

My METRO Moment



VALENTIGROUP

Fall 2013

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Executive Summary

METRO, Houston's primary transportation provider, is one of the largest transit agencies in the country. However, it faces a major challenge in connecting with millennials. Levels of awareness, usage, and consideration for the services METRO provides are low among its millennial audience.

But there is good news. Recent research has revealed that millennials are more interested in public transportation usage than previous generations.

If METRO can develop a strong presence on the UH campus, it has a good shot of growing its millennial rider base citywide. METRO's services provide a solution to alleviate increasingly widespread parking shortages both on campus and in key destinations around the city of Houston.

Our plan is to change the emphasis of METRO's advertising from the ride experience to the destination. We plan to do this by utilizing the brand identity infrastructure that is already in place for METRO and welcoming millennials into the conversation.

Millennials place a heavy importance on personal freedom. We believe it is possible to change the way millennials interact with METRO by introducing the METRO brand into what millennials already want.

By reevaluating and transforming the positioning of METRO, we believe that we can create a new demand for METRO's services and increase ridership rates among millennials here at the University of Houston and in the greater Houston service area.

Here's how we, the Valenti Group, did it.



Challenges

To overcome our challenges...

1

2

3

METRO Outlined Three Big Challenges

Increase Awareness

among millennials on the University of Houston campus and in the city of Houston.

Address Social and Political Obstacles

facing public transportation.

Combat Houston's Car Culture

by promoting METRO as a viable transportation alternative to personal vehicles.

Our Challenge is to create a successful campaign on our campus that can be used on other campuses.

SWOT

...we started by analyzing the METRO brand.

SWOT analysis takes a look at the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of METRO, and threats that METRO faces.

Strengths

- METRO's programs allow for a more cost efficient commute.
- METRO's natural gas buses are environmentally friendly.
- METRO's routes reach all of the city of Houston.

Threats

- Students are committed to driving their cars.
- Perception of public transportation being "not for me"
- Political opposition towards transit

Weaknesses

- Millennials lack awareness of METRO's programs and system.
- Millennials have a poor perception of METRO buses being safe and unclean.
- Low awareness of METRO's T.R.I.P.App

Opportunities

- Millennials, as a generation, are driving less.
- METRO can become a pillar of the college culture.
- Improve technology that impacts the bus riding experience.
- METRO Rail's new lines opening up around the city
- Transportation advertising filled with similar messaging

System Reimagining



SYSTEM REIMAGINING

METRO is currently reinventing its service and image. Our campaign works with this in mind.

Secondary Research

Many transit entities have faced problems similar to METRO's...

Industry review showed...

There are 5 Key Characteristics of a Successful Transportation Service.

According to a study found on Embarq.com, public transportation users' perception of transit services is influenced by five factors:

Reliability

Frequent Service

Safety and Cleanliness

Service Hours

Cost and Savings

If these five factors are accounted for, riders are more likely to believe in the quality of their transit system.

Marketing can Build Political and Social Support for Public Transportation

We also found that there is a secondary benefit that can arise out of transit marketing campaigns. According to the Embarq.com creative guide, "beyond increasing ridership among key demographics, marketing campaigns should build public and political support for new and existing projects." This means that it makes sense to try and "get the support of people who won't necessarily use the system." We want a system that is viewed favorably by users and non-users alike.

The Role of Marketing in Public Transportation

According to a study conducted in Sweden and published in the journal, Transport Policy, "in their study of car-using university students, Kerr et al. (2009) claimed that if car users believe that [public transportation] is a feasible and reasonable alternative to private transport, they are inclined to alter their travel accordingly." We can convince more students to use the METRO system if they believe that using METRO can provide levels of personal freedom and safety that are comparable to using a private vehicle.

Secondary Research

...and have approached advertising with four distinct, yet consistent, strategies.

Green



Environmental benefits of mass transit

Savings



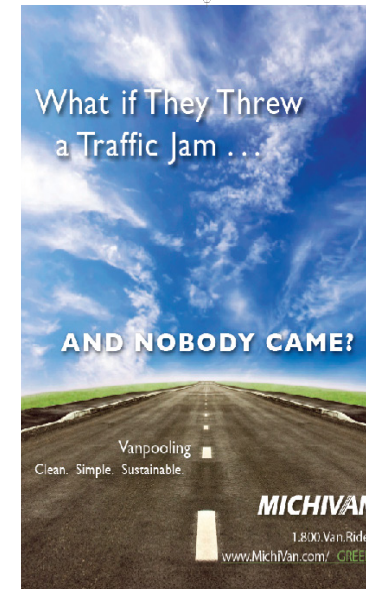
Frugality of mass transit

Personal Freedom



Exploration and opportunities of mass transit

Traffic Avoidance



Stress reduction of mass transit

Target

As we got to know millennials...

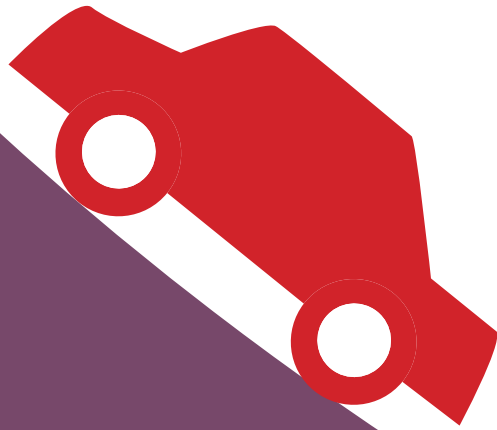
The campus student population is largely made up of adults representing the Millennial Generation.

Millennials on the UH campus are predominantly aged 18-24 and represent a wide range of ethnicities. They are the first true multi-cultural generation. They either work to pay for school, or at an internship. While they have differences, they share the following values:

Making a difference
Staying connected
Technology
Travel and adventure
Fun, Simplicity
Peers' Opinions
Freedom of choice
Education

Target

...we found they are open-minded about mass transit.



Millennials **view cars as a hassle.**

Consequently...

Millennials aren't crazy about car ownership:

In 2008, 31% of 16-year-olds and 77% of 19-year-olds have a car vs in 1978: 50% of 16-year-olds and 92% of 19-year-olds have a car.

Ultimately...

Millennials are **driving less:**

From 2001 to 2009, the average annual number of miles traveled by young people (16-34 year olds) dropped 23% from 10,300 to 7,900



There's **good news** for Millennials and public transit!

Millennials are **riding more:**

From 2001 to 2009, the number of passenger miles traveled by 16-34 year olds on public transit **increased by 40%**

Regardless of Income:

From 2001 to 2009, 16-34 year-olds in households with incomes of over \$70,000 **increased use of public transit by 100%**

Because:

Mass transportation is more compatible with millennial lifestyle. It allows millennials to safely stay connected with their peers on the go.

Primary Research

We set out to understand where METRO stands with millennials...

Objectives:

- Understand the brand awareness and usage of METRO.
- Understand the brand perception of METRO.
- Gain insight into what would motivate the target to consider METRO.

Strategies:

- Use quantitative and qualitative research methods including an online survey, focus groups, projective techniques and communication concept testing.

How Often People Ride METRO

Never = 67%



Less than once a month = 21%



Once a month = 1%



2-3 times a month = 1%



Once a week = 4%



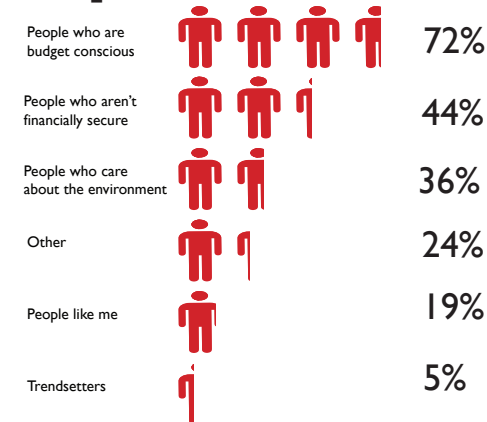
2-3 Times a week = 2%



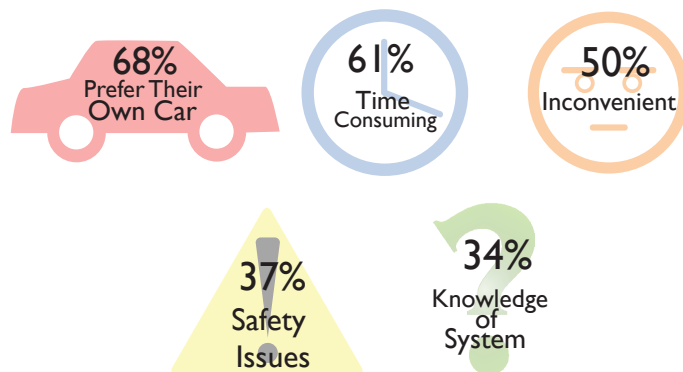
Daily = 2%



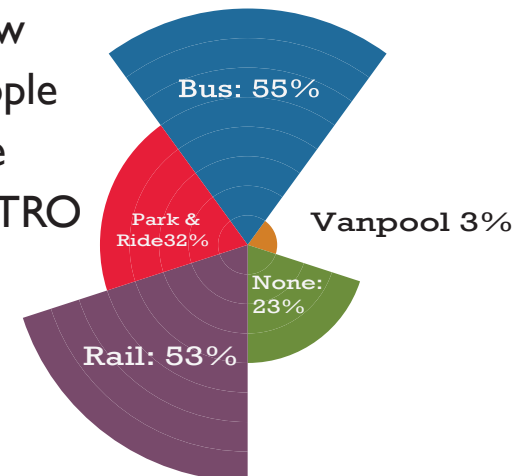
People Who Ride METRO Are...



Why don't people ride METRO?



How People Use METRO



Primary Research

...and found out they don't know the brand.

T.R.I.P. App Familiarity



4%
Very Familiar



10%
Familiar

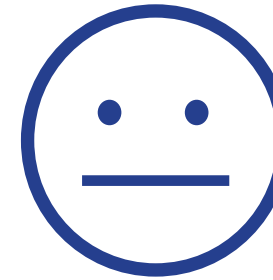


86%
Not Familiar

Website Familiarity



8%
Very Familiar



23%
Familiar



68%
Not Familiar

What is the cost per ride?

38% Familiar **\$** 62% Not Familiar

How do you purchase a Rail Ticket ?

40% Familiar **?** 60% Not Familiar

Percent Familiarity
with the Q Card:

46%

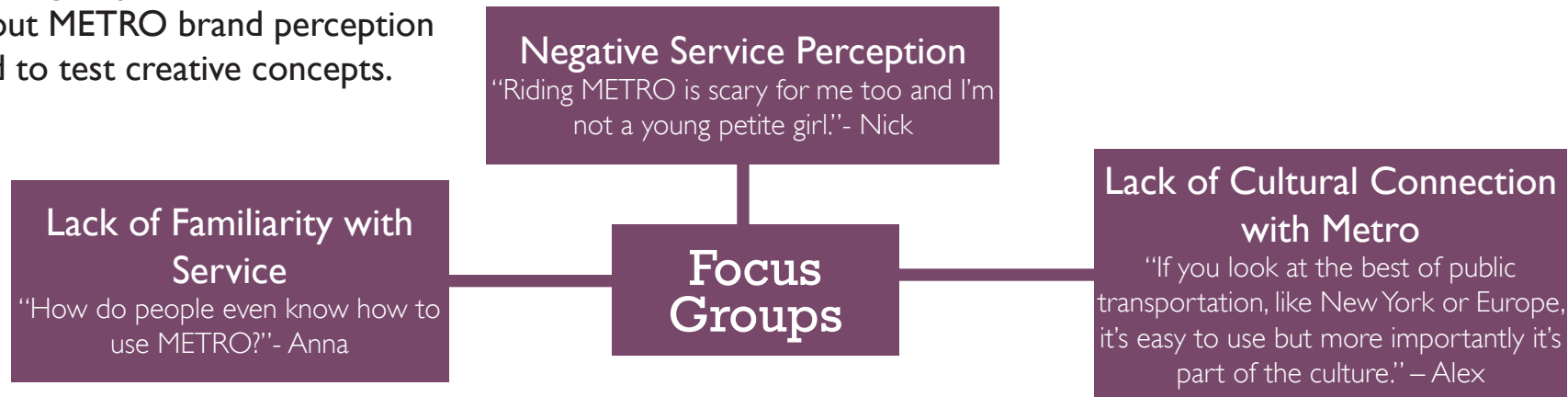
What We Learned

- Consumers lack familiarity with METRO's system.
- Consumers ride METRO infrequently.
- Consumers have service and safety concerns with METRO.

Primary Research

We dug a bit deeper...

Focus groups were used to learn about METRO brand perception and to test creative concepts.



Tested Four Concepts Based on Industry Strategies

Know Houston, No Traffic

Campaign focused on a stress-free transportation option around Houston.

Metro in an Instant

Campaign focused on getting to destinations quickly and efficiently.

Budget Campaign

Campaign focused on opportunities to save money with METRO.

Environmental Campaign

Campaign focused on METRO’s environmentally friendly services.

Sentence Completion

Primary Research

...and found that they don't understand the brand.

People who ride METRO are _____.

"Usually the ones without a car"

"Just fine"

"No different"

If my friends saw me riding METRO, I would feel _____.

"Okay, but not the best it can be in Houston"

"Intimidating"

Riding METRO is _____.

"Getting lost"

"Getting robbed"

If I were to use METRO, my biggest fear would be _____.

"Like I am being good to the environment, but in Houston I feel like it's easier to drive"

"A little scared and a little worried if I was on the right bus"

When I use mass transportation I feel _____.

What we discovered:

- Millennials have low consideration and have a low perception of METRO and the services it provides.
- Millennials responded well to concepts that incorporated ideas of personal freedom.
- Millennials viewed money-saving campaigns as too obvious.
- Millennials viewed environmental-friendliness claims with skepticism.

Perceptual Barriers

Consumers don't understand METRO...

METRO faces perceptual as well as physical barriers.

Awareness

Not
top of mind

Attitude

Negative
Perception

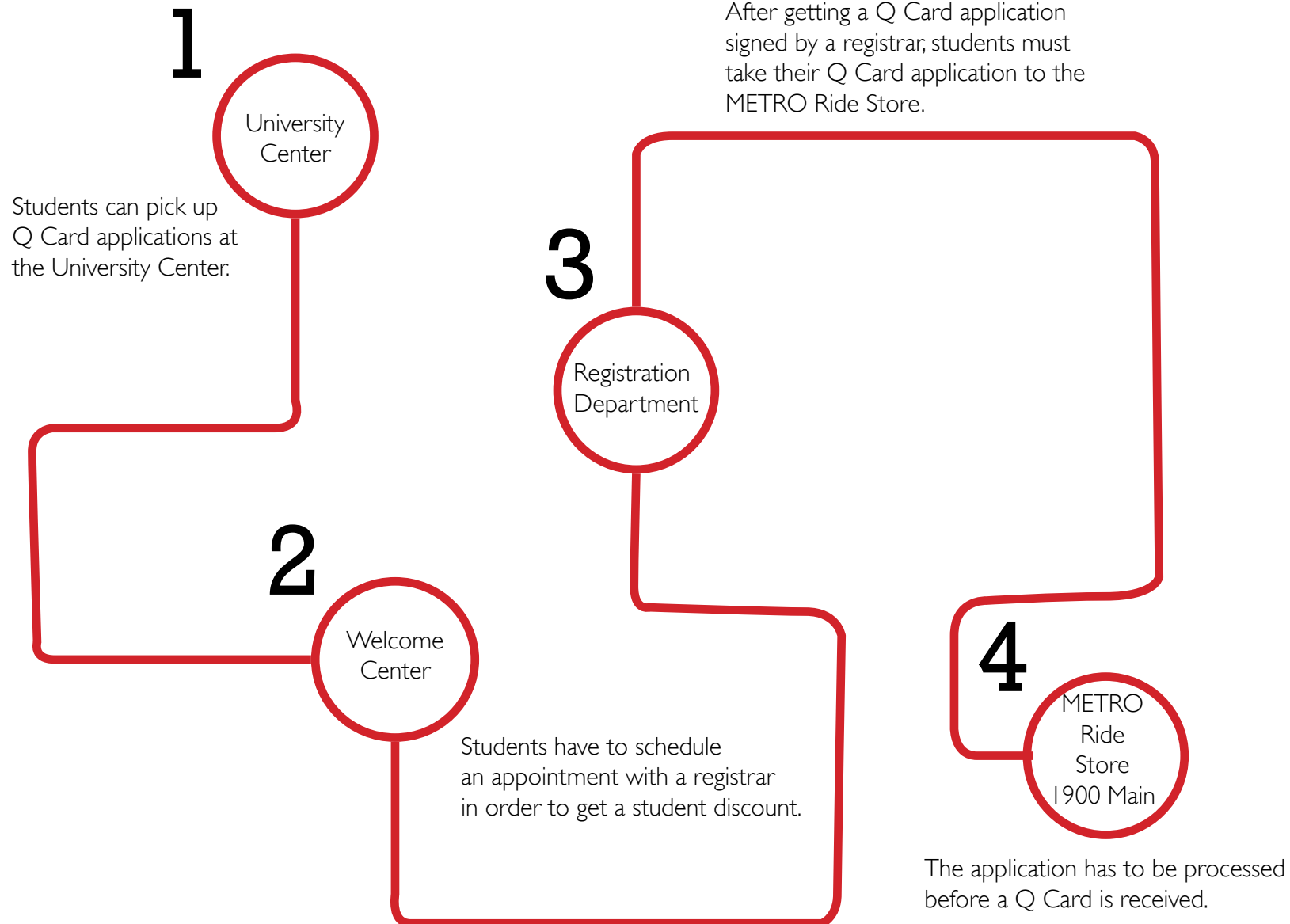
Understanding

Difficult to
access

Physical Barriers

...and find it difficult to access.

This is the current process for students to get a Q Card:



Brand Destination

We believe METRO is going places...

This shows where METRO is now and where the campaign will take it.

I think that METRO isn't for people like me.

Current Belief

I either drive my car or ask my friend for a ride. If both of these options are unavailable, then I will consider using METRO.

Current Behavior

The Q Card allows me access to a variety of ways to get where I want to go.

Compelling Future Belief

I choose to ride METRO and make it a part of how I get to where I want to go.

Desired Future Behavior

Big Idea

...but it takes a Big Idea to get there.

Brand Benefit
METRO's Q Card
provides access to all
forms of transportation.

Consumer Insight
Millennials want freedom
to choose where they go
and how they get there.

THE BIG IDEA

**METRO's Q Card gives you the freedom of
choice to go the way you want to go.**

WHY IT WORKS:

By putting the Q Card in the hands of millennials, METRO aligns itself with an idea that millennials value – freedom.

Campaign

To change millennials' perception of METRO...

The Creative Strategy moves the conversation from the ride to the destination.

Strategy:

The creative strategy is to show personal destinations that are relevant to millennials by adding METRO to their lives.

Positioning:

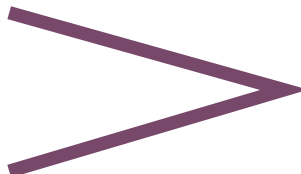
By positioning METRO's Q Card as an alternative way to get to your destination when and how you want to, the campaign will make METRO a relevant transportation option for millennials

Executional Idea:

The "Q Your _____ Moment" campaign expresses the big idea by focusing on destinations that millennials find relevant.

Changing Perception:

FROM:
Boring
Old-Fashioned
Not For Me
Ride



TO:
Interesting
Contemporary
A Good Option
Destination

Anatomy of an Ad

...we must connect emotionally.

This headline encourages conversation.

 Your



Each moment is captured in the same Polaroid style that is popular with millennials who are constantly building their own personal photo diaries.

The three-step process simplifies the METRO experience.

ment

This QR Code quickly links users to METRO's T.R.I.P. App.



1. Q up 2. Download 3. Ride

The METRO Q® Fare Card gives you the freedom to go where you want to go, when you want to go.



Excite and Experience

Bringing the campaign to life...

Our plan eliminates the barriers using a three-phase approach:
Excite, Experience, and Extend

Excite

Experience

Timeline of the Campaign

Generates
awareness of METRO

Campus event
educating consumers
eliminating the
familiarity barrier

Extend

...and extending it to last.

The diagram features a thick, solid green horizontal bar. Above this bar, on the left, is a red-outlined speech bubble containing the word 'Extend'. To its right is another red-outlined speech bubble containing the word 'Future'. Below the green bar, on the left, is a purple-outlined speech bubble containing the text 'Continue the conversation with consumers to eliminate the understanding barrier'. To its right is another purple-outlined speech bubble containing the text 'Continue to be a part of the campus culture by interacting with METRO millennials in the future'. The purple bubbles are positioned such that their top corners appear to emerge from or connect to the green bar.

Extend

Future

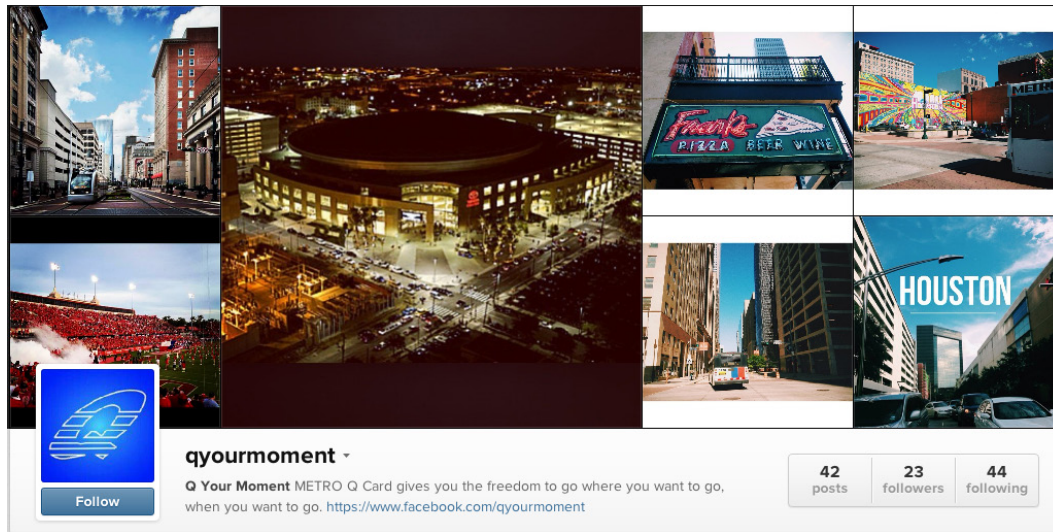
Continue the conversation with consumers to eliminate the understanding barrier

Continue to be a part of the campus culture by interacting with METRO millennials in the future

Excite

We developed an interesting way to reach our audience...

To increase awareness, this phase uses a combination of print, social media, and guerilla media.



Popular social media sites were used to generate awareness.



Posters, flyers, and yard signs were placed in high traffic areas around campus.

Excite

...and drive participation in our event.

Q Your

Moment

A moment when you break free and experience Houston when you want and how you want it. Join us to find out how to start:

Time: 11:30 am - 1:30 pm
Date: Oct 31st
Where: PGH

1. Q Up 2. Download 3. Ride
Metro Q Card gives you the freedom to go where you want to go, when you want to go.

METRO *Going Places*

Placement in the Daily Cougar promoted the event.



Miniature squirrel bus stops helped generate curiosity and buzz.

Experience

In order to reach millennials...

Start

The Q Your Moment event educated millennials and registered them for Q Cards.

Visitors are welcomed by the Valenti Group and encouraged to take the journey!



Visitors are connected to our social media outlets.

1st Punch!

Visitors board the METRO Discover Bus to learn more about METRO and get their student Q Card.

2nd Punch!



Experience

...we planned an event that would bring them in.

Visitors learn about the upcoming light rail system and METRO T.R.I.P. app.

4th Punch!



**Adventure
Moment**

At our event, by completing each of these stations, visitors will be connected to METRO and will receive free giveaways.



**Green
Moment**

Visitors learn about METRO's environmental initiatives.

3rd punch!



**METRO
Moments**

Visitors are connected with the Houston Rockets, given pizza, and invited to enjoy our photobooth.



Finish

Extend

We believe METRO can reach millennials today...

Extend creates a lasting connection and continued brand building.

Current



Posters and yard signs continue building awareness.



Social media continues to engage millennials online.



Campus Orientation tables educate students about METRO.



Student Ambassadors guide students through the METRO experience.

Future



The campaign tagline can be extended as a branding device, in this case a Q Card sleeve.

Extend

...and continue to engage them in the future.

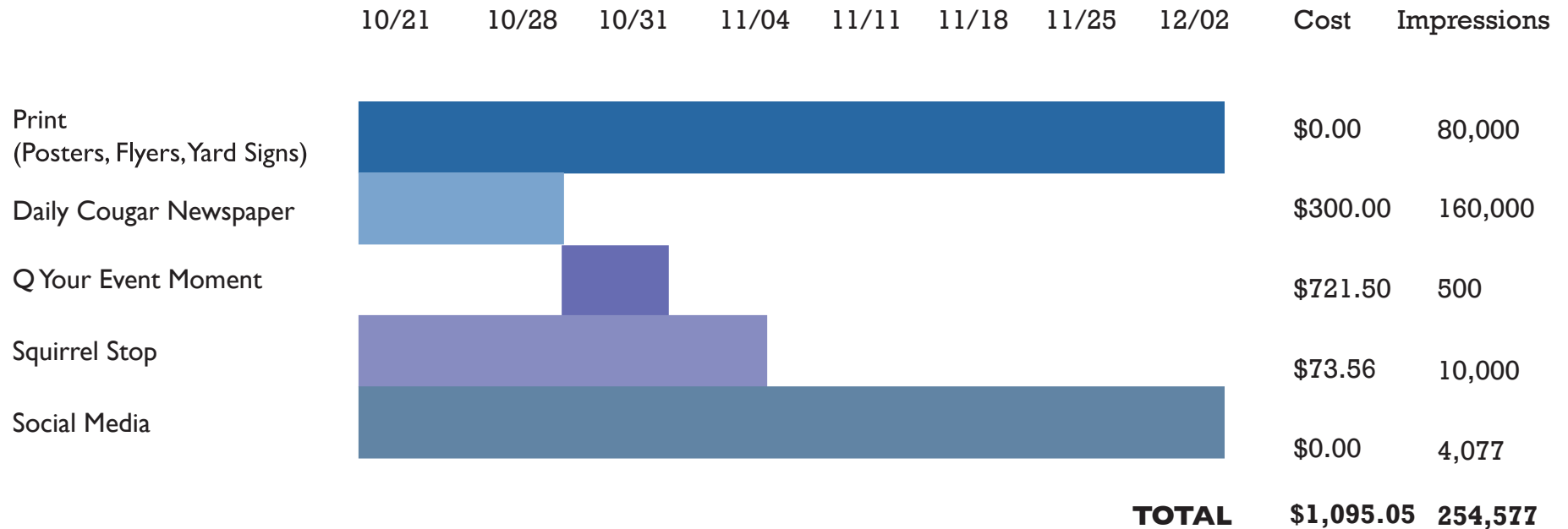


Integrating the Q Card with the Cougar Card will encourage usage among campus dwellers.

Flowchart/Budget

Finalizing the plan...

Campaign support included print, social media, event and promotions generating 254,577 impressions for \$1,095.06



\$400 of added value increased impact by 39%.

Post Measurement

...and measuring success.

The Q Your Moment campaign increased awareness, changed brand perception, and gained new riders.

Awareness Increased

Familiarity with
METRO's service  46 %

Q Card Conversion

75 Q Cards were acquired out of the
174 event attendees.

That is a 43% conversion rate!

Brand Perception Changed

Safety

 5 %

Reliability

 6 %

Cleanliness

 5 %

Green

 13 %

Budget Friendly

 4 %

Easy to Use

 21 %

Future Thoughts

The campaign set in motion a Q Your Moment experience that can go well beyond this semester and the University of Houston Campus. The program has the potential to be relevant to different campuses.

Appendix

Here are some interesting resources we found...

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...from the team that found it.

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