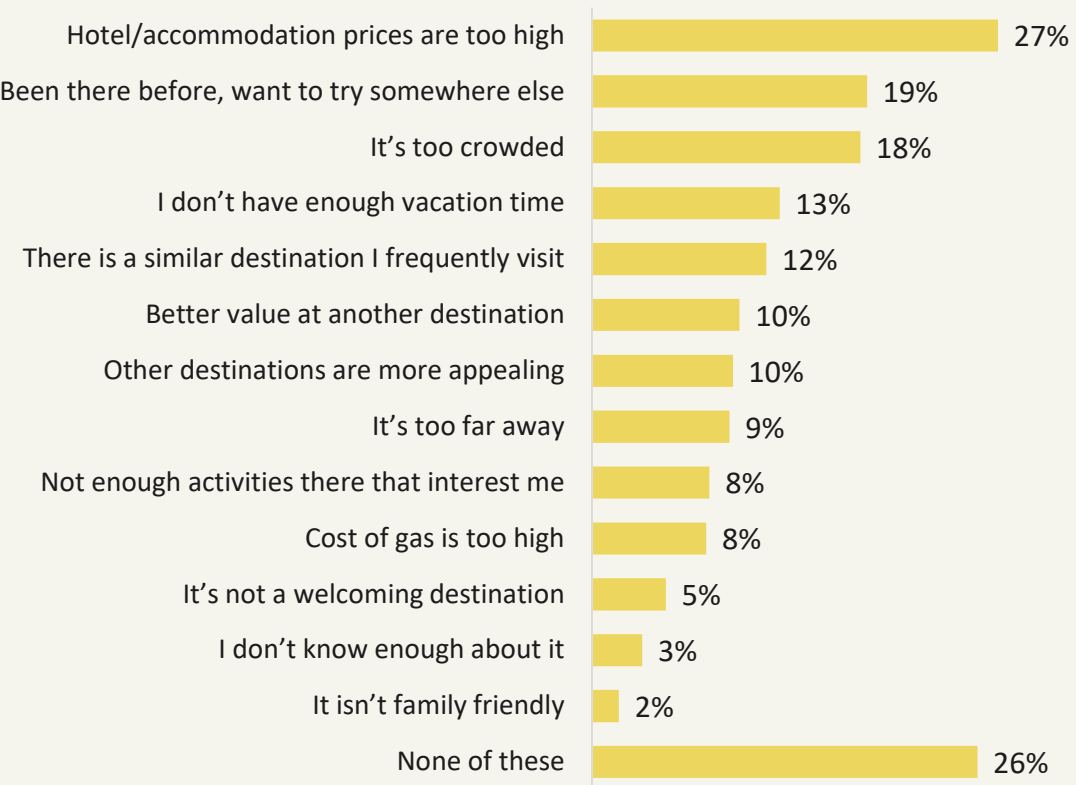


Q12. Which of the following destinations have you visited in the past 5 years?
General Population n=525 ; Past Visitor List n=325

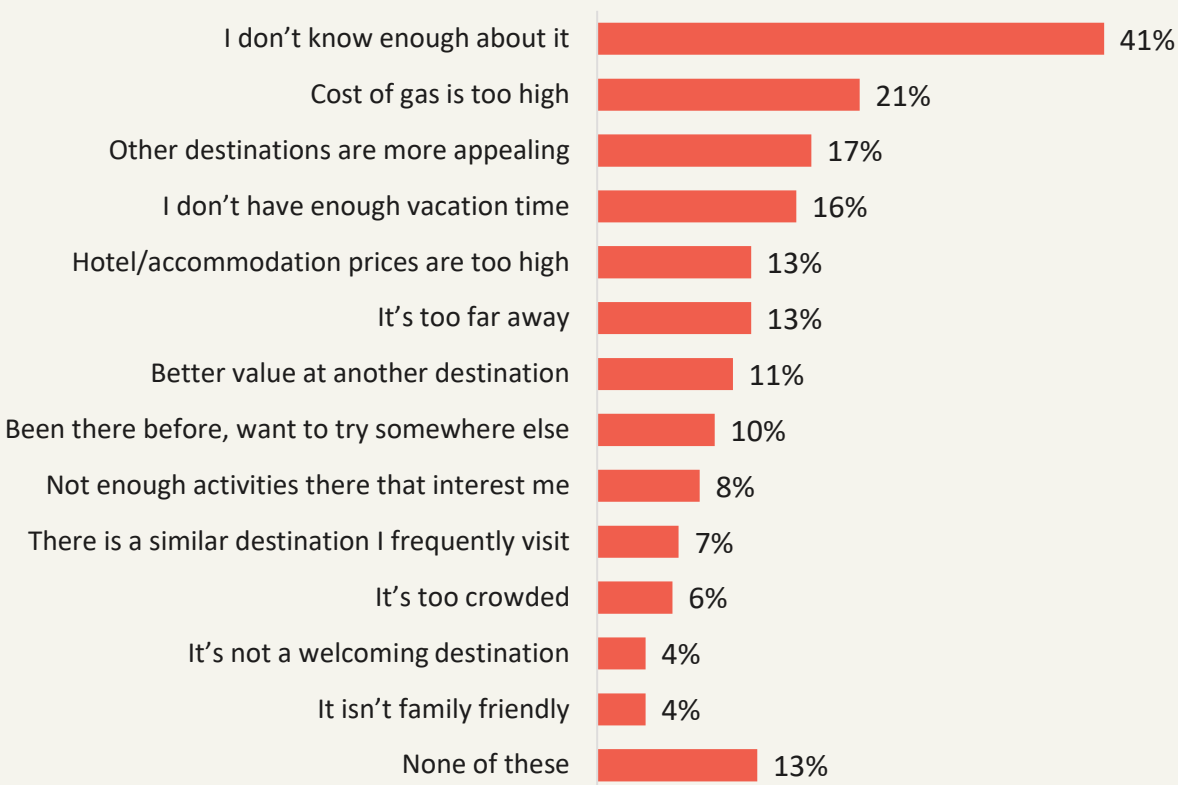
When asked of the barriers to visiting South Haven, past visitors cite high accommodation prices, wanting to try somewhere new and crowding in destination. Among non-visitors, lack of familiarity is the top barrier.



Barriers to Visitation – Past Visitor



Barriers to Visitation – Non-Visitors



Q21. Which, if any, are barriers to you visiting South Haven, MI? Please indicate all that apply.
 Past Visitors n=442 Non-Visitors n=408

CORE TAKEAWAY:

Those who know South Haven love South Haven – past visitors rate their experience highly, are very likely to recommend it, and are likely to return. The majority of past visitors come at least once a year, with many stating they take multiple trips per year, including during shoulder seasons.

South Haven receives the strongest experience ratings among the competitive set, though all destinations are thought to provide a positive experience.



Rating of Experience – Past Visitors

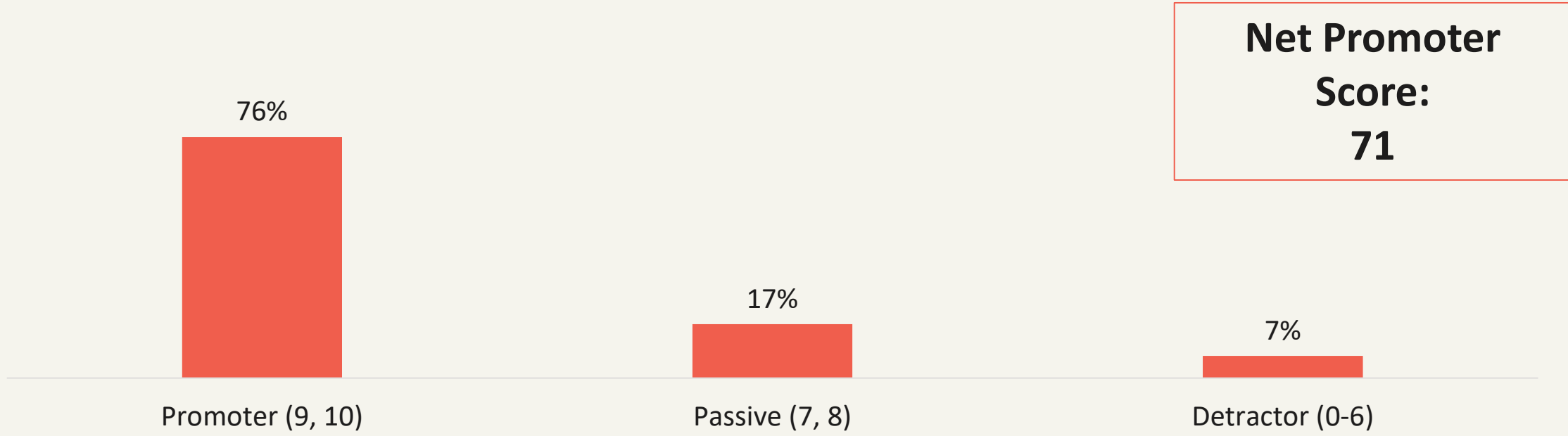


Q15. You said you have visited each of the destinations below. On the scale provided, indicate how you would rate the overall experience of the visit to each destination. Varies by destination

South Haven enjoys a very high Net Promoter Score, with the strong majority of past visitors being very likely to recommend the destination to others.



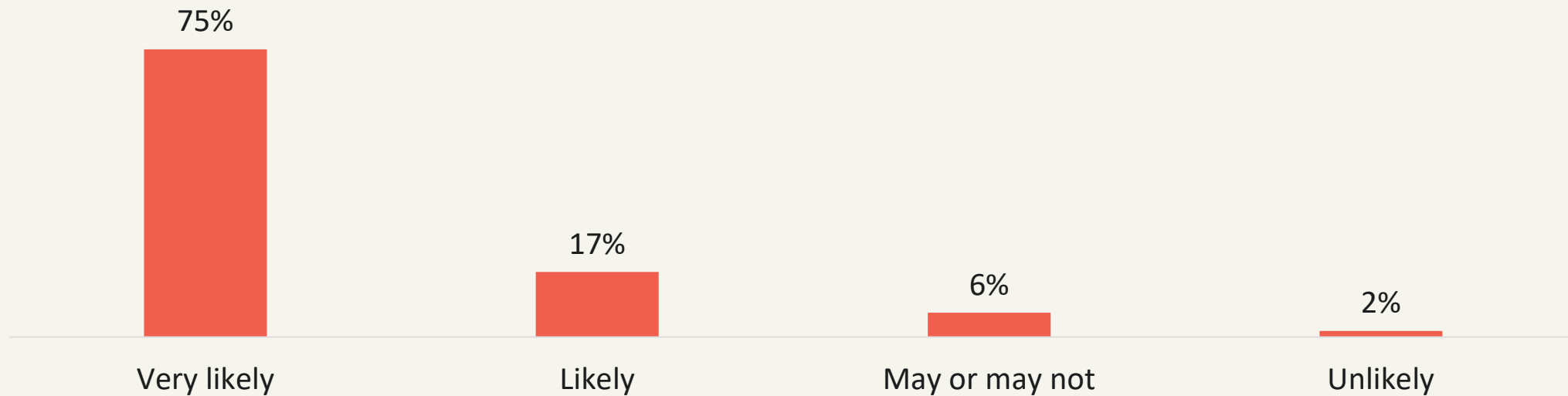
Likelihood to Recommend South Haven – Past Visitors



Q16. On a scale of 0 to 10, how likely are you to recommend South Haven, MI as a vacation destination to a friend or family member if you were asked?
Past visitors n=442

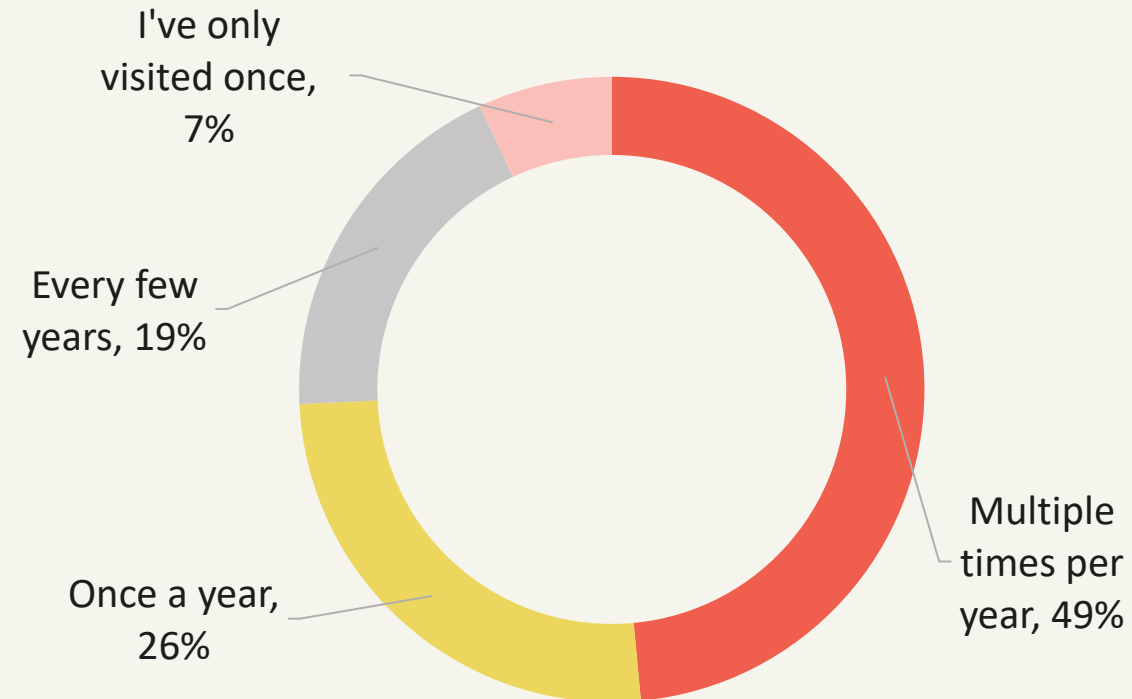
And nearly all past visitors are likely to return.

Likelihood to Return to South Haven – Past Visitors



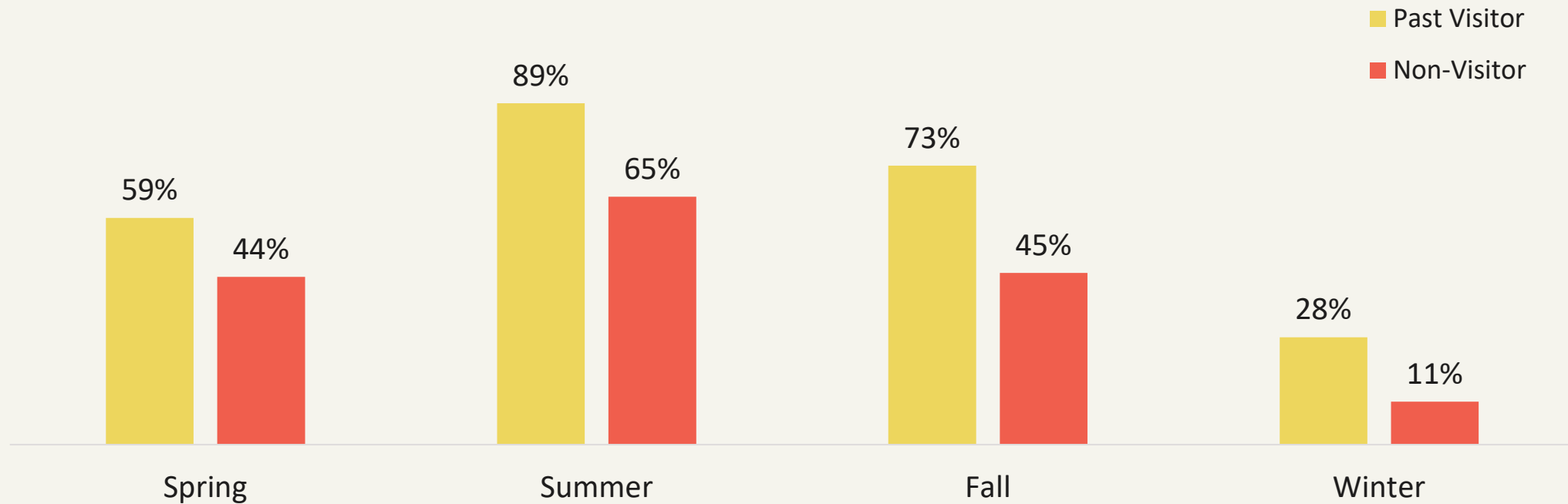
3 in 4 recent visitors say they visit South Haven at least once a year, with half saying they visit multiple times per year.

How Often They Visit South Haven



Among those who are interested in visiting or returning to South Haven, summer is the month they are most interested in, however there is interest during the shoulder season as well.

Seasons For Visiting South Haven – Among Those Interested in Visiting



Q10. In which of the following seasons would you visit South Haven? Please indicate all that apply.

Past visitors n=410, Non-Visitors n=196

CORE TAKEAWAY:

South Haven delivers on the important factors of beauty, beach and water access, the outdoors, a sense of ease, and a small town, local feel, but is less associated with being inclusive or welcoming, having a variety of dining options and being good value for the money. Notably, while the beach and water access is a top decision driver for past visitors, it is relatively unimportant to non-visitors when selecting a vacation destination.

Among past visitors, South Haven delivers on a variety of important factors – beauty, water access, ease, local shopping and a variety of accommodations. A few factors they feel it delivers less well are an inclusive/welcoming atmosphere, a variety of dining options and good value for the money.

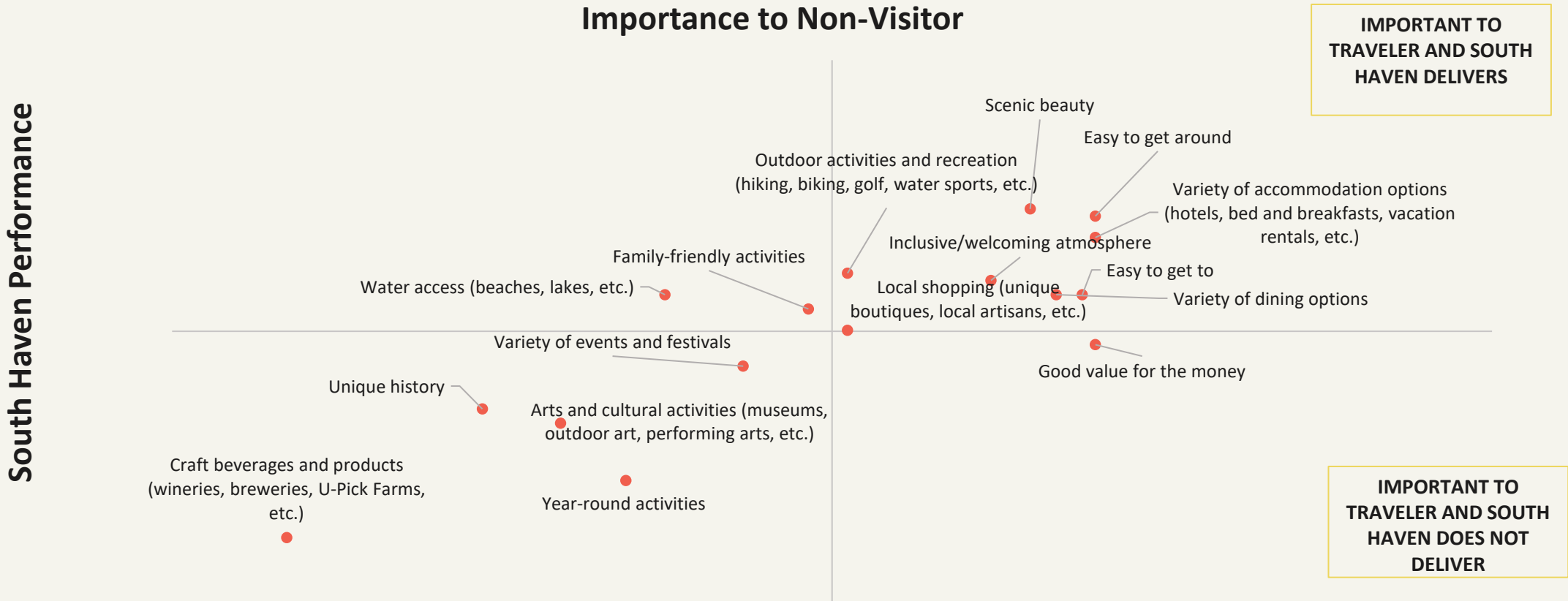


Q19. Indicate how important each of the listed attributes are when selecting a vacation or trip destination.

Q20. Now, please indicate the extent to which you feel South Haven delivers on each attribute.

Past Visitors n=438

Among non-visitors who are familiar with South Haven, they feel the destination delivers on nearly all the factors that are important to them, with the exception of value for the money. Interestingly, unlike past visitors, water access and beaches is a relatively unimportant factor for non-visitors.

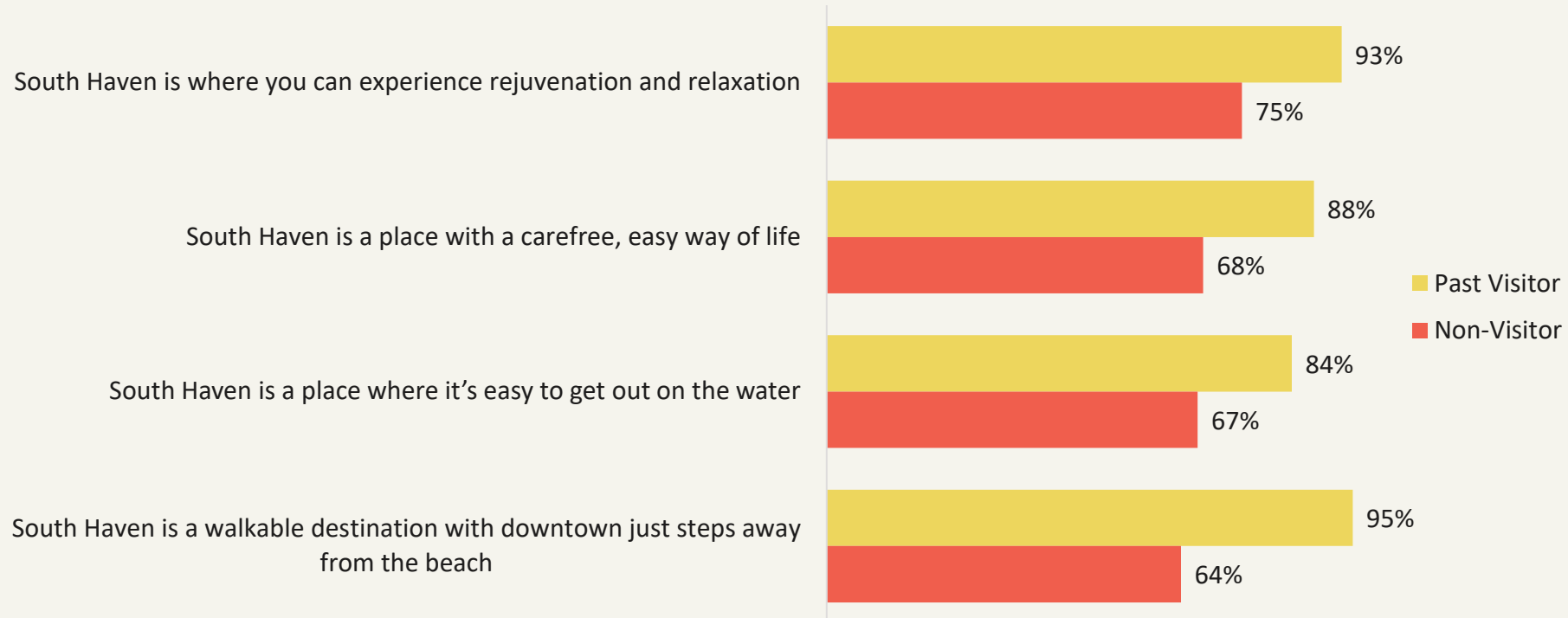


Q19. Indicate how important each of the listed attributes are when selecting a vacation or trip destination.
 Q20. Now, please indicate the extent to which you feel South Haven delivers on each attribute.
 Non-Visitors Who are Familiar with South Haven n=253

Non-visitor strongly associate South Haven with a sense of relaxation and show moderate agreement that it has a sense of ease – a carefree way of life, easy to get on the water and easy to get around downtown. Past visitors rate South Haven strongly on all aspects related to relaxation and ease.



South Haven Brand Perceptions – Agree Completely

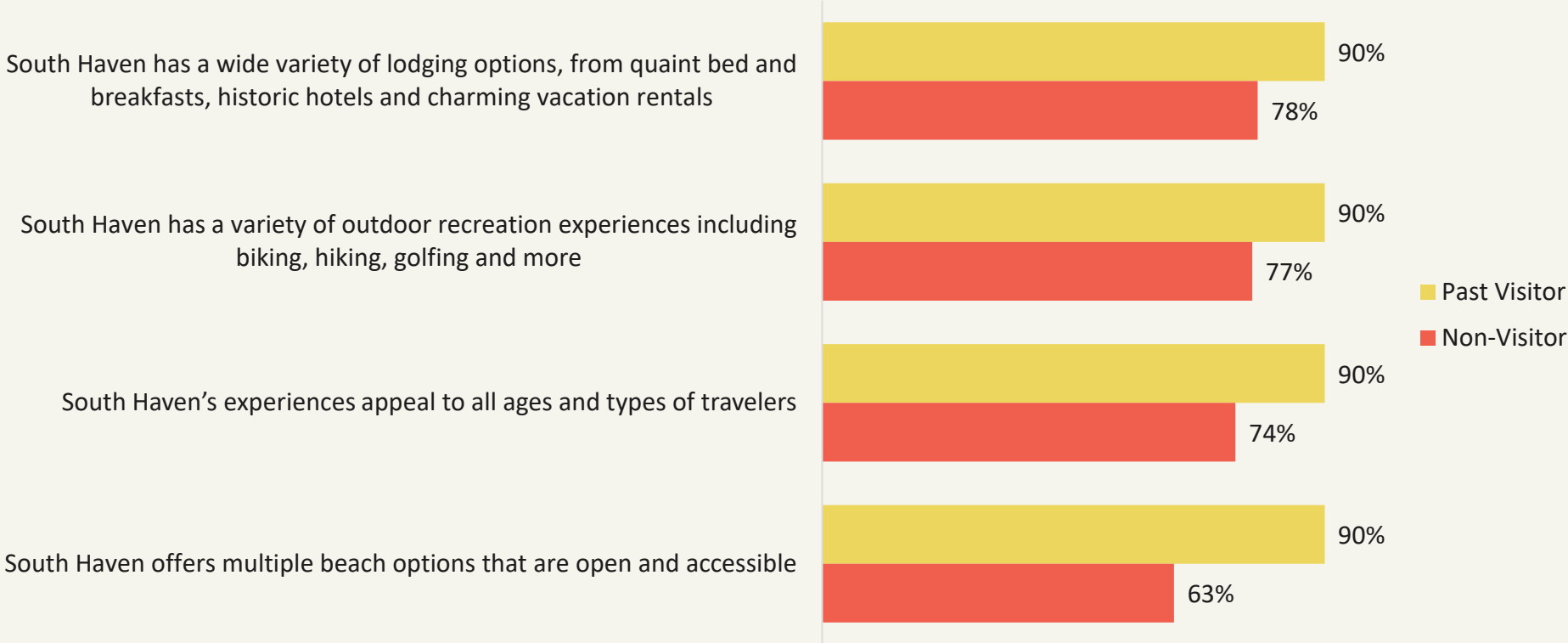


Q18. Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about South Haven, MI.
Past Visitors n=438 Non-Visitors Who are Familiar with South Haven n=253

The majority of past visitors and non-visitors agree South Haven has a variety of lodging options and outdoor recreation and has experiences for a variety of travelers. Fewer non-visitors associate South Haven with multiple beach options.



South Haven Brand Perceptions – Agree Completely or Somewhat

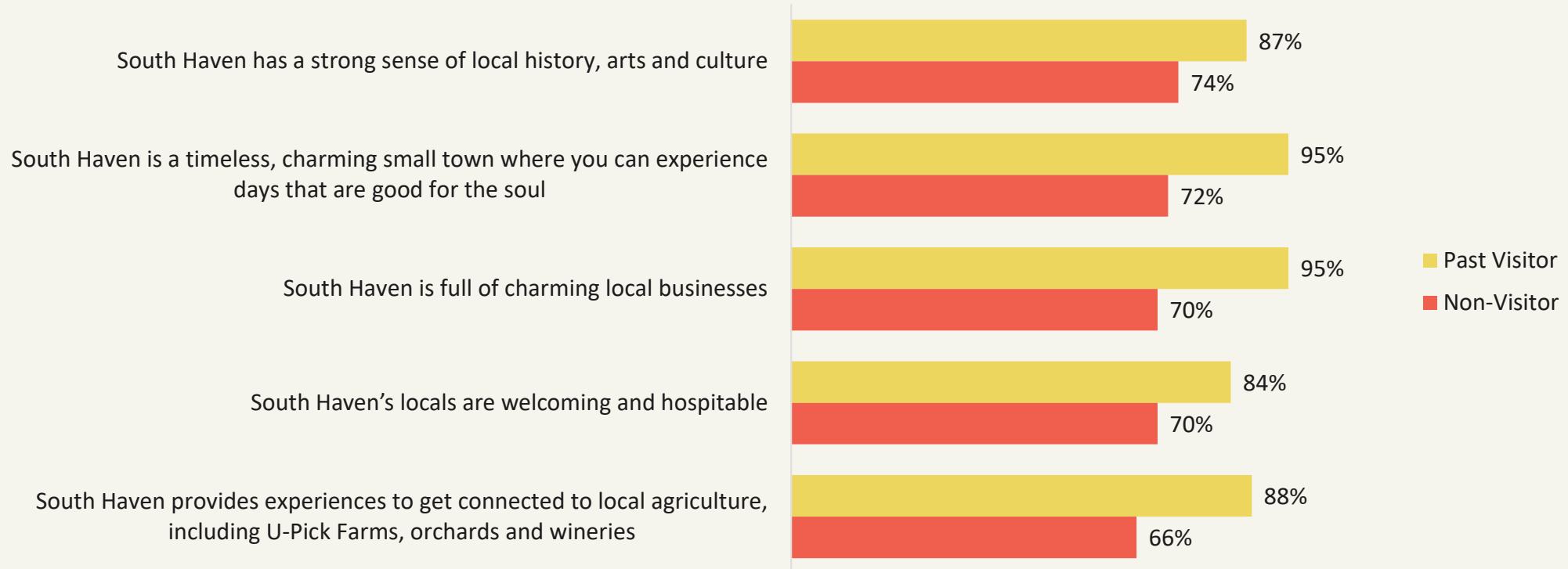


Q18. Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about South Haven, MI.
Past Visitors n=438 Non-Visitors Who are Familiar with South Haven n=253

Past visitors strongly associate South Haven with statements related vitality and local culture. Non-visitors also rate South Haven strongly on many local culture and vitality aspects, however fewer non- visitors associate South Haven with agricultural experiences.



South Haven Brand Perceptions – Agree Completely or Somewhat



Q18. Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about South Haven, MI.
Past Visitors n=438 Non-Visitors Who are Familiar with South Haven n=253

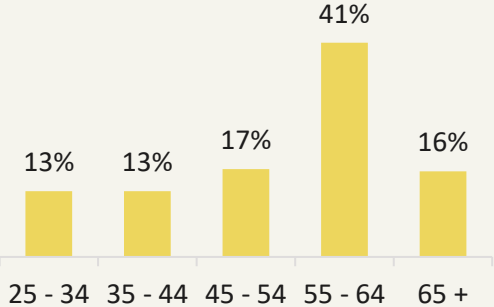
BVK

RESPONDENT PROFILE

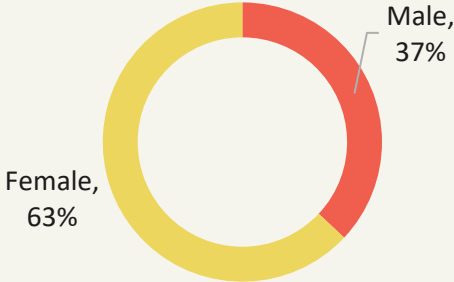
RESPONDENT PROFILE – PAST VISITORS



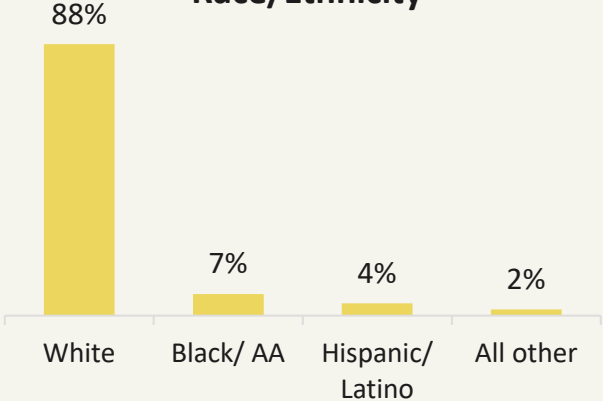
Age



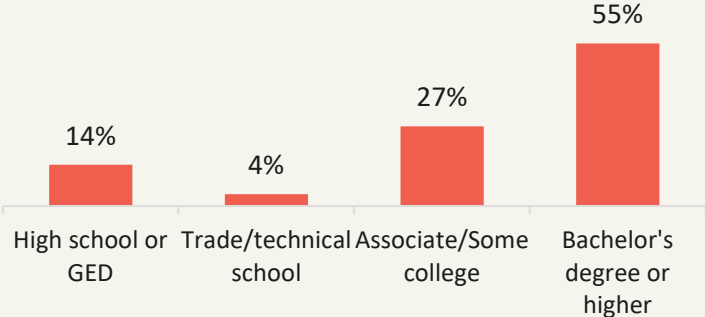
Gender



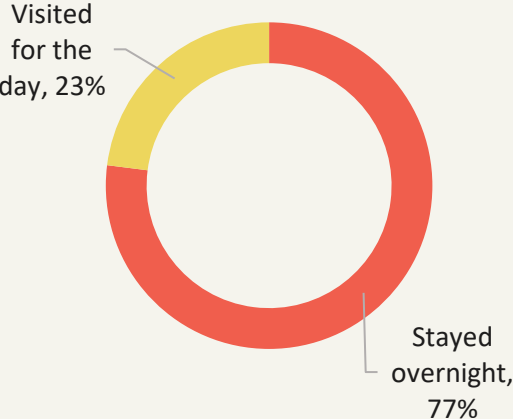
Race/Ethnicity



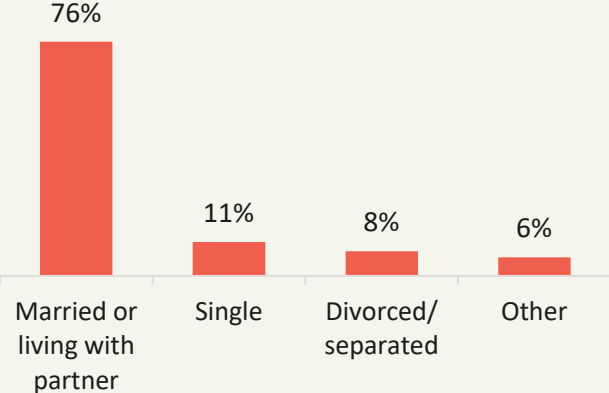
Level of Education



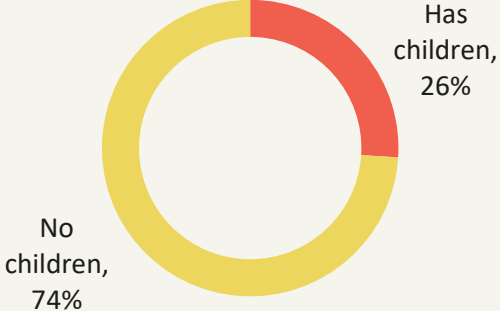
Day Trip vs. Overnight



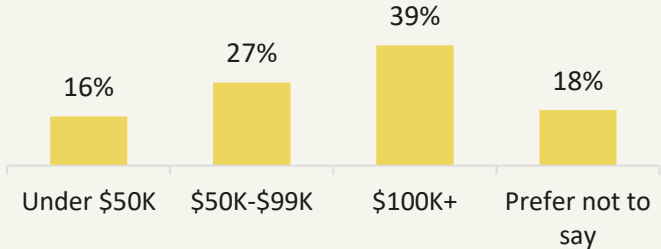
Marital Status



Presence of Children



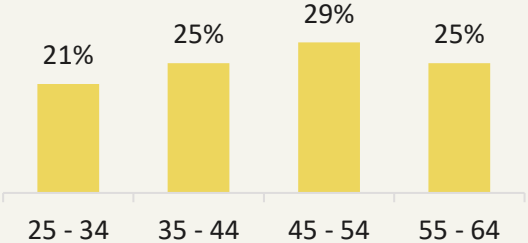
Household Income



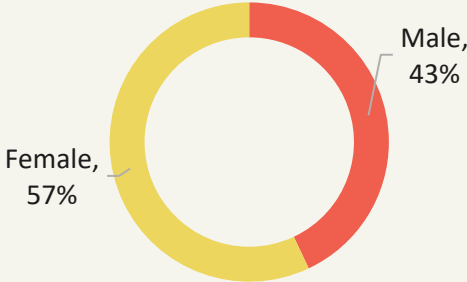
RESPONDENT PROFILE – NON-VISITORS



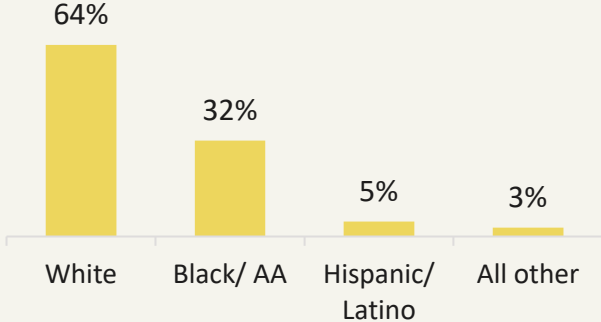
Age



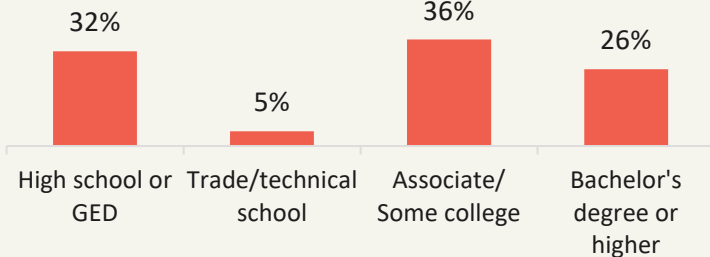
Gender



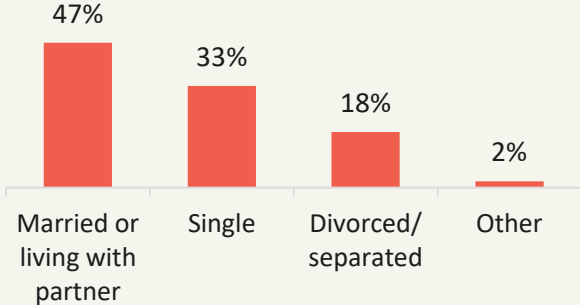
Race/Ethnicity



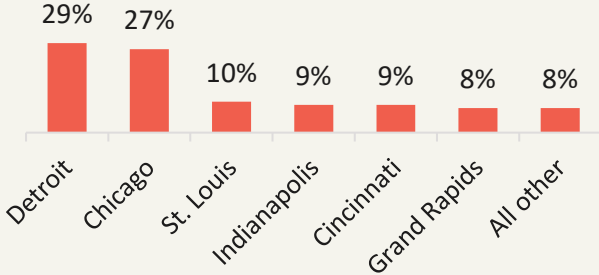
Level of Education



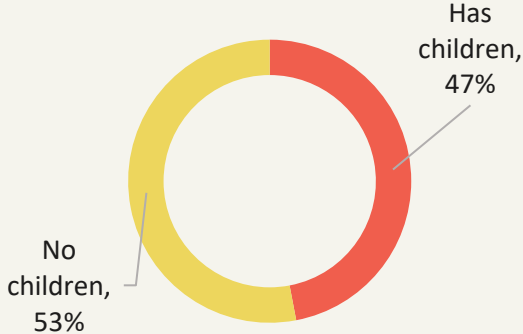
Marital Status



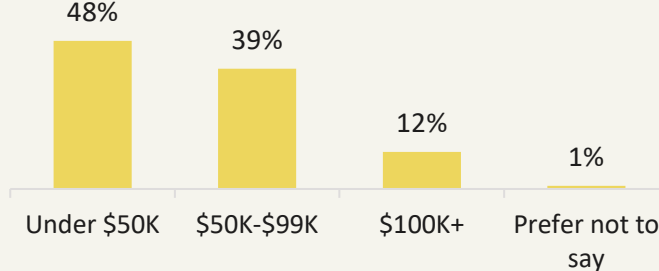
Geography



Presence of Children



Household Income



BVK