



**DESTINATIONS**  
INTERNATIONAL

# DESTINATION PROMOTION: A CATALYST FOR COMMUNITY VITALITY

# Introduction: It Starts with a Visit

Destination organizations —referred to as destination management organizations, destination marketing organizations, regional tourism organizations, convention and visitor bureaus, or tourism boards — create community value through various activities and channels. Their foundational activity of attracting visitors sets off a chain reaction of economic benefits. Destination promotion builds awareness, burnishes the destination brand, and drives incremental visitor spending that generates businesses, jobs, and taxes. Likewise, destination organizations promote their destinations to organizers of conventions, trade shows, sports, and other events—generating substantial economic benefits.

Destination organizations, by promoting the destination to leisure visitors and business events also spark a chain reaction of economic development. As described by Maura Gast, Executive Director at Irving Convention and Visitors Bureau: “If you build a place people want to visit, you build a place where people want to

live. If you build a place where people want to live, you'll build a place where people want to work. If you build a place where people want to work, you build a place where business needs to be. If you build a place where business has to be, you'll build a place where people have to visit. It all starts with the visit and that visit doesn't happen without us (destination organizations).” It is through repeating this process over and over, that a destination organization achieves its purpose to help the community achieve its goals by leveraging the power of destination promotion.

The findings presented in this study show that visitors to a destination are more likely to choose the destination as a place to live, work, play, and invest. This stands to reason; the amenities and experiences supported by visitors appeal to residents as well.

The diagram below depicts this chain reaction as the promotion of a destination acts as a catalyst for broader community benefits and economic development.

## The Work of a Destination Organization

### 1. Visit

If you built a place where people want to visit, then you have built a place where people want to live.

### 4. Invest

And if you built a place where business and residents will invest, then you have built a place where people will want to visit



### 2. Live

And if you built a place where people want to live, then you have built a place where people want to work.

### 3. Work

And if you built a place where people want to work, then you have built a place where business and residents want to invest.

The virtuous cycle of destination promotion improves resident quality of life, supports government services, encourages workforce development, and builds a broad economic base. The study includes seven chapters that describe and confirm the nature of these benefits.

### **Chapter 1: Direct Impact of Destination Promotion**

The measurable benefits of destination promotion and group sales

### **Chapter 2: Impact on Connected Industries**

The measurable benefits of visitor activity realized through the supply chain and earned incomes that are spent locally

### **Chapter 3: Benefits to Culture and Quality of Life**

How destination promotion fosters the development of assets enjoyed by residents

### **Chapter 4: Benefits of the Destination Brand**

How destination promotion creates and burnishes an overarching destination brand

### **Chapter 5: Impact on Workforce**

The role of destination organizations in workforce training, career development, and diversity

### **Chapter 6: Benefits to Government and Community Services**

How important government services are sustained through destination organizations

### **Chapter 7: Impacts on Economic Development**

How destination promotion opens the door for economic development



## Executive Summary

Destination organizations have long measured success using key performance indicators directly connected with the hospitality sector. This is consistent with the funding model for most convention and visitor bureaus, which is based on lodging taxes and assessments.

However, an exclusive focus on the hospitality sector sells the benefits of destination promotion short. As highlighted in the landmark study, *Destination Promotion: An Engine of Economic Development*, the entire economy is lifted through concerted destination programs.

For this reason, Destinations International commissioned Tourism Economics, an Oxford Economics company, along with Longwoods International, Clarity of Place, and MMGY NextFactor, to provide updated and sharpened insights on the broad, catalytic economic benefits of destination promotion. The study provides examples from 10 North American destinations that were examined in depth throughout

the course of the project: Champaign, IL, Chattanooga, TN, Fort Myers, FL, Great Lakes, MI, Houston, TX, Mesa, AZ, Ottawa, ON, Puerto Rico, Seattle, WA, and Victoria, BC.

The following points represent the key findings from the study:

### **The impacts of the visitor economy warrant investments in destination promotion.**

- Research consistently demonstrates the measurable benefits of destination programs as they reach potential visitors, influence their choices, and drive additional visits and spending. The average spending return on media spending is \$85 and the average return on taxes is \$9, for every \$1 invested.
- Increases in media spending have led to greater investment returns over the past decade, fueled by gains in marketing effectiveness.

### **The dividends of destination promotion extend far beyond the benefits accruing to visitor-related industries and their suppliers.**

- Visitor spending significantly impacts industries outside of the leisure and hospitality sector, especially in other services-producing sectors.
- On average, visitor spending produces additional sales in the destination that are almost 60% of that direct spending.

### **Tourism developments have proven to influence quality of life and overall well-being of the community.**

- Most residents value tourism as a direct contributor to their quality-of-life amenities.
- Destination organizations act as cultural custodians or stewards through intentional initiatives and programs.
- Destination organizations contribute to quality of life through event promotion, thoughtful placemaking, and attracting investment in additional amenities.
- Community stakeholders acknowledge the role of destination organizations in driving economic growth and boosting the overall community.

### **Destination brands can be leveraged across the economic development spectrum.**

- Tourism advertising not only attracts visitors; it also lifts the destination's image for economic development.
- Destination organizations play a leading role in ensuring consistent messaging is delivered about the destination.
- The creative assets produced by destination organizations are extremely useful to both public and private sector partners.

### **Amenities and lifestyles play an important role in attracting new residents to a community.**

- Talent is attracted to destinations that offer a good quality of life. Hence, talent attraction initiatives led by or in collaboration with destination organizations tend to have the greatest impact.
- Destination organizations contribute to workforce development through specialized programs.
- Workforce diversity is highly correlated with the size of the leisure and hospitality sector in a destination.

### **Revenues generated by visitors either directly or indirectly support government services.**

- Government services and community programs are impacted by tax revenues supported by visitor spending and the advocacy role played by destination organizations that are attentive to the long-term needs of the destination.
- A significant share of residents appreciate that the taxes paid by visitors help offset their own tax bill.

### **Growth in the visitor economy drives growth in other areas of a community's economy.**

- Destinations with a higher concentration of visitor-related industries have tended to grow faster than average over the past decade.
- Econometric tests show that employment shifts in the visitor economy are followed in subsequent years by sustained changes in growth in other parts of the economy.
- A 10% increase in a destination's visitor-related employment relative to the U.S. average tends to be followed by a 2.5% rise in broader employment in the short run.

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\* Includes destination examples.

# CHAPTER 1:

## DIRECT IMPACT OF DESTINATION PROMOTION

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## Direct Impact of Destination Promotion

Research consistently demonstrates the measurable benefits of destination programs as they reach potential visitors, influence their choices, and drive additional visits and spending.<sup>1</sup> Destinations benefit from promotion in the same way that any consumer product does: by building awareness, strengthening the brand, and influencing behavior.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter presents strong evidence of the impact of destination promotion in attracting visitors. We begin with a presentation of a meta-analysis of 26 investment return studies in North America by Longwoods International. Next, we present a summary of the economic impact of group sales by destination organizations, followed by a correlation analysis that evaluates the relationship between destination organization budgets and their sales performance. Finally, we present the results of a study that assesses the impact of increases in destination promotion investments on hotel performance.

### Meta-Analysis of Investment Return Studies

Even the most compelling promotion activities are only effective if they connect with the target audience. Destination promoters have honed their methods, and recent research shows that typically more than half of travelers in target audiences are aware of ads from specific campaigns.

Longwoods analyzed the results from 26 destination investment return studies from 2021-2023 to provide a panoramic view of promotion effectiveness.<sup>3</sup> The media spend for those 26 destinations ranged from \$400,000 to \$11 million. Longwoods also analyzed year-over-year changes in media spending and investment return to show how an increase in media spend affects investment return.

Investment return/promotion effectiveness research evaluates the success of the destination organization's promotion efforts (including broadcast, print, digital, and social media efforts, etc.) in key markets and among its core target traveler segments. This allows destination organizations to measure their success of their campaigns for target geographies.

The goal of the research is to measure the effectiveness of campaigns to understand whether promotion is:

- Increasing perceptions of the destination as a good place to visit.
- Driving actual visitation and generating a positive investment return.

1 Kumpu, J., Pesonen, J., & Heinonen, J. (2021). Measuring the value of social media marketing from a destination marketing organization perspective. *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2021*, 365–377. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-65785-7\\_35](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-65785-7_35)

2 Buhalis, D. (2000). Marketing the competitive destination of the future. *Tourism Management*, 21(1), 97–116. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(99\)00095-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(99)00095-3)

3 The 26 destinations studies by Longwoods International include city, state, county, regional, and provincial studies across North America.

Estimates of the incremental impact in terms of visitor spending are calculated by applying visitor spending data from the Longwoods Travel USA® study (the largest and longest ongoing study of American travelers). Other incremental economic impacts, including taxes, are estimated based on work from economic impact providers such as Tourism Economics. The cost of the campaign is then compared to the visitor spending and taxes generated by the incremental visitor spending attributed to the campaign to estimate the investment return.

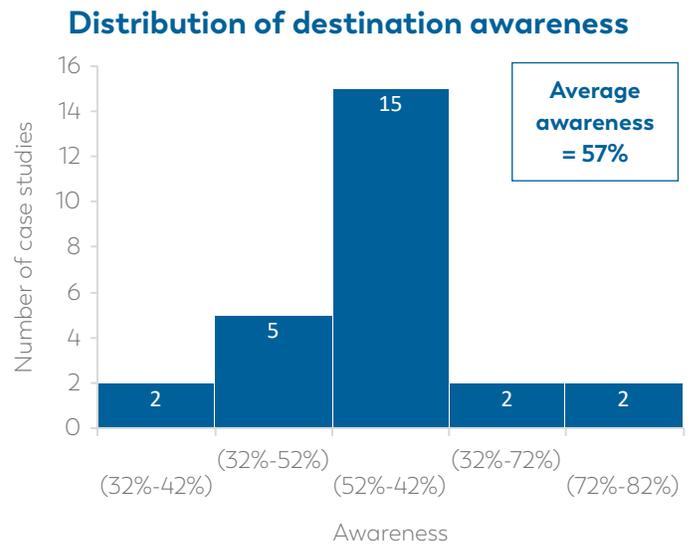
Is destination promotion effective? One common measure employed is the level of direct incremental visitor spending attributed to the

campaign per \$1 of promotion spending. Recent results of the Longwoods meta-analysis show an impact that is 80 times stronger, with each \$1 of promotion spending contributing to an average \$80 of direct visitor spending.

What about investment returns to state and local governments? Destination promotion generates a favorable investment return, paying for itself multiple times over, with recent research results across destinations showing a typical return of \$8 in tax revenue generated per \$1 of promotion spending, recognizing that definitions of tax revenues generated differ across destinations.

The success of destination marketing campaigns hinges on consumer awareness. More than half (58%) of potential visitors in target markets were aware of the analyzed destination marketing campaigns.

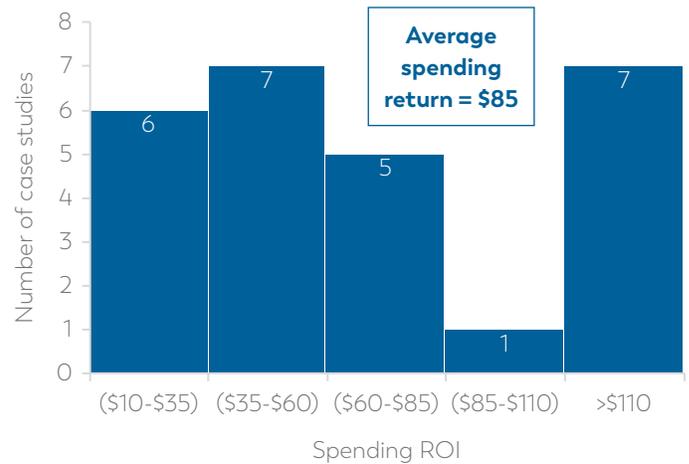
Between 52% and 62% of travelers were aware of the destination promotion campaigns in 15 out of 26 studies.



Longwoods research shows that 20 of 26 destinations experienced a visitor spending return of at least \$35 for every \$1 invested.

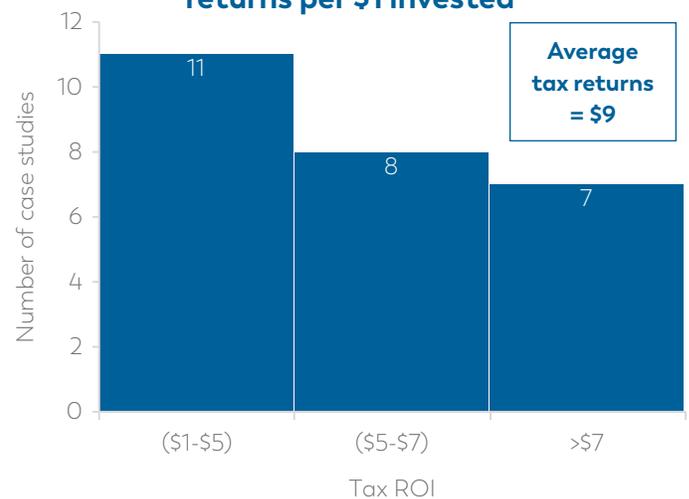
The remaining six campaigns yielded a returned between \$10 and \$35 for each \$1 invested.

### Distribution of visitor spending investment returns per \$1 invested



Destination marketing campaigns more than pay for themselves in local tax generation. Of the 26 campaigns analyzed, 15 produced local taxes of at least \$5 for each \$1 invested. The remaining 9 destinations had investment returns between \$1 and \$5 for each \$1 invested.

### Distribution of tax investment returns per \$1 invested



Over the years included in this analysis (2021-2023), media spending increased by 61%, resulting in a 75% increase in the spending investment return and a 76% increase in the tax investment

return; this would indicate that not only did an increase in media spending increase investment return, but the investment return also increased at a higher rate.

## Measuring the Impact of Destination Promotion

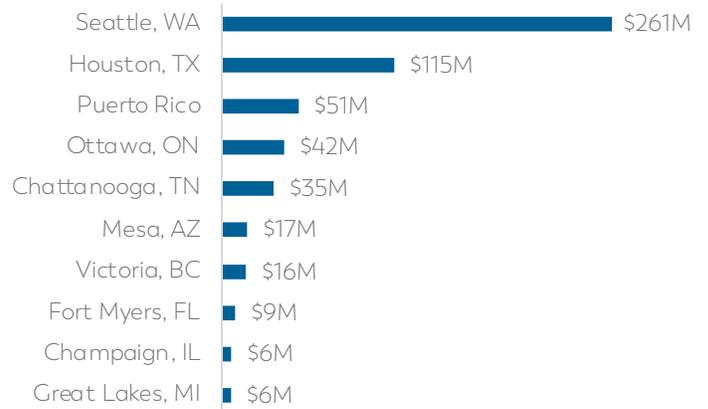
The tourism industry has long relied on meetings and conventions. Out-of-town guests attending these conventions spend money in hotels,

restaurants, retail stores, etc., in the host city. In this regard, attracting these groups to a city is of the utmost importance to the destination organization tasked with bringing conventions to a city as well as measuring their economic impact.

Using data on secured room blocks in 2023 by the destination organizations featured in this study, Tourism Economics analyzed the economic impact of group sales led by destination organizations for the destinations included in the study. The results show significant revenue generated from group sales with an average spend of \$628 per overnight visitor.<sup>4</sup>

This includes the spending of attendees, sponsors, exhibitors, and event organizers in the destination.

**Total visitor spending from group sales in 2023**



<sup>4</sup> Estimates of economic impact of 2023 contracts for future events.

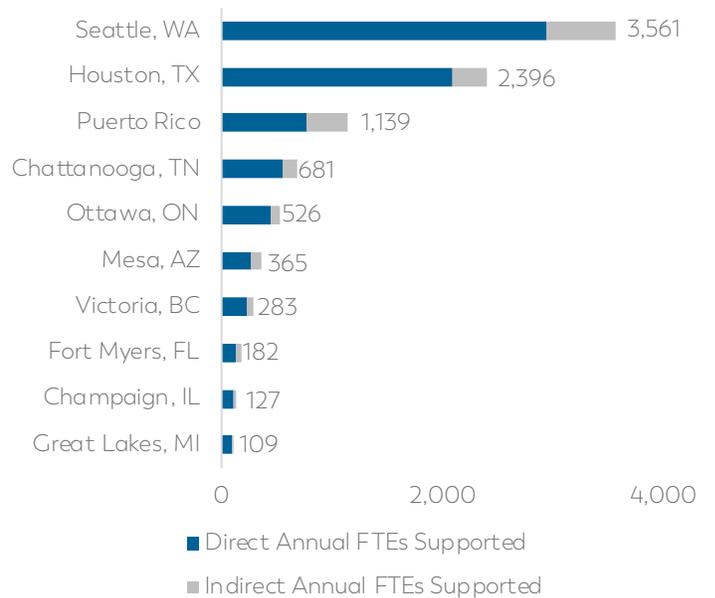
Group sales also generate significant local taxes for the community with an average of \$31 per overnight visitor.

### Direct local tax generated from 2023 group sales



In terms of jobs created, an average of one FTE position is supported by 85 overnight visitors in a room block, this includes both direct and indirect employment.

### Number of FTEs supported by 2023 group sales



## Meta-Analysis of Promotion Key Performance Indicators

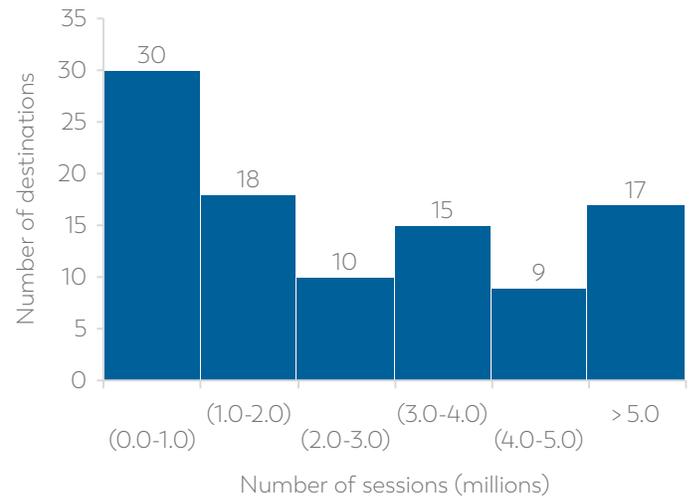
Destination organizations also track marketing effectiveness through raw key performance indicators (KPIs) that track website and social

media activity. Using Symphony, a Tourism Economics analytics platform for destination organizations, the project team analyzed these marketing KPIs for a sample of 100 North American destinations in 2023.

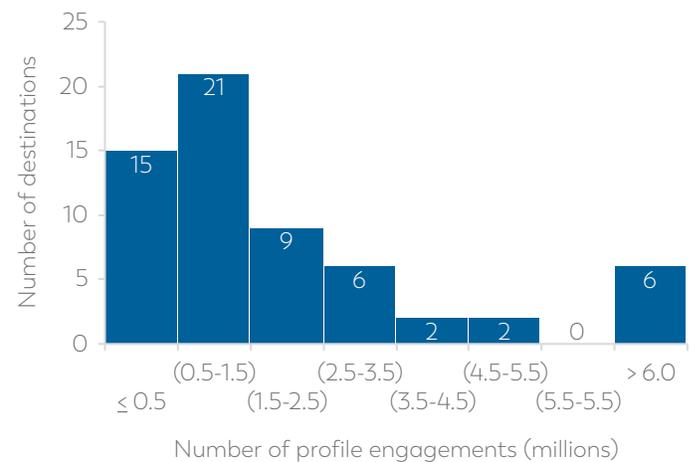
The websites of the analyzed destination organizations attracted an average of 3.3 million individual sessions in 2023. Twenty-six of the destination websites hosted more than 4 million sessions in the past year.

Social media engagement<sup>5</sup> across the 61 destinations in the sample averaged 2.8 million, with 25 destinations driving more than 1.5 million engagements.

### Distribution of destination web sessions in 2023



### Distribution of destination social media engagements in 2023

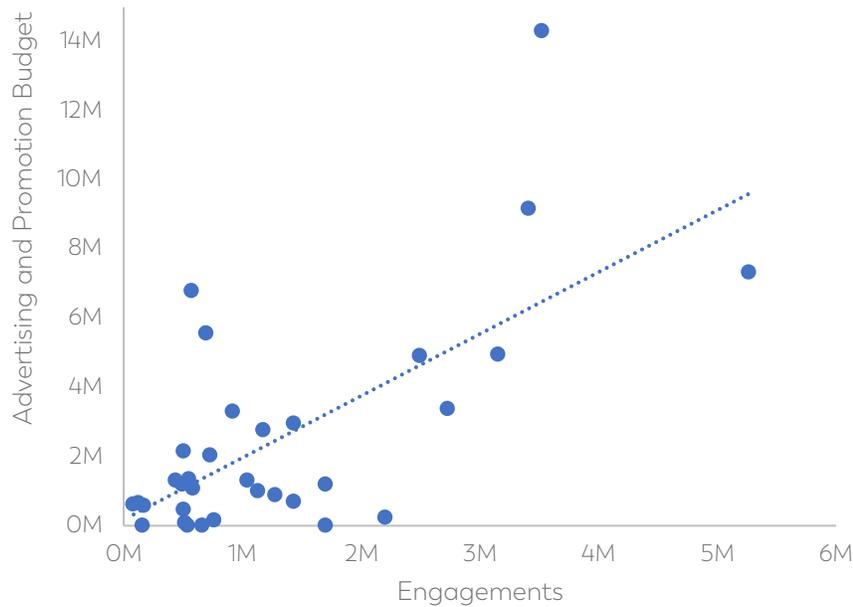


<sup>5</sup> Data included in this study is through Sproutsocial. The platforms included depend on what each of the destination use including Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest and TikTok.

Tourism Economics conducted a correlation analysis between the number of social media engagements and the advertising and promotion budget in 2022 for a sample of 34 destinations. The model found a strong correlation (0.89) between the two variables indicating that funding levels have a strong positive relationship with social media engagement.



**Relationship between advertising budget and social media engagements**



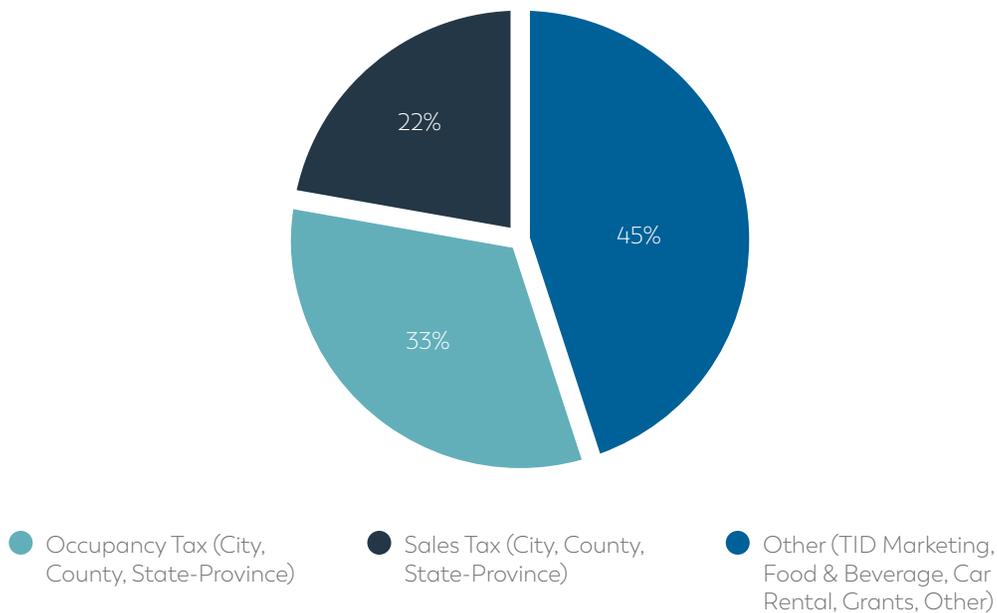
## Impact of Destination Promotion Funding

Destination organizations are funded through several different models. According to Destinations International’s Organizational Performance Reporting Platform, 92% of funding is generated through public sector channels, and the remaining 8% is from private sources.

Public sector funding is generated through sales taxes (22%), dedicated occupancy taxes (33%), and Tourism Improvement Districts and other dedicated funding streams (45%). Private sector funding factors into funding models as about 32% of destination organizations have dues-paying members, with 31% having only a partnership program.

## Destination Organization Performance Reporting

Public Funding Sources for the Destination Organization



Tourism Improvement Districts are mechanisms for funding tourism promotion and destination development activities via industry-agreed assessments, typically on lodging stays, within a designated geographic area. While the Tourism Improvement District contracts with government to collect the funds, these funds do not come from enacted government laws and are considered private funds. Those funds are then used to provide services directly benefiting the assessed businesses in the district. Because Tourism Improvement Districts are dedicated to the benefit of the visitor economy, funds raised

cannot be diverted to government programs. More than 200 destinations in the U.S. have now set up Tourism Improvement District funding mechanisms to support destination promotion.

Tourism Economics, in partnership with STR and Civitas, analyzed the impact of destination promotion funding increases by examining the performance of destinations both before and after additional funding was realized through a Tourism Improvement District. By examining the pre- and post-Tourism Improvement District performance of hotel room demand and

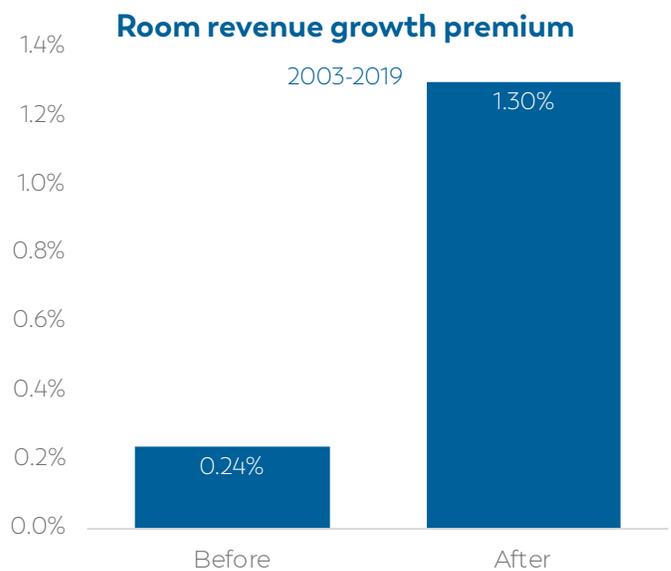
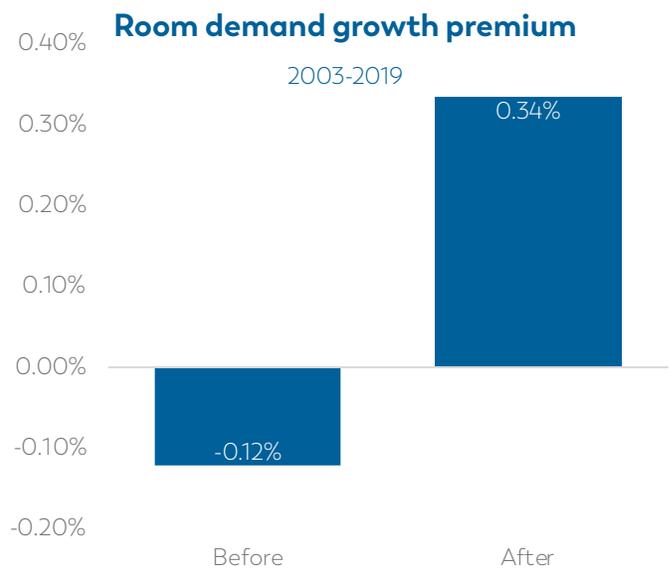
revenue compared to competitive cities, the model identified the benefits generated by this additional funding. The model focused on 29 Tourism Improvement District cities as part of a control group of 100 US cities and found that Tourism Improvement District-funded cities are growing faster in room revenue and demand than non-Tourism Improvement District cities, with that growth especially accelerating in the five years before the pandemic. This “growth premium”

indicates that increases in destination promotion activity generate measurable benefits, regardless of funding source.

While this analysis focused on Tourism Improvement District funding, the results are relevant to funding from any channel. When a destination dedicates additional funds to promotion, it experiences improved performance in both room nights sold and room revenue.

To explore the effects of destination promotion funding increases, Tourism Economics examined the three years before and after a Tourism Improvement District was implemented in each of the study’s 29 Tourism Improvement District cities. The team then compared those cities against their non-Tourism Improvement District competitors and found that after a Tourism Improvement District is implemented, destinations experience a stronger rate of growth in both room revenue and demand. Before any funding increase, these destinations underperformed the market by -0.12% per year. After funding increases, performance flipped to outpace the market by 0.34% per year. This means that, on average, these 29 destinations gained 0.5% in demand growth per year after an increase in destination promotion funding. This “growth premium” accumulates year-over-year, and the increase in hotel room revenue and demand translates to increased visitor spending, and in turn tax revenue for the destination.

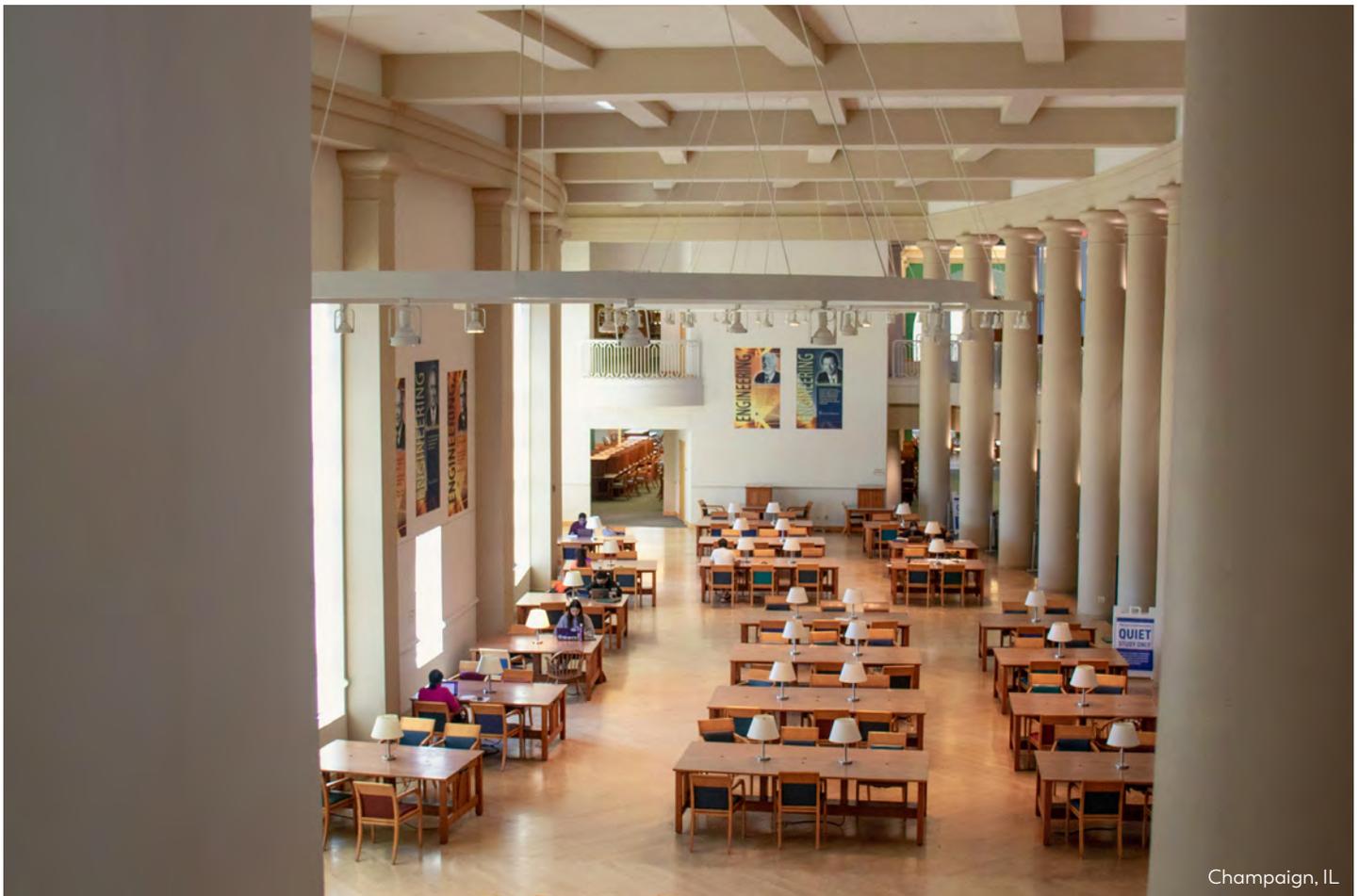
Tourism Economics extended the regression model to identify any growth premium in room revenue (factoring in average daily rates) before and after a Tourism Improvement District funding increase. Before any funding increase, these destinations outperformed the market by 0.24% per year. After funding increases, performance accelerated to outpace the market by 1.30% per year. On average, a destination gained 1.1% in hotel room revenue growth per year after an increase in funding.



# CHAPTER 2:

## IMPACT ON CONNECTED INDUSTRIES

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Champaign, IL

## Impact on Connected Industries

The dividends of destination promotion extend far beyond visitor-related industries. Destination promotion fuels development across the community's entire economic spectrum.

This chapter quantifies the significance of the visitor economy in selected destinations by presenting a comprehensive model detailing the far-reaching impacts arising from visitor spending. As such, we can evaluate the spillover effects of tourism on other industries.

### Key Findings:

- Visitor spending generates significant benefits to industries outside of the leisure and hospitality sector, especially in other services-producing sectors.
- On average, visitor spending produces additional business sales that are almost 60% of that direct spending.

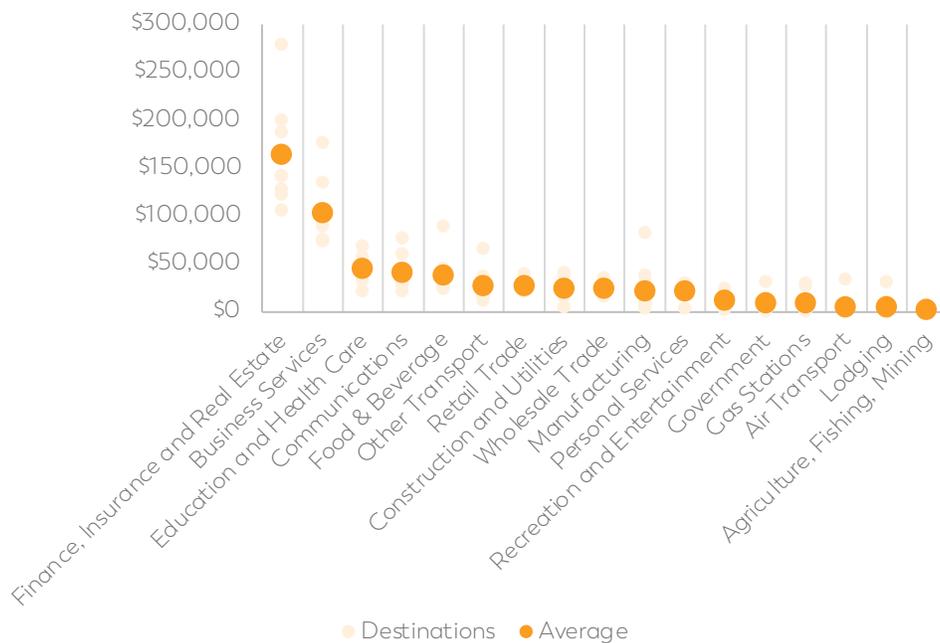
## Meta-Analysis of Economic Impact Studies

Tourism Economics analyzed the economic impacts of visitors to each of the destinations included in the study. Our key findings are summarized here:

- On average, \$1m of visitor spending generates \$0.6m of indirect and induced business sales.
- The most impacted industries from visitor activity are Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, and Business Services.



Size of induced and indirect economic impact by industry



In general, visitor-oriented businesses like hotels, restaurants, and attractions require a range of vendors, including business services and insurance/real estate expertise to start and run their businesses at a higher rate than other business sectors.

This is because:

- a) Visitor-supported businesses tend to be smaller/local/ non-chain, types of businesses that are more likely to outsource services like payroll and use local insurance, real estate agents, or building service companies.
- b) Tourism businesses are employment-intensive and, as such have more insurance needs than areas like manufacturing which are less labor-intensive.
- c) As a result of being employment-intensive, each of those employees in visitor-focused businesses spend disproportionately on insurance and accountants, adding to the spending in those industries.
- d) Visitor-focused businesses are also consumer-facing. This increases the need for insurance – to cover on-site liability – and for banking services to cover cash/credit card fees.



# CHAPTER 3:

## BENEFITS TO CULTURE AND QUALITY OF LIFE

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## Benefits to Culture and Quality of Life

Visitor economy investments in attractions and experiences have proven to influence quality of life or overall well-being of the community. In addition, when placemaking initiatives involve both tourism and non-tourism stakeholders, not only is that impact more pronounced, but it also significantly enhances the region's economic vitality.<sup>6</sup>

Visitor spending helps support a broader and higher quality set of local amenities than an area could not otherwise sustain. The result is a year-round diversified tourism and cultural offering that is a considerable asset for attracting residents and visitors alike.

By first seeking to offer a better quality of life, cities, and regions ensure they are respecting their core values and are being authentic. That is exactly what attracts visitors and contributes to a community's culture.<sup>7</sup>

This chapter evaluates the role of destination promotion in fostering assets enjoyed by residents. This is based on an analysis of Destination International's DestinationNEXT results from 114 destinations to showcase stakeholder views on the role of destination organizations within their communities. We then present results from Longwoods' recent resident sentiment studies to highlight residents' views on the role of tourism in supporting culture and recreation for locals. We supplement that with key takeaways from the stakeholder interviews we have conducted in each of the 10 destinations we examined in this study, along with several amenity mappings to highlight the quality-of-life offerings in those destinations.

### Key Findings:

- Most residents value tourism as a direct contributor to their quality-of-life amenities.
- Destination organizations act as cultural custodians or stewards through intentional initiatives and programs.
- Destination organizations contribute to quality of life through event promotion, thoughtful placemaking, and attracting investment in new amenities.
- Community stakeholders acknowledge the role of destination organizations in driving economic growth and boosting the overall community.

6 Liburd, J. J., Benckendorff, P., & Carlsen, J. (2011). Tourism and quality-of-life: How does tourism measure up? *Handbook of Tourism and Quality-of-Life Research*, 105–132. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-2288-0\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-2288-0_7)

7 Fortin, M., Therrien, V., & Langevin, I. (n.d.). How to promote tourism along with Citizens' quality of life. Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton. <https://www.rcgt.com/en/insights/how-promote-tourism-with-citizens-quality-life/>

## DestinationNEXT Analysis

The DestinationNEXT assessment model was developed by MMGY NextFactor in 2015 for Destinations International. It helps stakeholders strategically evaluate their destinations by assessing gaps and opportunities in the visitor economy. The assessment is generated from a survey of key stakeholders: industry and community leaders; and clients.

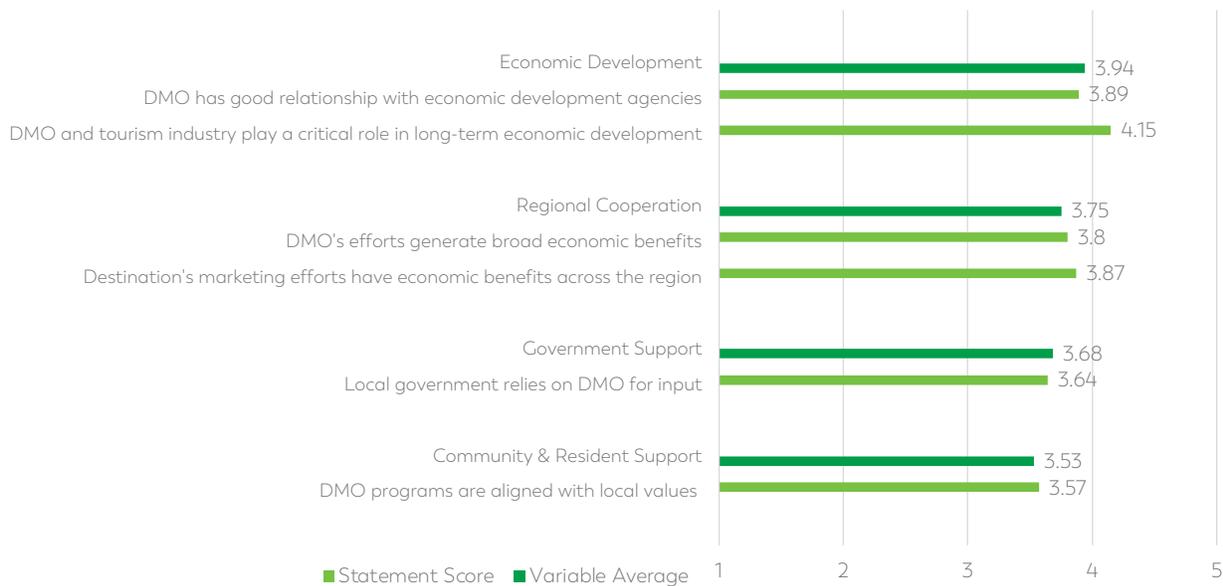
For this study, DestinationNEXT results were analyzed across 114 destinations to evaluate the

scores that stakeholders gave to six statements (during the 2020-2023 period) across four variables: Economic Development; Regional Cooperation; Government Support; and Community and Resident Support.

Stakeholders gave high scores for statements discussing catalytic impacts (score out of five).

The top line for each variable shows average scores for that variable with individual scores presented below

### Survey Scores



## Key Takeaways

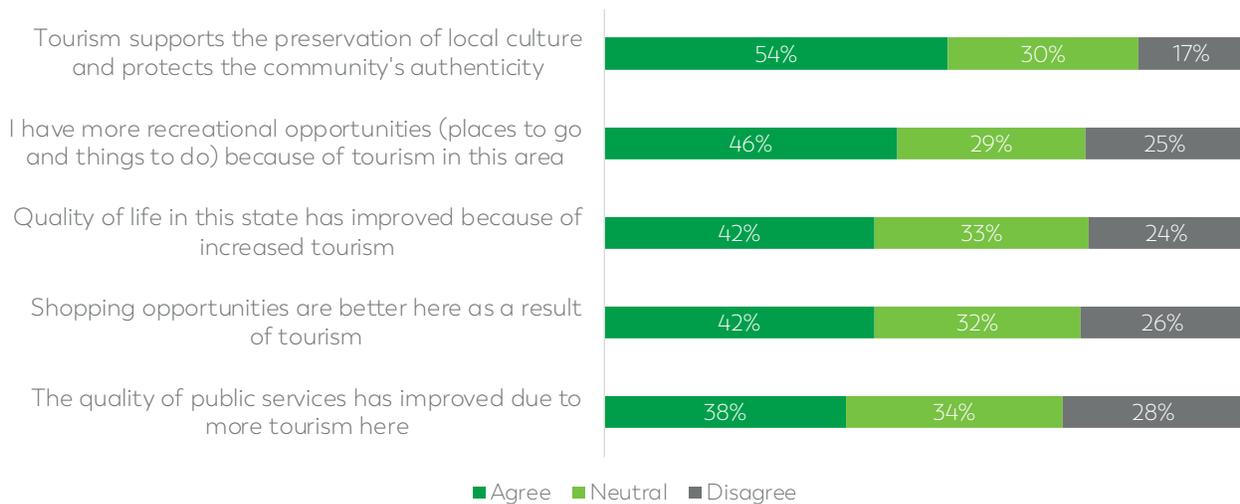
The following are key takeaways from that analysis:

- 1.) **Destination Organizations Propel Economic Growth.** Destination organizations actively drive economic development, emphasizing the need for sustained and intensified tourism promotion efforts to ensure lasting and impactful growth.
- 2.) **Destination Organizations Drive Regional Impact.** Destination organizations play an important role in realizing broader regional economic benefits through effective promotion.
- 3.) **Destination Organizations Guide Governments.** Destination organizations serve as indispensable sources of information for local governments in conducting vital assessments.
- 4.) **Destination Organizations Boost Community.** Destination organizations align with community values, fostering positive perceptions and success through tourism promotion.

## Residents recognize tourism’s local benefits

Longwoods International analyzed 30 recent resident sentiment studies across the U.S. and Canada.

### Residents’ response to the following statements, 2020-2023 average



The results show that:

- More than half of residents agree that tourism supports the preservation of local culture and protects the community’s authenticity, which is a share that is 3.2 times the share that disagrees with the concept.
- More than four in 10 residents agree that they have more recreational opportunities in the area because of tourism, a share that is 1.8 times that of those who disagree.
- A slightly lower share - 42% of residents - agree that the quality of life in the region has improved because of increased tourism, a share that is 1.8 times that of those who disagree.
- More than four in 10 residents agree that the retail mix is better because of tourism, a share that is 1.6 times those who disagree.
- The role of tourism (and its economic impact) needs to be highlighted to residents as in how that affects public services, where 38% of residents agree that the quality of public services has improved because of tourism, a share that is only 40% higher than those who disagree.

## How does the destination organization support culture and quality of life?

From Houston to Victoria, our team had valuable conversations with several organizations in each of the destinations we studied to understand how the role of the destination organization supports culture and quality of life for residents. Below are some of the key takeaways:

### Indigenous Culture and Relationships

Various organizations in Victoria, British Columbia, have been actively supporting the journey towards Truth and Reconciliation. This journey centers on building strong and authentic relationships with the Lekwungen-speaking peoples of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, on whose traditional homeland the city stands. This journey of listening, learning, and ongoing engagement is collaborative and multi-faceted and has enriched local culture by educating residents about Indigenous cultures and perspectives. Bruce Williams, CEO of the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce, spoke to us about the South Island Powwow, an annual event hosted by the Songhees Nation and supported by Destination Greater Victoria, which celebrates traditional Indigenous culture and resiliency and provides an opportunity to recognize Survivors and their families.

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“Promoting indigenous businesses is a part of us recognizing the unique nature of their culture and respecting it.”

**BRUCE WILLIAMS**

CEO,

*Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce*

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Jeff Bray, CEO of the Downtown Victoria Business Association, spoke about the support that Destination Greater Victoria provides to Indigenous tourism businesses, one example being the marine trail walking tour developed and led by the Songhees Nation, an experience that has been “great for tourists, but equally great for locals”. He said Destination Greater Victoria does a great job in promoting Indigenous experiences such as these, which augments and amplifies the capacities of these businesses, and at the same time, this is done in a very respectful manner that engages Indigenous business owners and ensures they are being promoted authentically in the way they would like.

## Supporting Indigenous Entrepreneurship in Ottawa

Recognizing the importance and unique experiences that stem from both the acknowledgment and celebration of the past and present Indigenous communities, Ottawa Tourism has sought initiatives to build the capacity of the region's Indigenous communities in authentic, respectful, and meaningful ways.

Ottawa Tourism developed the Indigenous Tourism Entrepreneurship Training in partnership with Algonquin College's Indigenous Initiatives department. This 10-week training curriculum that was run over two cohorts between 2020 and 2021 was developed by Indigenous entrepreneurs and subject matter experts and helped to equip local Indigenous tourism businesses and entrepreneurs with the foundational business skills, start-up development tools, and sector resources needed to succeed.

The training is designed to allow participants to learn business fundamentals and develop their tourism concepts and business ideas in an Indigenous learning environment that is rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing such as storytelling and a human community model.<sup>8</sup>

## Supporting the Tribal Communities in Seattle

Visit Seattle expresses their commitment to culture by honoring and celebrating the rich diversity of cultures in Seattle. Among the numerous cultures they highlight, some noteworthy ones include Black, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Native Hawaiian, as well as various Asian and Hispanic communities. Throughout the year, they integrate stories about the diverse communities and business owners into their ongoing earned media efforts and media itineraries.

Visit Seattle is ongoingly involved with the tribal communities to forge authentic relationships with Indigenous communities, honor the land, and support Indigenous cultures.

Several examples have been highlighted to us by the Visit Seattle team:

- The Native American Heritage Guide is a print and online publication by Visit Seattle. This guide features tribal museums, cultural centers, and public places of significance in the region, offers important historical and present-day information about indigenous peoples, and is produced with review by local tribal representatives to ensure accuracy and sensitivity. Visit Seattle also created and hosts a page to inform visitors and residents.
- The Tulalip tribes have been traveling with Visit Seattle as a partner in various sales missions for over 15 years. These activations have included participation in the U.S. Travel Association's IPW, the world's largest annual travel trade event. Visit Seattle has also sent over 36 new business leads to Tulalip so far this year.
- Visit Seattle was instrumental in connecting the Polynesian Voyaging Society/Hokule'a with Suquamish and Muckleshoot tribes and worked closely with the Port of Seattle and Friends of the Waterfront to help welcome the Native Hawaiian canoe at Pier 62 as part of the multiyear canoe journey highlighting the value of Indigenous knowhow to fight climate change. There were more than 2,000 people in attendance at the event.

<sup>8</sup> Indigenous Tourism Entrepreneurship Training, Ottawa Tourism. (n.d.-b). <https://ottawatourism.ca/en/story-to-tell>.

- Eighth Generation, a Seattle-based art and lifestyle brand owned by the Snoqualmie Tribe that sells work designed 100% by Native artists from the US and Canada, is an active partner of Visit Seattle. Visit Seattle's PR team is currently planning a media event in NYC that will be done in partnership with them and a Native artist in the fall of 2024 to create a platform to talk about authentic Native art and the importance of supporting and not appropriating.
- Visit Seattle is an active partner/sponsor of the Northwest Trolls project and encouraged the integration of Northwest tribal representatives and artists. This ambitious public art project is presented by Scan Design Foundation, whose mission is to support Danish-American relations with a focus on environmental sustainability. The Muckleshoot and Snoqualmie tribes have been actively involved. The recent Lincoln Park troll dedication featured the Muckleshoot tribe, artist Coyote, and his canoe family.
- Visit Seattle also has partnered with Salish Lodge which is tribe-owned and currently establishing a new relationship with the Muckleshoot Casino Resort. Other Visit Seattle partnerships include the Hibulb Cultural Center and Natural History Preserve, and the Duwamish Longhouse and Cultural Center.
- Visit Seattle's media itineraries include meaningful Native American experiences (past and present). This might include shopping at Eighth Generation, visiting and eating at restaurants owned by Indigenous People or places that are open to the public (like cultural centers, public art or other museums).

### Diversity in the Fabric

Diversity has always been intrinsically tied to tourism: new places, new people, new cultures. But what happens when the destination organization showcases the destination's inclusivity in its promotion efforts? More people will want to call the place home.

Ottawa Tourism has embraced and promoted the region's diversity and inclusion to create an even more welcoming destination. Ottawa Tourism is an accredited Rainbow Registered organization recognized by Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ Chamber of Commerce for meeting stringent criteria attesting to diverse and inclusive practices. This showcases the destination's commitment to inclusivity and has had spillover effects on the city's culture.

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“  
**Diversity is a big element of  
 Ottawa's DNA and a crucial  
 element in all our programs.**  
 ”

**ANJAN AKRISHNAMURTHY**  
 Director of Talent Recruitment,  
*Invest Ottawa*

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Anjan Akrishnamurthy, Director of Talent Recruitment at Invest Ottawa spoke of how the city attracts talent because of the “freedom to live” and how newcomers find Ottawa to be welcoming for people from all ethnicities, backgrounds, and sexual orientations. When Ottawa Tourism puts the destination's DEI values in the forefront, not only is it helping to attract talent, but it's also holding the community true to its DEI commitments and emphasizing the quality of life for people from all walks of life.

## Supporting the Refugee Artisan Initiative in Seattle

In the summer of 2023, Seattle hosted the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) Third Senior Official's Meeting. Part of the programming was providing gift bags to all delegates. Visit Seattle worked with the Refugee Artisan Initiative (RAI) to provide 2,700 upcycled bags, an order which was approximately \$150,000, and put 32 refugee artisans to work. Visit Seattle also ordered 1,200 additional pouches from RAI, 950 of which were for the AMEX InterAction Convention. The products have been so well received that Visit Seattle has decided to incorporate them into the convention Services 2024 gifting program.

This is a message that Visit Seattle received from the Refugee Artisan Initiative: "The APEC project has had rippling effects of keeping not only 32 artisans working but also their families. One artisan told us that this year, she could finally purchase back-to-school supplies like shoes and backpacks that she didn't get to do before. Many sent money back to their home countries. The State Department was so pleased with the project that we just finished a customized bag project for First Lady Dr. Jill Biden for her upcoming UN event. RAI empowers our artisans to shine and become financially independent. They are creative, skillful, and resourceful."

## Honoring our Heritage

Marnie Schubert, Community Services Director at the Town of Queen Creek shared positive insights on how Visit Mesa and its partners have prioritized keeping the area's culture and heritage and focus on quality of life—especially in light of the area's tremendous population growth. As a result, the East Valley has remained an attractive place to live. She explained that Queen Creek is an equestrian and agricultural community, and that Visit Mesa's promotion of the rural lifestyle and authentic character has contributed to the area's growth while maintaining a strong sense of community. Schubert referred to this as the "full circle of life" where the community maintains and grows its amenities, so then it is enjoyed by visitors, who in turn choose the region as a place to live.

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“  
A very unique opportunity here is knowing your farmer and being able to partake in these healthy food programs right here.

”

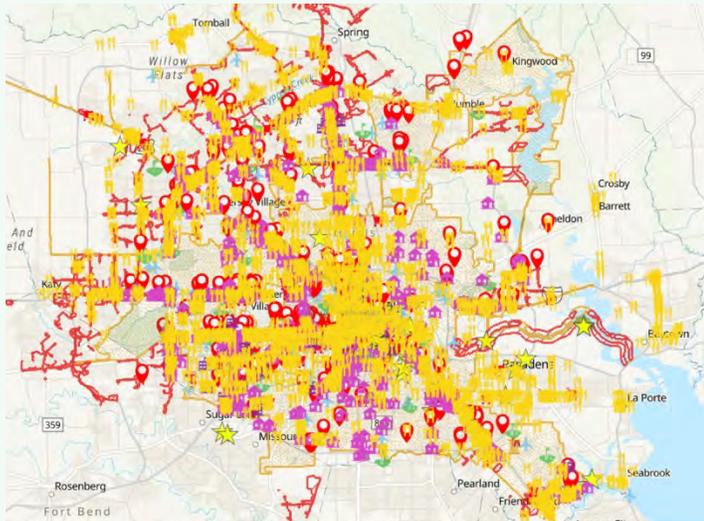
**MARNIE SCHUBERT**  
Community Services Director,  
*Town of Queen Creek*

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### Celebrating Who We Are

The fourth largest U.S. city by population, Houston claims a thriving economy and tremendous diversity in culture and destination assets. Houston’s cultural variations provide the backbone of its brand promise and the heart of the community’s distinctive appeal.

The city is the ninth largest in overall geographic size spreading the density of its assets and influence over 599.6 square miles.



DEMAND DRIVERS & ATTRACTIONS			
	Museum/gallery		Convention Center
	Historic Sites		Entertainment venue
	Golf course		Sports fields/facilities
	College/University		Parks
HOSPITALITY INFRASTRUCTURE			
	Lodging		Dining
	Campgrounds		Shopping area
	EV charging stations		Airports
	Cell towers		

The Houston Rodeo is a big part of Houston’s culture. Lisa Gagnon, Chief Marketing Officer, and Peter McStravick, Chief Strategic Planning Officer, of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo spoke to us about how it is part of the local culture and essence of the Houston community. Houston First is one of the sponsors of the RodeoHouston Super Series, an annual 20-day tournament competition. It participates in the World Championship BBQ Event and helps promote the tournament nationally and internationally. The role of Houston First has therefore been very important to the success of the event. As McStravick puts it “[events like these] are the lifeblood of Houston and part of the image of what Houston is.”

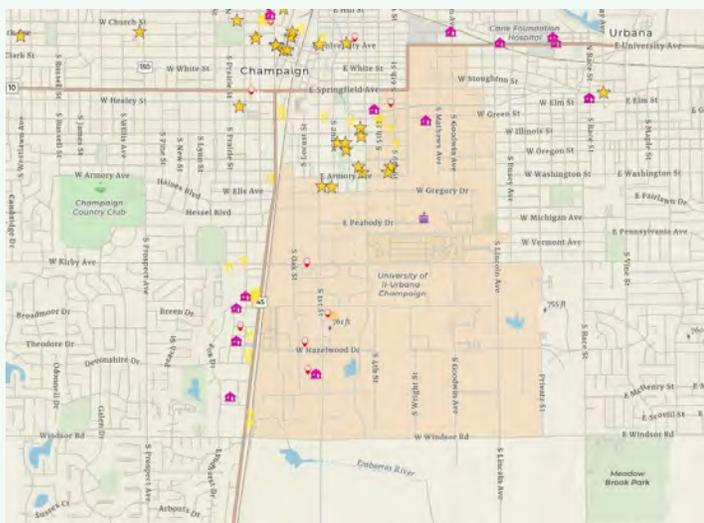
“Houstonians have such an immense amount of pride. They love this event and they love their community, and so collectively between us and Houston First, we are able to continue that.”

**LISA GAGNON**  
 Chief Marketing Officer Houston,  
 Livestock Show and Rodeo

### A Convener of Place

In our discussions with several organizations in Champaign, the role of Experience Champaign-Urbana as the “steward of place” was very evident. For example, Laura Wiskoff Bleill, Director of External Engagement at the University of Illinois Research Park, mentioned that Experience Champaign-Urbana has embraced the idea that raising the quality of life for residents is a priority, and this, in turn, will encourage visitors, enhance the student experience at the University of Illinois

– Champaign, and welcome newcomers. In our discussions, she mentioned very useful resident-focused resources that have been developed by Experience Champaign-Urbana like the Champaign-Urbana Area Map that highlights the shops, restaurants, and attractions in the walkable districts in Champaign-Urbana, as well as surrounding communities. This “hospitality infrastructure” services not only visitors but also students, academics, and corporations that choose to partner with the university as well (see map).



DEMAND DRIVERS & ATTRACTIONS			
	Museum/gallery		Convention Center
	Historic Sites		Entertainment venue
	Golf course		Sports fields/facilities
	College/University		Parks
HOSPITALITY INFRASTRUCTURE			
	Lodging		Dining
	Campgrounds		Shopping area
	EV charging stations		Airports
	Cell towers		

In addition, she also mentioned the Seasonal Checklist that is put together by Experience Champaign-Urbana to offer recommendations on things to do in the community. This tool is very handy for companies because “it tells them where to take their people and how to engage them. It does the work for them.” So, in a sense, by showcasing the area’s quality of life and resident resources, Experience Champaign-Urbana is helping companies in the area attract talent. Rob Kowalski, Neighborhood Services Director for the City of Champaign echoed the same sentiment in saying that Experience Champaign-Urbana “encourages our local folks to be tourists”.

### Attracting Additional Tourism Amenities

In the Great Lakes Bay region, Annette Rummel, President and CEO of the Great Lakes Bay Regional Convention and Visitors Bureaus told us about how the Midland County Convention and Visitors Bureau donated a portion of their office space to attract a gourmet Italian restaurant to Midland’s City Center.

The Italian restaurant, Gratzi, is an upscale dining restaurant that has been a special addition to the Midland community and its offerings. It originally had a restaurant in Ann Arbor in 1987 before opening the Midland in 2017. It employs more than 100 people.

### Connecting Assets

While known primarily for its beaches, the Fort Myers area has a variety of demand drivers and attractions ranging from entertaining downtown environments, recreational waterways, sites of historical significance, competitive sports venues, and a vibrant network of quality of place amenities that grew to serve the county’s growing residential and corporate communities. These demand drivers are distributed across the county and each municipality within the county offers a different set of amenities and visitor-facing attractions (see map).

As the destination organization, the Lee County Visitors and Convention Bureau has nurtured and supported the area’s quality of place by working to disperse visitor activity throughout the county and making it easier for businesses wanting to help activate the destination brand to do so. Additionally, the organization’s efforts to extend the county’s brand to external audiences supports other efforts in the county to draw attention to the area as a great place to live, work, buy a second home, retire, start a business, start a career, or go to college.



DEMAND DRIVERS & ATTRACTIONS			
	Museum/gallery		Convention Center
	Historic Sites		Entertainment venue
	Golf course		Sports fields/facilities
	College/University		Parks
HOSPITALITY INFRASTRUCTURE			
	Lodging		Dining
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	Cell towers		

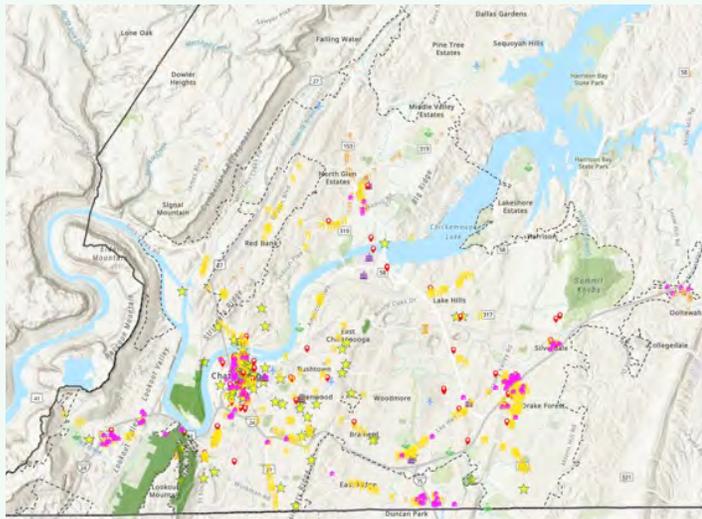
### Emphasis on Walkability

Tourism is a catalyst for building different aspects of quality of life, from outdoor recreation to cultural heritage and arts to a robust music scene.

Chattanooga features a range of demand drivers and attractions for each of the destinations, as well as other hospitality infrastructure that

impacts visitors – lodging, restaurants, cell towers, airports (commercial and non-commercial), and walkability.

Tourism’s value to the community is expressed through the importance of outdoor recreation combined with a consistent story of redevelopment, especially within downtown.



DEMAND DRIVERS & ATTRACTIONS			
	Museum/gallery		Convention Center
	Historic Sites		Entertainment venue
	Golf course		Sports fields/facilities
	College/University		Parks
HOSPITALITY INFRASTRUCTURE			
	Lodging		Dining
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# CHAPTER 4:

## BENEFITS OF THE DESTINATION BRAND

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## Benefits of the Destination Brand

Destination branding goes beyond tourism promotion. It's the foundation of every place's positive image and unique identity. Besides defining what becomes front of mind, it also defines what will remain in visitors' memories: the performance of the destination as a whole; the journey, the experience, the long-lasting memories.

Destination promotion activities support the understanding of a destination's distinct positioning and raise awareness of the destination's key attributes. Most importantly, by increasing visitation, destination promotion activities provide firsthand experience with a destination, resulting in familiarity with a destination that is critically important for attracting investment and talent, and economic development in general. These three components – building a brand, raising awareness, and increasing familiarity – raise the destination's profile. As emphasized in this report, these interrelated concepts have the collective impact of supporting economic development efforts to attract investment and build a skilled workforce.

A destination's brand represents both the identity and characteristics of the destination, as well as the activities and messaging undertaken to communicate and reinforce that brand. Destination organizations build the brand of a place by defining and communicating its uniqueness and attractiveness to potential visitors and investors.

The result has an impact on business decision-makers. Past research has revealed that these brands can be leveraged across the economic development spectrum. Indeed, in many cases, brand elements developed by destination organizations serve to directly support economic development efforts.

This chapter presents a meta-analysis of the Longwoods International "Halo Effect" research which provides important background on the wide-reaching impacts of destination promotion. Following that, we present key findings from our stakeholder discussions with economic development offices, chambers of commerce, and key organizations in the 10 destinations we explored as part of this study.

### Key Findings:

- Destination promotion and visitation contribute to economic development goals.
- Destination organizations have a leading role in ensuring consistent messaging is delivered around the destination.
- The creative assets produced by destination organizations are extremely useful to partner organizations.



## The Halo Effect

Economic development professionals have long appreciated that destination promotion and familiarity with a destination as a visitor can play key roles in influencing an individual's perception of a place for economic development factors beyond travel. For example: Is this a good place to start a career or start a business? Is this a good place to live, retire, or send my child to college?

Researchers at Longwoods International have addressed this relationship, quantifying the impact of advertising and visits through a series of studies in 22 destinations over the past two years. The findings show that tourism advertising not only attracts visitors and their money; it also creates a major positive lift on the destination's image for economic development, increasing its reputation as a good place to live, work, buy a second home, retire, start a business, start a career, or go to college. Visiting a destination creates a similar lift on these attributes.

The results below show the extent of this lift – the difference in perception between those who are aware of advertising or have visited the destination during the past two years compared to those who do not recall any advertisements or have never visited, for each of the attributes.

For example, among survey respondents who were aware of destination advertising, 43% strongly agreed with the statement that the destination was a good place to start a business, while only 26% of those unaware of the destination advertising strongly agreed (i.e. the lift is 17%). Similarly, 50% of respondents who had visited the destination in the last two years strongly agreed with the statement, compared to only 32% of those who never visited (i.e., the lift is 18%).

In this particular example, we find that among those who recalled at least one advertisement and visited in the last two years, 54% strongly agreed the destination is a good place to start a business, compared to 23% of those who were neither aware of an advertisement nor had ever visited (i.e. the lift is 30%).

The results show that:

- Advertising is most likely to affect people’s decisions in buying a vacation home, starting a business, and starting a career (17 percentage points higher for those exposed to the campaign).

### Halo Effect - Advertising Lift



- A visit is most likely to affect people’s relocation and education decisions (21 and 20 percentage points higher, respectively, for those exposed to the campaign).

### Halo Effect - Visitation Lift



- For each economic development objective, the most significant improvement was among those travelers who both recalled the advertising campaign message and recently visited the destination with lifts of at least 28% for each category.

### Halo Effect - Advertising + Visitation Lift



## Brand Development, Adoption, and Broader Benefits

Embracing place branding and destination branding is not only important for attracting visitors but also for attracting talent and investment. Competition among places is intense and effective regional branding is a strategic asset, amplifying the strengths that set the region apart from others, showcasing potential to stakeholders, and ultimately bolstering its competitiveness on both the domestic and international stage.

The implementation of place branding and destination branding by economic development professionals can enhance their region's visibility, competitiveness, and overall appeal, resulting in economic growth and prosperity.<sup>9</sup>

This section will highlight several destination brands as well as the coordination efforts between the destination organizations and economic development organizations to demonstrate how the branding efforts by destination organizations can be leveraged and taken advantage of by partner organizations.

### A Brand Refresh for More Regional Coverage

In May 2023, Visit Champaign County launched its rebrand to Experience Champaign-Urbana. As Terri Reifsteck, the organization's Vice President of Marketing and Communication says about it: "As a result of market research, holding focus groups, testing advertising, and conducting surveys over the past year, we decided to embrace the name that is widely known to hundreds of thousands outside of our community, thanks to the brand recognition of the University of Illinois.

Through this change, we will be able to engage with more people and shine a light on the entire Champaign-Urbana area, from as far north as Paxton, west to Monticello, and south to Sullivan. We will continue the work we have always done. Telling stories about the brilliant people, places, and events to explore through engaging content on our website, our social media channels, our videos, advertising, and much more".<sup>10</sup>

Having conversations with several stakeholders in the community, we were able to understand how the brand and the collateral developed by Experience Champaign-Urbana are key to economic development efforts in the region. Our team met with Rob Kowalski, Neighborhood Services Director for the City of Champaign, and Kowalski highlighted the important role Experience Champaign-Urbana is playing in extending the brand and generating activity by bringing the different units of government and the different stakeholders and unifying the voice of the destination.

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“

**Experience Champaign-Urbana is very skilled at bringing us all together with the university at the table to think of the destination as a whole.**

”

**ROB KOWALSKI**

Neighborhood Services Director,  
City of Champaign

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9 Calimanu, S. (2023, November 30). Place vs. destination branding: Their vital role in Economic Development. ResearchFDI.

10 McClure, Julie. "Visit Champaign County Is Now Experience Champaign-Urbana - Splog." Smile Politely - Champaign-Urbana's Culture Magazine, May 18, 2023. <https://www.smilepolitely.com/splog/visit-champaign-county-is-now-experience-champaign-urbana/>.

The brand of the Champaign-Urbana area and the collateral that is developed by Experience Champaign-Urbana are major assets that partner organizations use. Carly McCrory-McKay, Director of the Champaign County Economic Development Organization highlighted the Champaign County Area Experience Guide as an effective tool. In 2022, the guide won the Best Printed Collateral award at the Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel and Tourism. The award, part of the Illinois Excellence in Tourism Awards night, was especially deserved as the piece is written and designed entirely in-house. McCrory-McKay also highlighted how the two organizations co-branded to have consistent messaging and one voice in describing the area's value proposition and differentiators, despite having separate missions.

### One of Us

Chattanooga Tourism Co. launched a new brand in 2019 designed to ensure that visitors never feel like tourists when visiting Chattanooga. With imagery reflecting the destination's diversity and lighthearted messaging targeted to nature lovers, history buffs, and amenity seekers, the new brand celebrated the destination's welcoming nature.

However, two crises—COVID-19 and a string of catastrophic tornadoes—hit shortly after the brand's January 2020 launch, necessitating a new approach that would go above and beyond standard recovery messaging to elevate neighborhood businesses, encourage locals to patronize them and reestablish the city's sense of pride and community. The Tourism Co. shifted its emphasis to encouraging local companies and raising spirits to bring back the essence of what it meant to be a Chattanooga.

The Tourism Co. changed the direction of its content and allowed business partners to share their tales in gripping films that would motivate both present and potential tourists. As a result, the "One of Us" campaign effectively maintained Chattanooga companies at the forefront of the community and revitalized popular local destinations.

“

**The Chattanooga Tourism Co. brand video is powerful because it's a quick introduction of who we are as a community.**

”

**CHARLES WOOD**

CEO,

*Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce*

Charles Wood, CEO of the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce told us that the brand video developed by Chattanooga Tourism Co. is “something [they] show in every recruitment endeavor” that they do. He says that an effective sales pitch for Chattanooga is “more around what it's like to live here or opening a business and having employees relocate” than anything else, and that's why the collateral by the Chattanooga Tourism Co. is better than any economic development specific material. Wood highlighted the collaboration between the Chattanooga Tourism Co., the Chamber of Commerce, the River City Company, and others to ensure a common understanding of the brand message and the storytelling, among other things. The organizations are present on each other's boards of directors, they meet regularly, take part in each other's strategic plans, and have an open line of communication on the challenges they face as well as the opportunities they see.

Our team also met with Bridgett Massengill, President and CEO of Thrive Regional Partnership, a tri-state organization in the Chattanooga region promoting responsible growth. Massengill highlighted the outdoor element in the Chattanooga brand which her organization has been able to leverage with the various arts and culture partners throughout the region. In a way, the brand that the Chattanooga Tourism Co. has created embraces more than just the city of Chattanooga which has contributed to regional growth.

“

**It helps us that people throughout the region feel they are part of the Chattanooga tourism story.**

”

**BRIDGETT MASSENGILL**

President and CEO,  
*Thrive Regional Partnership*

### Go Great Lakes Bay

Established in 2011, the Great Lakes Bay Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau has been working collaboratively with its partners to enhance the community for its residents, and consequently, making the region a great place to visit. The organization recently undertook a tourism master plan, with a long-term focus on planning for growth and development that will take shape in the brand, the visitor assets, and the overall industry.

Our team met with David Lorenz, Vice President of Travel Michigan, who talked to us about the difficult role that the Great Lakes Bay Convention and Visitors Bureau plays in branding the entire region because of the differences between

the cities and the unique attributes that they each possess. As such, he appreciates that the efforts by the Convention and Visitors Bureau “get the people thinking about the area in so many different ways”. Lorenz mentioned that the Convention and Visitors Bureau does an excellent job highlighting all the players in the community so that it becomes easy to think of the region as a place to live, work, or visit.

We also met with Greg LaMarr, the Communications and Marketing Director for Saginaw Future Inc., a private nonprofit economic development agency serving Saginaw County, whose mission is to promote and increase private investment and job growth through the attraction of new businesses and expansion of existing businesses. LaMarr highlighted how important the place brand of the region is because of the rapidly changing economic development priorities. “In the past, companies would think about incentives and low taxes. Now, placemaking and talent are the new economic development priorities because companies need to ensure they’ll be able to attract talent to this community”, said La Marr.

“

**We don’t have just one pitch, we have a variety of pitches, and once people come here, they’re exposed to the wonderful things that they’re truly passionate about.**

”

**DAVID LORENZ**

Vice President,  
*Travel Michigan*

## The Power of Together

Houston First works to promote Houston and the surrounding region to convention goers and leisure travelers worldwide through its primary consumer brand, Visit Houston, as well as several sub-brands targeted at particular markets.

However, the city lacked a common brand and messaging for tourism, economic development, and investment attraction. Therefore, in 2021, Houston First created a positioning strategy and messaging that would help Houston's organizations speak the same language as they worked to attract visitors, talent, and investment.

The work resulted in a strategy, brand proposition, and messaging that leveraged the city's inclusivity and diversity by focusing on the powerful collaborative energy they made possible.

The idea helped the "city of the future" evolve into a city that positioned itself to welcome talent and investment to build their futures—a shift from Houston's many features to its emotional benefits for the audiences it wanted to attract. United under the platform "The Power of Together", Houston First created economic development and tourism videos, trade show communications, graphic systems, and other content on B2B and B2C platforms.<sup>11</sup>

Our team met with Clint Pasche, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer for the Greater Houston Partnership. Pasche highlighted the importance of being united in the messaging of the city, even if the organizations have different missions. He mentioned that Houston First, because of budget size among other things, was in the best position to create the Houston brand which partner organizations may then align with and adopt. The excellent communication lines between organizations allow the messaging to become more of a collaborative effort.

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“  
You know it's a good campaign  
when it's natural.

”

**CLINT PASCHE**

Chief Marketing and Communications Officer,  
*Greater Houston Partnership*

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<sup>11</sup> "Houston, Texas." Resonance, September 28, 2023. <https://resonanceco.com/work/houston/>.

## Fort Myers

The Lee County Visitor and Convention Bureau serves the broader interests of Lee County by acting as a marketing, sales, and services organization. The Lee County Visitor and Convention Bureau refocused the Lee County brand through a refresh to unite tourism, economic development, and sports development while creating a powerful destination brand, fostering a sense of community within one identity, and increasing local pride.

“

**The Lee County Visitor and Convention Bureau has done an exceptionally creative job with a brand that we are able to easily incorporate.**

”

**BENJAMIN SIEGEL**

Executive Director and CEO,  
*Lee County Port Authority*

To achieve this, the Lee County Visitor and Convention Bureau engaged residents as well as industry, business, and elected officials to understand the goals of the community. From there, insights from the community were connected with traveler data from research and the process culminated with the creation of the Fort Myers brand architecture. It is an articulation of what the Fort Myers brand stands for, how it is positioned against the competition, and how it emotionally connects with and motivates the audience(s). This new brand allows tourism, economic development, and sports development to showcase their personality while portraying the balanced lifestyle found in the Fort Myers area.

## Limitless

Branded as “City Limitless”, Mesa's branding strategies guarantee that travel inclusion is at the forefront of everything the organization does. Mesa is on a mission to become a recognized leader in travel accessibility. The brand's "Limitless" campaign, which highlights accessibility and inclusivity, signals a change in the organization's inclusive image.

Our team met with John Giles, Mayor of the City of Mesa, who highlighted that Visit Mesa is working to extend and raise the brand of the city even beyond the city limits, which is a major part of the “Limitless” campaign and embracing the destination and the experiences as the visitor does. Mayor Giles recognized the importance of building community pride and celebrating Mesa and the character and evolution of the area. This branding mindset has allowed neighboring towns like Queen Creek to benefit from and leverage the branding efforts by Visit Mesa, which would not have happened had Visit Mesa only adopted a city-centric vision.

“

**One of the reasons why Visit Mesa's brand is effective is because it is not competing with neighboring communities, instead it joins forces with them. This is the emphasis behind the relationship.**

”

**MARNIE SCHUBERT**

Community Services Director,  
*Town of Queen Creek*

## Here to Inspire

In 2017, the City of Ottawa and Ottawa Tourism collaborated to develop a coordinated city brand strategy. Despite Ottawa being recognized as the top place to live by MoneySense in the same year, research revealed that its city brand was underperforming. For instance, in 2018, the World's Best Cities Report ranked Ottawa 71st, a surprising position for a G7 capital. While individual brands may have excelled, the overall perception depicted a high-performing city with a lagging national and global reputation.

The partnership aimed to align Ottawa's brand messages with the place's identity and its people. This involved creating cohesive messaging not only for tourism but also to unify external voices within the community, addressing residents, visitors, and business partners nationally and internationally. To bolster Ottawa's reputation, it was crucial to develop a consistent and unified city brand that aligned the millions of stories generated each year with the authentic identity of the place and its people. The primary goal was not to develop a new city or corporate tagline but a city brand essence that would be foundational to all tourism and economic development partners, ensuring communication and messaging fundamentally mirrored the true uncovered essence of the place.

The first step in the process was defining Ottawa's Place DNA by discovering the city's core identity and unique attributes. From there, a city Brand Framework was established that defined Ottawa's brand story, brand promise, and brand essence – "Canada in one city." Core brand themes were identified, providing the foundation for all future Ottawa stories. Finally, a Brand Storybook was developed, laying out how collectively we can communicate Ottawa's stories more consistently and compellingly to key audiences.

Anjan Krishnamurthy, Director of Talent Recruitment at Invest Ottawa, spoke to our team about how Invest Ottawa uses the Ottawa brand to attract talent from outside of the region. Krishnamurthy highlighted various collateral (e.g., photos, videos, banners, content packages, etc.) at international events and how the branding efforts of Ottawa Tourism make the case for why it's a great place to live and work.

“

**Ottawa Tourism has done a brilliant job in building that brand and then creating a stewardship plan that reflects all sectors of the business community in both of those elements.**

”

**SUELING CHING**  
President and CEO,  
*Ottawa Board of Trade*

Upon completion of this work, Ottawa Tourism then took this DNA and refreshed the branding and messaging to align. One of the first campaigns out of the gate was "Here to Inspire," a multi-platform campaign celebrating Ottawa's culture and creativity. It features the city's key differentiators, from museums to galleries, concert venues to festivals, targeting leisure travelers, tour groups, meeting and convention planners, as well as sports organizers.

## Bringing Prosperity to Puerto Rico

Since its inception in July 2018, Discover Puerto Rico has effectively created and implemented multi-channel tactics and campaigns designed for the progression of the destination and destination organization, to help advance its mission of bringing prosperity to Puerto Rico by positioning the Island as a premier destination for leisure, business, and event travel. Discover Puerto Rico has demonstrated excellence in both creativity and mission execution, as evidenced by its inclusion in Fast Company's 2023 list of "World's Most Innovative Companies," its three Emmy Awards for the "Sounds like Puerto Rico" series and its hosting of superstar Jimmy Fallon for a show taping on the island.

Discover Puerto Rico understands that a destination's brand is a perception and belief that lives in the hearts and minds of travelers. A brand is not a campaign or a tagline. A campaign is one reflection, or expression, of a brand. That is why the approach to re-defining and re-positioning Puerto Rico's brand was a research-driven and results-focused process.

“

We should be fostering an echo chamber as we think about the message that will attract people to come here.

”

**MARKHAM MCINTYRE**

Director,  
Seattle Office of Economic Development

Discover Puerto Rico needed a base understanding of where Puerto Rico stood in the minds of consumers and stakeholders. An exhaustive qualitative and quantitative process was embraced that began immediately upon the formation of the organization, aimed at benchmarking awareness, identifying the destination's brand associations and competitive landscape, determining the travel personas and market segments, and understanding the desired travel experiences.<sup>12</sup>

Breakthrough creative campaigns that elevate Puerto Rico's culture and diverse tourism offerings, paired with targeted media relations and thought leadership efforts, and award-winning content through owned channels, have driven massive results for the destination and Discover Puerto Rico. Examples include the “Live Boricua” campaign, a manifestation of Discover Puerto Rico's focus on elevating local culture while underscoring values-based promotion, as well as the campaign “Sunshine to Spare”, which was created in partnership with the Pantone Color Institute.

Manuel Laboy, former Secretary of the Department of Economic Development and Commerce, spoke to the team about the Puerto Rico brand, specifically, the “Live Boricua” campaign and how it conveys the perfect message across tourism and economic development. He says the success of the campaign came is “the combination of the creative process as well as the execution”, where he says that Discover Puerto Rico spent a lot of time formulating and executing the strategy to get both elements right. The campaign has been so successful that Marriott Hotels in Puerto Rico are also adopting it, so not only is it being leveraged by partner organizations and departments in government, but also on the corporate level.

<sup>12</sup> “Brand History Overview.” Discover Puerto Rico. Accessed November 1, 2023. <https://www.discoverpuertorico.com/industry/brand-history-overview>.

## Embracing Seattle

For over fifty years, Visit Seattle has been the official destination organization for King County and Seattle. Global destination branding, combined with competitive programs and campaigns in leisure travel marketing, convention sales, and international tourism development, boosts the region's economic prosperity.

Visit Seattle's brand has to speak to different users; from family vacationers and weekend revelers to meeting planners in search of convention space and restaurant managers hoping to boost business, to residents researching their weekends. The marketing campaigns are equally diverse, highlighting the beauty of Seattle for locals as in the "I Know a Place" campaign or embracing the city's weather with "The Seattle Rain Booth".

The "I Know a Place" originated in 2021 as a grassroots campaign to garner support for local businesses through the pandemic. Featuring a rotation of Seattle-based content creators, the success of the campaign among residents led to its national expansion. "The Seattle Rain Booth" is a fully sustainable, traveling, walk-in photo booth built to replicate a rainy Seattle day. As summer temperatures soar in Los Angeles, Scottsdale and other markets where the booth traveled, the rain booth provided a welcome cool down for locals.

Visit Seattle's efforts have been acknowledged through several accolades, seventeen in total during 2023. The "Kissing in the Rain" campaign was awarded Travel Weekly's Silver Magellan Award for Destination Marketing-Live Installation/Activation Program for Destinations and the Skift IDEA Award for Thinkers in the Physical Experiences. Visit Seattle was also recognized by the World Travel Awards as North America's Leading Tourism Board, Leading Meetings and Conference Center, and Leading Meetings and Conference Center.

Our team met with Markham McIntyre, Director of the Seattle Office of Economic Development. McIntyre mentioned that the branding efforts by Visit Seattle not only raise the visibility of the city but also can help companies change perceptions and help in talent attraction. "Any branding that we do for the Seattle region describes it as a place that has a high quality of life with lots of opportunities and a strong sense of community. A message like that has broad benefits", said McIntyre.

### **Destination Greater Victoria**

In 2021, Destination Greater Victoria undertook a brand refresh to address visitor sensibilities in a post-COVID environment, reflect community sentiment around sustainability, and continue to tell its unique story as a people and place. While Victoria has been known for its British history, the destination has been reinventing itself and today is a leader in ocean and marine research, sustainability, and technology. In brand-speak, “Victoria is where old school meets new school, nature meets city, and traditional meets unconventional. Victoria is where people and ideas come together”.

The destination won an international award for global impact on sustainable tourism in the summer of 2023, acknowledging the significant contribution it has made to the travel and tourism industry over the last few years. Greater Victoria has also been recognized by Conde Nast Traveler as a reader favorite, clinching the Best City in the World ranking in 2023 while also ranking top-ten for friendliness and food scene.

Greater Victoria has created a brand that resonates with locals, businesses, and visitors alike. Our team met with Jeff Bray, CEO of the Downtown Victoria Business Association, who spoke about how the brand is impactful locally and economically. Jeff said that sustainability fits well with the ethos of the region and so it really speaks to the community values, hence the success of the brand.

Greater Victoria achieved Biosphere Sustainability Certification in early 2023. Since that time, almost 60 local businesses have either become certified or formally committed to the highly regarded Biosphere designation. The Biosphere sustainability program was developed by the Responsible Tourism Institute, is rigorous and founded on the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and requires continuous improvement. The extensive business uptake on Biosphere is a clear indication of strong alignment with brand value, and how this is taking Greater Victoria forward as a community and a desirable, first-choice destination.

# CHAPTER 5:

## IMPACT ON WORKFORCE

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## Impact on Workforce

What does it take to attract today's top-notch talent? Economists increasingly recognize not only the important connection between an area's human capital and its economic growth but also the role that amenities and lifestyle characteristics play in attracting human capital.

Richard Florida introduces these concepts, noting that economists and geographers have long looked at the role that the availability of talent has played in the location decisions of firms, but have only more recently turned to the factors that attract talent.<sup>13</sup>

Interest in the role of lifestyle amenities and quality has resulted in highly relevant research, including a study by two economists in Philadelphia that provides an in-depth analysis that is particularly relevant to the role of the visitor economy. In this analysis, titled "Beautiful City: Leisure Amenities and Urban Growth", the researchers use several approaches to address the question: "Did cities that are perceived as attractive places for leisure activities grow at a relatively faster pace in recent periods?"<sup>14</sup> A core aspect of the analysis uses the volume of leisure trips to each metropolitan statistical area as a measure of local leisure-oriented amenities, proposing that the types of amenities that attract leisure travelers, such as "...scenic views, historic districts, architectural beauty, and cultural and recreational opportunities... [are] some of the very characteristics that attract households to cities when they choose these places as their permanent homes."<sup>15</sup>

The research reaches several affirmative conclusions, summarized as follows:<sup>16</sup>

- Population and employment growth was about 10 percentage points higher in a metro area with twice as many picturesque locations as in another one. Results are not driven by employment growth in the tourism sector. Lifestyle amenities are tied with low taxes as the top predictor of contemporaneous urban growth.
- Cities that attracted greater numbers of leisure visitors also attracted a greater share of college-educated residents, consistent with the expectation that leisure amenities can contribute to attracting high-skilled individuals to a city.
- Neighborhoods that are "central recreational districts", defined as proximate to recreational and leisure-oriented amenities grew faster than other comparable areas, flourishing even as other central city areas lagged. Rents, incomes, and educational attainment increased faster in urban beautiful neighborhoods but at the cost of minority displacement.

Therefore, destination organizations and economic development organizations are both essentially seeking the same outcome when they focus on local communities through tourism as a talent attraction gateway. Attracting top-notch talent is easier when your city is a welcoming place to live.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Florida, "The Economic Geography of Talent," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 92, no. 4 (2002): 743–55.

<sup>14</sup> Carlino, Gerald A., and Albert Saiz. "Beautiful City: Leisure Amenities and Urban Growth." Working paper (Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia), 2019. <https://doi.org/10.21799/frbp.wp.2019.16>.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.



In this chapter, we provide examples of initiatives that have taken place in the destinations we studied where the destination organization has partnered with its economic development counterparts on successful talent attraction initiatives or where it has contributed positively

to the quality of the workforce through workforce development programs. The last section of the chapter provides quantitative evidence as it relates to the quality of the workforce in several selected destinations to highlight key workforce performance and development aspects.<sup>17</sup>

### Key Findings:

- There is a strong relationship between workforce diversity and the size of the leisure and hospitality sector.
- Wage growth across the economy is associated with leisure and hospitality wages.
- Talent is attracted to destinations that offer a good quality of life, and hence, talent attraction initiatives led by or in collaboration with destination organizations tend to have the most powerful impact.
- Destination organizations contribute to workforce development through key programs.

<sup>17</sup> The quantitative analysis has only been conducted for U.S. destinations due to data availability.

## Talent Attraction Programs

There are many ways for destination organizations to collaborate with economic development organizations and chambers of commerce to attract talent. One way is through strong messaging and visuals about lifestyle factors (in addition to career factors) to appeal to talent on all fronts. Historically this has not been in the wheelhouse of economic development organizations, however, destination organizations are experts at selling the livability of an area and this is where a successful collaboration should begin. Making sure messaging aligns across tourism and economic development entities shows a united front and makes it easier (and more cost-effective) to tell the story of a community.

### Community Job Application Program

In Champaign, Illinois, Experience Champaign-Urbana works in collaboration with the Champaign County Economic Development Corporation to offer the Community Job Application Program, partly funded by Champaign County through its American Rescue Plan Act funds. This program connects new and current residents with over 200 local HR and talent attraction professionals to place people in jobs and connect them with community ambassadors to get them engaged in the community. This short application makes the path to choosing Champaign-Urbana as a destination to live and work easier while helping employers fill jobs.

The project team met with Carly McCrory-McKay, Executive Director of the Champaign County Economic Development Corporation. “In the age of talent wars, it’s critical that Champaign County stays on the cutting edge of talent attraction tactics,” says McCrory-McKay. “The Community

Job Application is an innovative approach that gives future residents an accessible path to “yes” by providing a virtual front door to employment in Champaign County and important information about what matters to them most: personal interests and hobbies, quality of life, and more. We are excited to work with Champaign County employers on this new program.”

“

Experience Champaign-Urbana does an excellent job at general community storytelling and their collateral materials and website are pieces that I use in my traditional economic development efforts.

”

**CARLY MCCRORY-MCKAY**

Executive Director,  
Champaign County Economic Development Corporation

### Training for Realtors’ Association

McCrory-McKay says that talent is a great convener of the Champaign County Economic Development Corporation and Experience Champaign-Urbana. She says that the Economic Development Corporation benefits from all the collateral developed by Experience Champaign-Urbana, including the website and the visitors’ guide. More importantly, she highlighted the training that Experience Champaign-Urbana provides for the Realtors Association where they guide realtors on marketing the community and its assets.

### The “Chambana” Welcome Crew

The project team also met with Laura Weisskopf Bleill, Director of External Engagement at the University of Illinois’ Research Park. Bleill shared insights about the important role that placemaking plays in talent decisions and consequently, the important role that Experience Champaign-Urbana plays in talent attraction and retention. While this is true of for all destinations, it becomes particularly important in international communities like Champaign-Urbana (i.e. destinations with a large share of foreign-born residents) because not only does the destination organization need to promote the amenities of the place, but it also needs to do so in a very welcoming way that encourages newcomers. The Chambana Welcome Crew is a collaboration between the Champaign County Economic Development Corporation, Experience Champaign-Urbana, and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. It connects new residents or prospective residents with a local ambassador so they can get personalized insights that best suit their needs. This includes

invitations to attend local events, getting recommendations on things to do, being part of networking events, and just regular check-ins in the first year of moving. Ambassadors have a strong network and knowledge of the Champaign-Urbana area and stand ready to answer questions, share experiences, and ensure a smooth transition into the community.

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“  
Talent is attracted to Champaign because of the knowledge community values. Experience Champaign-Urbana ensures those are at the forefront of the message.  
”

**LAURA WEISSKOPF BLEILL**

Director of External Engagement,  
*University of Illinois Research Park*

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### Building the Tourism Workforce Pipeline

A similar collaboration was found in Chattanooga where the Chattanooga Tourism Co. ran advertising in the metro area in 2021 and added surrounding markets in 2022 to build the brand of working in tourism and connect the audience with open jobs in tourism in the Chattanooga area. The Tourism Co. created a landing page that told the stories of working in tourism and updated the landing page with currently available jobs in tourism. This campaign ran targeted ads to people seeking employment or seeking to change employment via digital, radio (English and Spanish), and locally broadcast television advertising. The result of the campaign was that Chattanooga's tourism jobs were filled faster than other destinations in the area, helping to put people back to work, reducing stress on other employees, managers, and owners, and improving the quality of experience for visitors. By July 2022, a new record level of tourism employment in Chattanooga was achieved.

### Chattanooga Calling

Our team also met with Charles Wood, President and CEO of the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce. Wood spoke about the "Chattanooga Calling" talent attraction campaign which is a joint initiative between the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce and the Chattanooga Tourism Co. It integrates a

dynamic website, digital advertising, and a creative program to bring remote workers to Chattanooga by curating a list of Airbnbs with Gig Internet and working with Bandwango and local co-working spaces to offer perks and discounts for participants to earn a chance to win a workcation package in Chattanooga.

“

Talent attraction is one of those areas where the brand message is really impactful.

”

**CHARLES WOOD**

President and CEO,  
Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce

The interview with Wood discussed how he came to Chattanooga from Pensacola, Florida. The first time he came to the city was in 2012 to interview for the position of Vice President of Economic and Talent Development. He did not know much about Chattanooga then but liked the vibe of the city and downtown specifically. He says that Chattanooga is a “great combination of an urban center with fantastic outdoor amenities”.

## Coming Home

In the Great Lakes Bay Region, Michigan, several organizations have been leading the charge regarding attracting and retaining talent. Our team met with Tony Stamas, President and CEO of the Midland Business Alliance. The Midland Business Alliance is working on several initiatives including a thriving MyPros (Midland Young Professionals) group, the Alliance Awards scholarships, POWER UP Women's Leadership Conference, job shadowing opportunities with Northwood University's international students, 'Talent Talks' videos interviewing local businesses about their struggles and solutions and a video showcasing all Midland has to offer. "None of those initiatives would have been possible without the Great Lakes Bay Regional Convention and Visitors Bureaus being a strong partner and telling the story of the region in a way that attracts new residents", said Stamas.

Another interesting regional initiative in Great Lakes is "Coming Home", an effort to attract young professionals who have left the region back to the area. With that, a website with resources branded and marketed as DiscoverGreatLakesBay.com, has been created to provide information to those individuals and serve as a platform for that initiative. The initiative focuses on networking, career coaching, and more importantly promoting the amenities and livability of the region and the wealth of opportunities.

Our team spoke with Jenee Velasquez, Executive Director of The Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation, who highlighted how useful the Great Lakes Bay Regional Convention and Visitors Bureaus' materials are in assisting in recruiting talent. Velasquez told us about a recent search committee that she was part of to recruit a position for the Saginaw Valley State University and how the regional brand has helped in convincing the candidate to take the position. Another anecdote Velasquez shared with us was about one of the Foundation's grant partners

moving to the region during the pandemic encouraged by the variety of recreational opportunities. He then moved his company and settled with his family after discovering what the Midland community was able to offer them.

## Remote Work

As with many tourism destinations, Puerto Rico has seen an upsurge in remote work since the pandemic. Discover Puerto Rico has made an intentional effort to market the amenities most important to remote workers like connectivity, shared workspaces, and more importantly, the quality of life and amenities.

To highlight Puerto Rico as a remote work destination, Discover Puerto Rico offered remote workers a desk makeover as part of its "Deskover Puerto Rico" program. Travelers sent short submissions detailing why they would like to work remotely from Puerto Rico. The campaign encouraged workers to take advantage of the benefits that Puerto Rico offers as a remote destination. The program highlighted future travel and targeted niche/themed topics. The sweepstakes drew 14,642 entries, resulting in 90 million impressions and \$1.6 million in ad value. The program contributed positively to Puerto Rico's thriving business community, building stronger networks for tech companies, start-ups, and entrepreneurs.

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“  
**There is an opportunity in Puerto Rico to have a better work-life balance and we have seen many people move here driven by that notion.**

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**JORGE HERNANDEZ**  
 President and CEO,  
 Aerostar Airport Holdings

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## Workforce Development Programs

Not only is talent attracted to high amenity destinations, but our stakeholder consultations throughout the project have shown how successful destination organizations contribute to the destination's talent pool both inside and outside of the travel and tourism industry through workforce development programs, hence upskilling the workforce.

### Student Exploration Program

An excellent example is the Student Tourism Exploration Program funded by the Mesa Regional Foundation for Accessibility, Diversity, and Inclusion offered in Mesa, Arizona. This program works on building the future hospitality pipeline by introducing students from high schools to career opportunities within the industry through hands-on projects, experiential site visits, activities, and guest speakers. The program emphasizes professional demeanor, networking, and leadership so while the program aims to build the talent pipeline in hospitality, the soft skills that the students acquire through the program benefit them throughout their careers even if they transition to other industries.

### Mesa Master Class Series

Another example from Mesa is the Mesa Master Class Series designed to bring together Visit Mesa partners, Arizona State University faculty and students, Mesa residents, and visitors to provide an interactive and educational experience on a variety of topics.

For example, one master class brought together the Mesa Regional Foundation for Accessibility, Diversity, and Inclusion, one of the "Fresh Foodie Trail" stops (Freeman Farms), a Visit Mesa partner (Board and Brush), visitors/residents, and Arizona State University for a creative painting experience. The master class brought together the art of board painting and the fascinating world of bees. Participants created stunning wooden signs while learning about the importance of

bees in the Mesa ecosystem. Not only was this an educational experience, but part of the proceeds went to benefit the Mesa Regional Foundation for Accessibility, Diversity, and Inclusion.

### Guests First Customer Service Training Program

Another similar endeavor is the Guests First Customer Service Training Program offered in the Fort Myers area. It is a free educational program that offers customer service skills training to front-line and management professionals. In 2012, Harvard named this program as one of "111 Bright Ideas in government". The Bright Ideas initiative serves to complement the innovations in the American Government Awards program by shining a light on noteworthy and promising government programs and practices. As a result, in 2013, the Lee County Visitors and Convention Bureau entered a first-of-its-kind partnership with the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute to offer hospitality certifications to program completers the opportunity to sit for the Certified Guest Service Professional Examinations.

### Shine On

On the Canadian side, Ottawa Tourism offers the Shine On Program which teaches and celebrates Ottawa's dedicated front-line staff. It includes four online courses that cover an overview of Ottawa's tourism industry and visitor economy, a robust look at regions in Ottawa and the businesses that make it vibrant, a refresher on best practices in customer service, and finally, resources to further assist with providing great and knowledgeable customer service.

The Shine On Program was developed through a partnership with Tourism Calgary to white label their successful White Hat Academy, in a first-ever Canadian-made, cross-country solution. This new program is helping to position Ottawa as a beacon of top-tier tourism and hospitality, with over 290 participants in the program this far, and a successful inaugural Shine On Awards celebrated in May 2023.

## Quantitative Analysis

Tourism economics evaluated employment and wage trends as well as workforce demographic and occupational characteristics in the destinations studied throughout this project.<sup>18</sup> This analysis shows how the growth of the visitor economy has spillover effects on the workforce in other industries. Below are some key findings:

**Growth in leisure and hospitality is associated with overall economic growth.** Across the destinations we studied in this project, a high growth rate in employment in the leisure and hospitality sector has been associated with a high growth rate in employment in all industries.

**There is a strong relationship between diversity and the tourism sector.** Across the destinations we studied in this project, we saw a strong relationship between the size of leisure and hospitality employment and the share of Black-, Indigenous-, and People of Color (BIPOC) employment.

**Wage growth across the economy is associated with leisure and hospitality wages.** Across the destinations we studied in this project, we noticed a strong positive relationship between wages in the leisure and hospitality sector and wage growth in all industries.

**The leisure and hospitality sector is experiencing growth in knowledge occupations.** While most occupations in the leisure and hospitality sector are in food-preparation and serving-related occupations, the fastest growing occupations in the sector are in management occupations and business and financial operations occupations.

## Destination Highlights

- In Chattanooga, the leisure and hospitality sector has grown over the last five years, led by growth in arts, entertainment, and recreation; an industry which has grown by 7% over that period. The growth rate in the sector has been 97% higher than the national growth rate. Similarly, growth in the entire economy has been impressive, where growth in employment in all industries has been almost 5%, a rate 26% higher than the national growth rate.
- In Champaign, wages in the leisure and hospitality sector have increased by 33% over the last five years, a rate 12% higher than the national level, and wages in all industries have increased by 25%, a rate 1% stronger than the national level.
- In Houston, growth in employment in all industries has also been impressive at 7% in the last five years, a growth rate 79% higher than the national average. Average earnings in Houston are also 6% higher than the U.S. average, indicating a strong and competitive job market.
- In the greater Fort Myers area, employment in the leisure and hospitality sector in the last five years has increased, despite negative growth on the national level. Growth has been largely led by the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry, adding 989 jobs in the last five years. More importantly, employment in all industries has grown at a rate more than 3 times that on the national level. Average earnings in the area have also grown by 29%, a rate 17% higher than the national average.
- In Seattle, growth in employment in all industries was close to 5%, a rate 25% higher than on the national level. Average earnings in Seattle are not only 59% higher than the national average, but they have also grown at a much faster rate; 40% over the last five years.

<sup>18</sup> This quantitative analysis does not extend to destinations outside of the U.S. due to lack of data.

# CHAPTER 6:

## BENEFITS TO GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

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## Benefits to Government and Community Services

Tax revenues generated by visitors either directly or indirectly support government services. As such, some core government services are paid for through destination activities. In most cases, this means improved infrastructure, providing greater accessibility and supply logistics that are, in turn, important in attracting investment in other sectors.

This chapter discusses the effect of destination promotion on government services and community programs through several avenues. We first present an analysis of the tax contributions generated by tourism in the

destinations under study for this report. We then provide some anecdotal examples of how destination organizations have supported specific services or community programs and how their work has helped improve infrastructure in their destinations. Finally, we end the chapter with an analysis of several resident sentiment surveys by Longwoods International, evaluating resident sentiment specifically related to tax revenues generated by tourism and the impact it has on government services.

### Key Findings:

- Government services and community programs are impacted by:
  - a) The impact of tax revenues supported by visitor spending.
  - b) The advocacy role played by destination organizations that are attentive to the long-term needs of the destination.
- Residents appreciate that tourism taxes offset expenses that would otherwise be borne by residents.

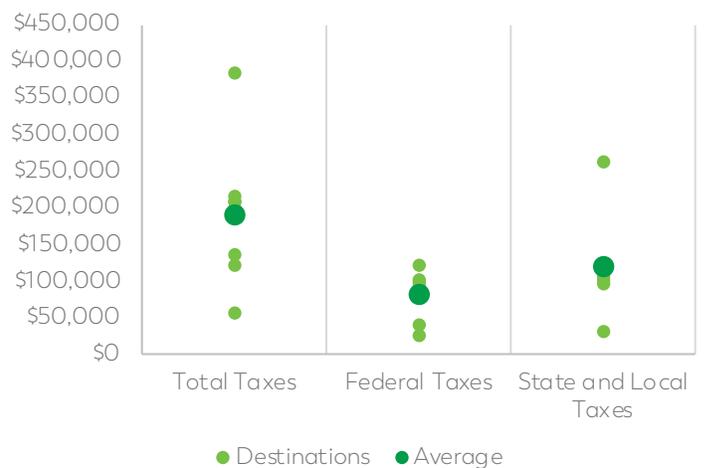
## Tax Analysis

Tourism Economics analyzed the tax impacts of tourism across the destinations included in the study. Our key findings can be summarized as follows:<sup>19</sup>



- On average, \$1 million of visitor spending within a destination generates \$191,000 in total tax revenues.
- State and local taxes constitute 63% of the taxes generated by tourism, where on average, every \$1 million of visitor spending within a destination generates \$120,000 of state and local tax revenues.

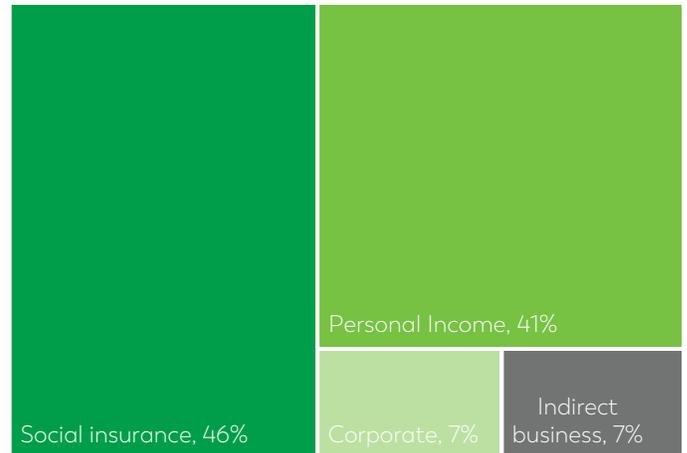
### Tax generation for every \$1m of visitor spending



<sup>19</sup> Findings are based on data for U.S. destinations and are likely to be similarly applicable for other destinations.

- Almost half (46%) of the tax impact on the federal level is from social insurance, while 41% is from personal income.

### Composition of federal taxes generated from tourism



- 45% of the tax impact on the state and local level is from sales taxes, 30% from property taxes, and 11% from bed taxes.

### Composition of state and local taxes generated from tourism



## Community Initiatives and Infrastructure Expansions Supported by Destination Organizations

The impact of destination organizations is far-reaching, not only are they promoting tourism which generates tax revenues, in turn funding government services, but they also directly support infrastructure projects and expansions as well as community programs.

This section will highlight some key examples from the destinations we studied as part of this project.

### Community Initiatives

#### Fort Myer's Beach and Shoreline Program

The beaches and ecology are the main draw of visitors to Fort Myers and its surrounding islands and beaches, and the Beach and Shoreline Program serves as a great enhancement to these assets with funding provided by the tourist development tax. Since 1990, this program has allocated more than \$190 million to a variety of countywide projects related to beach maintenance, beach renourishment, and beach park facility development. Project funding is provided by 26% of the 5% tourist development tax collected on short-term accommodations. Each of these projects represents a cooperative effort with governmental agencies in the area from the local municipalities to the federal government.

The Beach and Shoreline Program provides direct benefits to visitors and residents alike, all intending to promote tourism while preserving and enhancing the beaches and shoreline. Additionally, these tourist-generated funds have served as budget supplements, allowing for the provision of services at a level that exceeds what could be provided without additional taxation to residents. For example, the maintenance of the public beach accesses is funded by the tourist tax at no additional cost to the residents who also use these facilities.<sup>20</sup>

#### A Leader in Sustainability

Destination Greater Victoria is a leader in sustainability in the region. As travelers from around the globe are seeking out sustainable and eco-friendly travel options that match their values, Destination Greater Victoria works to build and promote the destination's credentials in providing sustainable accommodations, attractions, experiences, dining, and transportation. As a result, Destination Greater Victoria has proudly led the Biosphere Certification process for Greater Victoria, which includes a commitment to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, the World Charter for Sustainable Tourism +20, and the COP21 Paris Agreement to combat climate change.

<sup>20</sup> Beach & Shoreline: Lee county visitor & convention bureau: Lee VCB. Beach & Shoreline | Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau | Lee VCB. (n.d.). <https://www.visitfortmyers.com/lee-vcb/funding-programs/beach-and-shoreline>

In addition, Destination Greater Victoria is one of four founding partners and a co-organizer of the annual IMPACT Sustainability Travel and Tourism Conference in Victoria, which is now in its seventh year. This conference inspires the tourism industry to impact global change and lead the world in a new age of environmental and social responsibility through a four-day event that includes expert speakers, workshops, breakouts, and experiential tours, where industry players can learn from tourism leaders about industry-leading sustainability practices. The IMPACT Conference aims to drive, spark, and demonstrate innovative and collaborative sustainability solutions for positive tourism development across Canada, through dialogue, recommendations, and action.<sup>21</sup>

As part of its sustainability efforts, Destination Greater Victoria partnered with Peninsula Streams, a local ecology-focused NGO working with Indigenous partners, to help restore critical beach habitat in Victoria's middle harbor. The project reestablished and naturalized the shoreline, stewarding the return of forage fish to this component of the ecosystem. The site also has considerable significance for the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations who, with the restored backshore, can now once again conduct traditional canoe landing ceremonies at this culturally significant site.<sup>22</sup>

### **Mesa's Path to Accessibility**

After a one-year process, in 2019, Mesa became the U.S.'s first Autism Certified City, denoted by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES).

Initially, Visit Mesa started on a small scale by working to get Mesa's tourism bureau trained and certified by IBCCES. The IBCCES provides cognitive disorder training and certification so that professionals are better equipped with tools to best accommodate neurodiverse people in various settings. Once the bureau saw the positive effect the certification had, training was then extended to public-facing employees throughout the city and thus began the nearly year-long process of Mesa becoming an Autism Certified City.

Visit Mesa worked with its partners (including attractions, restaurants, and hotels) to have at least 80% of its customer-facing staff trained to recognize and understand developmental disability, which can cause challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, restricted interests, and speech/non-verbal communication. More than 500 Mesa Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities employees completed the training, along with nearly 4,000 community members representing 60 businesses and organizations.

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21 Sustainable Travel in Victoria, BC - tourism victoria. Tourism Victoria -. (2023, December 8).

<https://www.tourismvictoria.com/plan-your-trip/sustainable-greater-victoria>

22 Duffy, A. A. (2023, July 23). Beach reclamation gives new life to Lime Bay. Times Colonist.

<https://www.timescolonist.com/local-news/beach-reclamation-gives-new-life-to-lime-bay-7313292>

In addition, sensory guides for Certified Autism Centers (as determined by IBCCES), such as the I.D.E.A Museum and the Arizona Museum of Natural History are made available in venues, detailing the effect that certain activities and interactions in the attraction can have on children who experience sensory overload.

Following the autism certification, Visit Mesa adopted the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program, making it the first U.S. city to do so. Through the program, which was first launched in the UK, Visit Mesa and other attractions around the city provide free sunflower lanyards and bracelets to visitors. These floral-themed accessories signal to hospitality employees and inform community members that the person or family wearing them may need extra assistance or patience navigating certain spaces.

Finally, Visit Mesa has partnered with Aira, which is an on-demand visual interpretation service for people who are either blind or have low vision. Through the app, individuals can connect with an agent who can assist with trip planning, menu reading, and more. The city has also launched a collaboration this year with Wheel of the World, which maps out accessibility information for various destinations with photos and measurements.<sup>23</sup>

### **Victoria's Housing Project for Local Hospitality Workers**

The pressing need for affordable housing has been a long-standing concern in Greater Victoria, particularly for the hardworking individuals who power the local hotel and hospitality industry. The lack of affordable housing options not only poses significant challenges for workers but also impacts the overall operations of many businesses within the sector.

For that reason, Destination Greater Victoria partnered with the City of Victoria and the Greater Victoria Housing Society to help fund a below-market purpose-built rental project. The funding for that project came from the Online Accommodation Platform Municipal Regional District Tax revenues. Which were allocated for affordable housing purposes. Since 2018, funds from short-term vacation rentals in Victoria, which impact housing supply adversely, have been collected through Online Accommodation Platform Municipal Regional District Tax revenues and allocated to the City of Victoria's Housing Reserve Fund, specifically earmarked for the creation of affordable workforce housing for hotel and hospitality workers.

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<sup>23</sup> Hemmings, R. (2023, May 30). The first of its kind: Mesa, AZ is the US's first-ever Autism Certified City. <https://www.kansascity.com/detour/article275927841.html>

While workforce housing development isn't core to Destination Greater Victoria's work, Destination Greater Victoria, the City of Victoria, and its partners contributed to addressing the issue of workforce housing. Contributing \$2.5 million in Online Accommodation Platform Municipal Regional District Tax funds to the project closed the project's existing equity gap and enabled the project, which has already received zoning approvals, to move forward. In return for this funding contribution, the Greater Victoria Housing Society will prioritize housing units within the building for hotel and hospitality workers.

“

**This decision demonstrates our commitment to the well-being of those who make Greater Victoria a sought-after destination. We are proud to be part of this collaborative effort that will not only provide much-needed housing but also enhance the overall quality of life for our dedicated hotel and hospitality workers.**

”

**PAUL NURSEY**  
CEO,

*Destination Greater Victoria*

## Infrastructure Expansions

### Reintroducing Transatlantic Service to Ottawa

Our team met with Joel Tkach, Vice President of Business Development and Marketing at the Ottawa International Airport Authority. Tkach spoke about the role Ottawa Tourism has in expanding connectivity to the destination. This is particularly important for a city like Ottawa, which despite being the capital, is in proximity to two major connection hubs in Toronto and Montreal, which makes it difficult to attract foreign carriers.

So, when the Ottawa Airport Authority saw an opportunity to reintroduce Air France's transatlantic service after the pandemic, it needed strong partners and this is when Ottawa Tourism stepped in. Ottawa Tourism was able to help with an agreement with Air France and put some assurances on the table to reduce the risk of the Air France operation. This is in addition to leading the marketing for point of sale in France and other parts of Europe. The Ottawa Airport Authority and Ottawa Tourism worked very hard until June 2023 when Air France inaugurated its new non-stop flight between Paris-Charles de Gaulle and Ottawa.

As a result of this successful collaboration, the Ottawa Airport Authority is currently working in partnership with Ottawa Tourism to reach a similar agreement with other airlines and extend the connectivity of the destination.

### Better Connectivity for Victoria

On the west coast of Canada, our team interviewed Elizabeth Brown, CEO of the Victoria Airport Authority. Brown spoke about the important role that Destination Greater Victoria plays in the community and how it raises the profile of the destination. She also highlighted the importance of airports being aligned with their destination organizations in terms of air service development, strategic plans, and understanding the strongest market potentials.

In terms of direct partnerships and how they continue to contribute to the success of the Victoria Airport Authority, Brown explained that Destination Greater Victoria helps with the incentives. The Airport Authority does not have marketing dollars, and so in a sense, its ability to provide incentives is somewhat limited as it can only waive fees. However, the cooperative efforts offered by Destination Greater Victoria to the airlines are often the tangible investment the airline is looking for and is what “seals the deal”.

As a result of this great partnership between the Airport Authority and Destination Greater Victoria, Porter Airlines expanded its presence in British Columbia with service between Victoria

and Toronto Pearson in September 2023 with a year-round daily service. Destination Greater Victoria played a major role in that expansion by advocating the need for more capacity and by providing incentives.

Brown says this recent air service development has been very successful, to the extent that Porter Airlines is looking at increasing their services next year and possibly adding another origin city. “This is all a testimony to the success Porter has seen”, said Brown.

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“  
We’re very fortunate to have a strong destination organization here. Destination Greater Victoria understands the importance of air service and to have a partner who is that knowledgeable is very helpful.

”

**ELIZABETH BROWN**  
CEO,  
*Victoria Airport Authority*

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### Aligning the Messaging for Houston

The close collaboration between Houston First and the various partner organizations in the city is one of the things that was very evident throughout the conversations we had. Our team met with Molly Waits, Chief Marketing, Air Service Development, and Communications Officer at Houston Airports to discuss the role of Houston First in developing air service development in the region.

Waits highlighted the importance of aligning the messaging for Houston and “selling Houston as a whole package” to ensure all the different standpoints are being shown to the potential air carrier. She said that the quality of life and tourism amenities of Houston aren’t naturally what a network planner for an airline is thinking of and so that’s why it’s important to have Houston First involved in putting together the business case for the carrier, to highlight that there’s more to Houston than the business environment. This is usually the front end of the business case and the back end is the analytical piece which includes the forecast for the route.

Working in that sort of harmony and allowing each partner to demonstrate the key strengths of the Houston market has allowed Houston Airports to secure successful new routes to many destinations including Taiwan, Singapore, Qatar, Emirates, and more.

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“

**It’s really about Houston First making commitments to the airlines and showing as the destination organization what they are able to offer to make that partnership successful.**

”

**MOLLY WAITS**

Chief Marketing, Air Service Development  
and Communications Officer,  
*Houston Airports*

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## Chattanooga's Airline Summit

In partnership with the Chattanooga Tourism Co. and the Chamber of Commerce, Chattanooga Airport hosted a summit in October 2023 to re-market and re-sell itself to its current air carriers: United Airlines, American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, and Allegiant Air.

Our team met with April Cameron, President and CEO of the Chattanooga Airport to talk about the summit and the role of the Chattanooga Tourism Co. in its air service development efforts. "The airline representatives were amazed," Cameron said of the summit. She said they repeatedly commented on local leaders' community engagement. The Chattanooga Tourism Co. took a big part in the summit discussing air service development from the tourism side and presenting key findings from a recent study on the Chattanooga Convention Center. The Chattanooga Tourism Co. discussed its plans to market the region in new destinations if new routes were to be added and the potential this would have for the airlines.

The delegation attended an outdoor evening meal at Rock City and toured the Volkswagen plant. Cameron said that she knew "if we could just get the airlines to come here, the city would sell itself, and it did".

The summit also included a forum that allowed airline representatives and local CEOs to exchange questions and needs. "It had to be informational, we wanted them to take away some important characteristics", said Cameron.

One of the early wins of the Airline Summit is a new nonstop roundtrip flight to Las Vegas on Allegiant Air, announced in November 2023. Another recent expansion is the new nonstop flight to Denver thanks to the Chattanooga Airport being awarded the Small Community Air Service Development Program grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

“  
Chattanooga is a unique destination  
and the Chattanooga Tourism Co. is in  
the best position to partner with us to  
promote the city to new destinations.  
”

### APRIL CAMERON

President and CEO,  
Chattanooga Airport

## Great Lakes Bay Airport Endowment Fund

Annette Rummel, President and CEO of the Great Lakes Bay Regional Convention and Visitors Bureaus told us how the organization understands that the strength of the MBS International Airport and how its connection to other forms of transportation (public, rail, private, and river/lakes) is directly tied to the Region's ability to attract and retain visitors, talent, residents, and business and manufacturing.

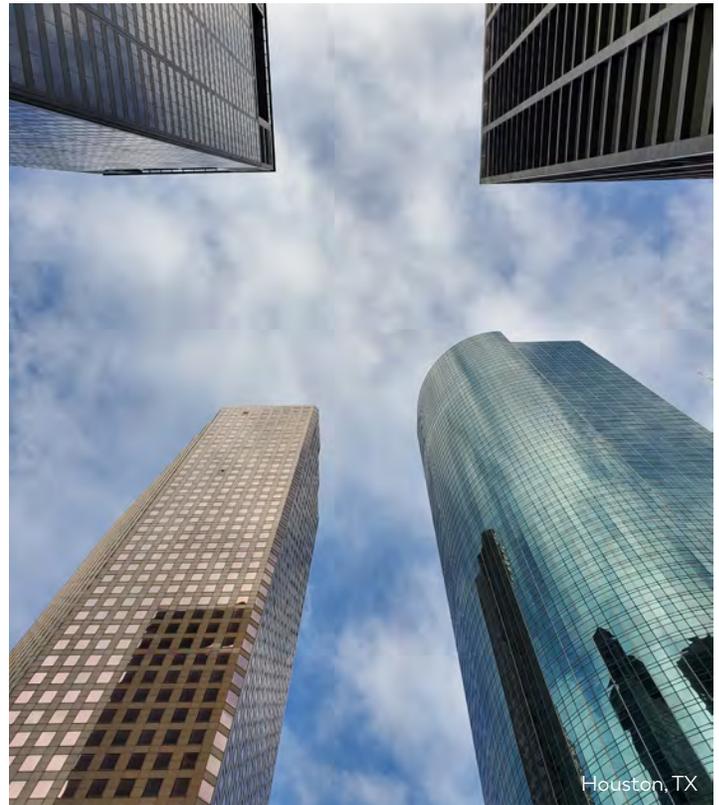
The organization invests in significant projects identified as transformational for the region. For that reason, the Great Lakes Bay Regional Convention and Visitors Bureaus is working on creating an endowment fund that would provide the MBS International Airport with a sustainable airline route expansion and attraction account.

The organization's funds of \$500,000 would be deposited in year one with the goal being to challenge others to match or exceed this amount. In tandem with the deposit, a three-year funding commitment from the community will be initiated. All funds raised would be endowed and allowed to grow until the interest earned reaches the level needed to accomplish the annual investment need.

## Resident Sentiment on Tourism’s Tax Contribution

Although in many destinations residents recognize that visitors help offset taxes or expenses that they would otherwise need to pay, residents also often feel the sales taxes paid by visitors are inadequate to compensate for wear and tear on the destination.

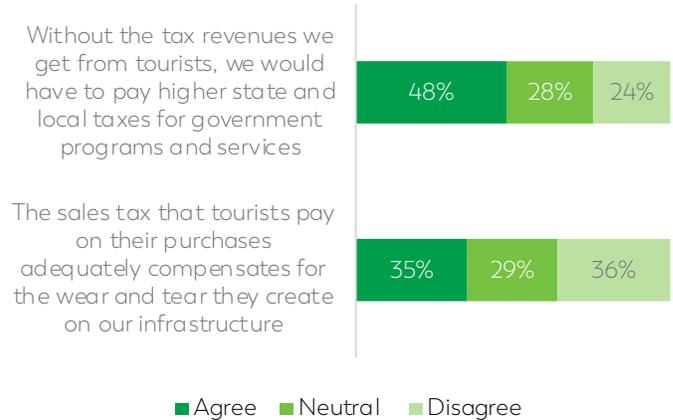
Longwoods International analyzed 29 recent Resident Sentiment studies across the U.S. and Canada. The results below relate specifically to residents’ views on tourism taxation and how it affects the services offered in the community.



The results show that:

- Almost half of residents feel that without the tax revenues from tourists, they would have to pay higher taxes to fund government programs and services.
- A larger share of people thinks the sales tax that tourists pay on their purchases is inadequate to compensate for the wear and tear in the destination than those who think the sales tax is adequate.

### Residents’ response to the following statements, 2020-2023 average



# CHAPTER 7:

## IMPACTS ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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## Impacts on Economic Development

Throughout this report, we have demonstrated the effect of destination promotion on various elements, be it the effect of tourism on other industries, quality of life, workforce, or infrastructure; factors that are underpinnings of economic vitality. We have helped illustrate that visitor economy channels of influence are clear on the ground, through case studies.

But is that important role as a catalyst of economic development also evident in the data? This chapter examines the relationship between

visitor economic growth and overall economic growth across more than 200 cities. The findings confirm previous results and show that cities with a higher concentration of visitor-related industries tend to grow faster than average.

This chapter also provides examples of destination organizations providing entrepreneurship support or promoting a destination that is favorable for company relocation, two additional types of economic development collaboration.

### Key Findings:

- Cities with a higher concentration of visitor-related industries tend to grow faster than average.
- Econometric tests show that structural shifts in the visitor economy are followed in subsequent years by sustained changes in growth in other parts of the economy. A 10% increase in a destination's visitor-related employment that is achieved through an increase in that destination's share of total US visitor-related employment (i.e. a market share gain), tends to be followed by a 2.5% increase in employment in other sectors in that city in the short run (within approximately two years).
- Destination organizations support entrepreneurship through initiatives providing technical and financial support. This is especially important in supporting Black-, Indigenous-, and People of Color (BIPOC)-owned businesses.
- Company relocation decisions are impacted by the quality of life in the destination and the destination's ability to attract talent.

## The economic track record of cities that prioritize destination promotion

Having observed the various ways in which destination promotion supports broader economic development efforts, the question remains whether a statistical relationship can be determined. That is, do cities (and states) that are succeeding as visitor destinations tend to grow more quickly?

As a starting point, we summarize the correlation between visitor economy intensity at the city level and economic growth over a subsequent 10-year period, we then present a causality analysis which indeed proves that the growth of the visitor economy leads to spillover effects in other sectors of the economy.

### Correlation

In Destination International's 2014 report, we showed that cities with a higher concentration of visitor-related industries tend to grow faster than average using data from almost 100 cities across the United States from 2004 to 2013. In this updated analysis, we expanded our scope to more than 200 U.S. cities over 30 years of available data (1990 to 2019).

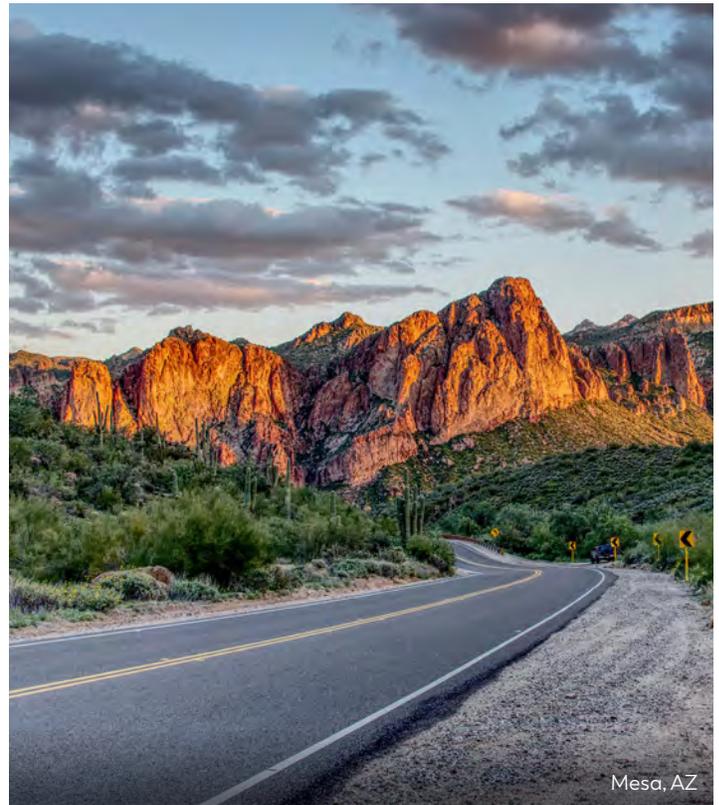
The visitor economy is one of many factors that influence regional economic growth. As shown in the following figure, a simple correlation analysis between the importance of a metro area's visitor economy and subsequent job growth shows a positive relationship, but many other factors are also at work. In this graph, the importance of the visitor economy is shown on the horizontal axis as measured by the share of jobs accounted for by selected hospitality and tourism sectors in 2010.<sup>24</sup> Growth in total employment over the period from 2010 to 2019 is shown on the vertical axis. Each city is measured based on the metropolitan statistical area, which represents a specifically defined set of economically connected counties. In total, measures for 212 Metropolitan Statistical Areas are shown.

Based on this correlation, each 1.0 percentage point increase in the share of visitor economy jobs corresponds to total job growth over a 10-year period that is 3.4 percentage points stronger. Considering Orlando as an example, 5.3% of jobs in the economy were visitor economy jobs in 2010. This is 0.6 percentage points higher than the 4.7% share for the 212 Metropolitan Statistical Areas on average. Orlando's total job growth was 7.2 percentage points faster than the average of the selected cities. (This is a faster pace of incremental job growth than implied by the correlation for the

<sup>24</sup> Specifically, we used the leisure and hospitality sector, consisting of NAICS 71 Arts, entertainment and recreation, and NAICS 72 Accommodations and food service, to represent visitor-related employment.

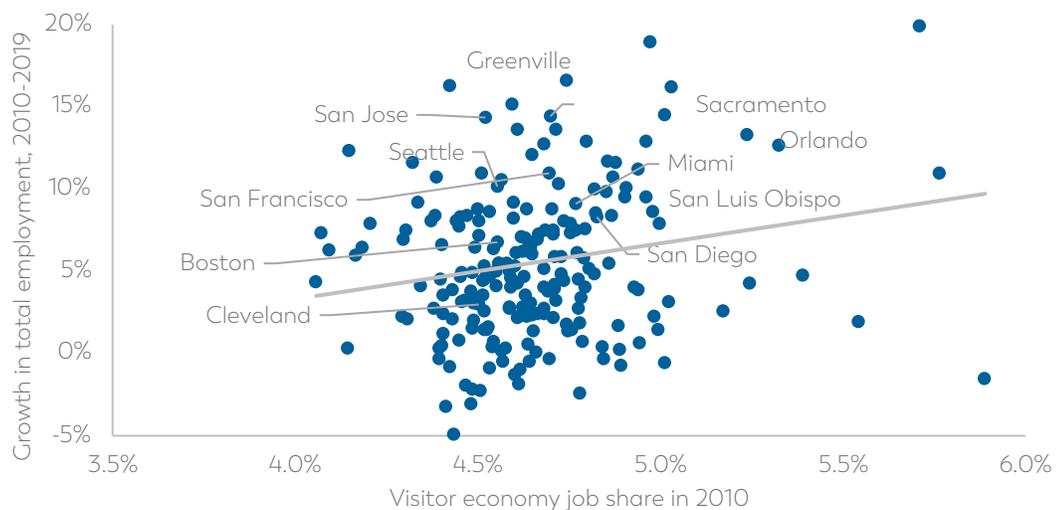
cities overall.) To compare the results with the earlier study, we now see a stronger relationship between the visitor economy job share and economic growth. Where the previous study showed each 1.0 percentage point increase in the share of visitor economy jobs corresponds to total job growth over a 10-year period that is 3.0% stronger, the more recent results with additional historical data show growth that is 3.4% stronger.

This presents a compelling hypothesis that the dynamics described in the previous chapters are evident in the actual performance of cities. However, for the theory to be validated, causation must be substantiated, and while we have proven this in the previous study, we update our results in the next section.



Mesa, AZ

### Visitor Economy and Total Employment Growth



## Causality

In the 2014 Destination International study, we developed econometric models to test the relationship between employment in visitor-related sectors and employment and wages in other parts of the economy.

The specific approach that we used to assess causality was a form of econometric analysis referred to as “Granger causality tests”. These tests measure the deterministic nature of the relationship between multiple variables, in this case, employment in visitor-related sectors and employment and wages in other parts of the economy. To apply this approach, we developed a set of econometric models based on panel data consisting of employment by industry sector, and wage levels, covering 23 years (1990 to 2012) for over 200 cities. In these models, we used an aggregate of the hotels, restaurants, and recreation sectors as a proxy for the visitor-related economy.

In this edition of the report, we expanded our data, using 1990 to 2019 panel data for the same set of U.S. cities, and evaluated the results.

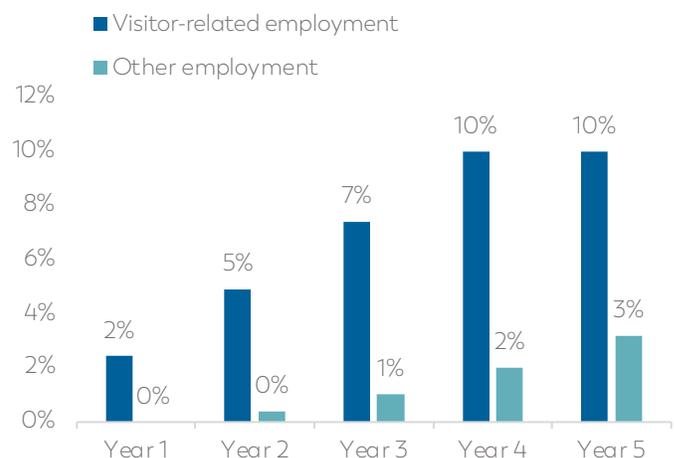
The accompanying figure illustrates the dynamics at work in the causality analysis. For the example, we have modeled the impact of a change in visitor-related employment over four years, ultimately reaching a 10% increase above the baseline.

Over time, this increase in visitor-related employment yields gains in other employment. Part of this impact is represented by the short-run effects that occur within two years of changes in visitor-related employment. For example, in year two, the year after visitor-related employment initially increased to 2.4% ahead of the baseline, we see less than a 1% increase in other employment. Another part of the gain in this example, particularly in later years, reflects the additional positive impacts captured by the econometric analysis as being incremental to the short-run effects. As a result, by the fifth year, the impact on other employment reaches approximately 3%.

Across the panel of cities analyzed, when a city gains market share, as measured by an increase in that city’s share of U.S. visitor employment, a pattern of subsequent increases in broader employment within that destination is evident. The model yields a high degree of confidence that the structural relationship between the visitor and the broader economy has been identified. Specifically, the relationship that is observed is that a 10% increase in visitor-related employment in a city that is achieved through an increase in that city’s share of total U.S. visitor-related employment (i.e., a market share gain), tends to result in a 2.5% increase in employment in other sectors in that city (within approximately two years). Such dynamics can be seen in examples over time and across the various cities considered.

Comparing these results with the earlier 2014 results, we can see a stronger relationship where the earlier results showed a 1.5% increase in broader employment in response to a 10% increase in visitor-related employment in a city.

### Visitor economy employment and its impact % increase over baseline



## How does destination promotion support economic development?

Throughout our conversations with destination organizations and stakeholders, we saw inspiring examples of economic development initiatives led or supported by destination organizations and heard great examples of destination promotion indirectly supporting investment attraction decisions.

### Promoting entrepreneurship

#### Ottawa's Destination Development Fund

Ottawa Tourism's Destination Development Fund offers project-based funding for collaborative tourism development initiatives that can demonstrate long-term benefits to Ottawa and the surrounding region through increased overnight visitation, positive social media coverage and word-of-mouth, enhanced visitor experiences, and that build tourism sector capacity and enhance investments.<sup>25</sup>

Examples of eligible projects include new developments or expansions in existing tourist attractions or experiences, unique events that present a vibrant and dynamic image of Ottawa, tourism project feasibility studies, or arts and culture festivals and events with a significant new dimension that will drive additional visitation.

“

The Destination Development Fund is an absolute game changer for Ottawa and the local tourism economy. It tells the world that we recognize the value of destination development as an important factor in keeping Ottawa as an innovator in the visitor experience.

”

**MICHAEL CROCKATT**

President and CEO,  
*Ottawa Tourism*

#### Visit Seattle's Partnership with the Intentionalist and Seattle Bank

Visit Seattle and Intentionalist have partnered to amplify and support small businesses and diverse local communities in the Seattle region, a goal that intersects with the missions of these organizations. Intentionalist is an online directory and marketplace of more than 3,000 local restaurants, bars, gyms, shops, and more, owned by women, people of color, veterans, LGBTQ, families, and differently-abled people. Visit Seattle is uniquely positioned to highlight the cultural diversity and vibrancy of Seattle's neighborhoods and encourage visitors to explore different areas of the city.

<sup>25</sup> Destination development fund. Ottawa Tourism. (n.d.). <https://ottawatourism.ca/en/destination-development/funding-programs/fund>

In 2022 and 2023, Visit Seattle partnered with Seattle Bank and Intentionalist to support BIPOC-owned businesses, situated in or near Seattle's Chinatown-International District, Central District, Capitol Hill, and First Hill neighborhoods. By actively promoting these businesses, the program sought to boost tourism and drive foot traffic.

- Seattle Bank sponsored Visit Seattle annual membership dues for 20 locally owned businesses in its first year and sixteen businesses in the second year. Visit Seattle and Seattle Bank also sponsored \$250 tabs at each participating business through Intentionalist. Through these tabs, visitors had the opportunity to enjoy a taste of each business by placing orders until the \$250 limit was reached. Seattle Bank also provided complimentary financial consulting services to each participating business.
- Visit Seattle provided social media, content on [visitseattle.org](http://visitseattle.org), e-newsletter promotion, and integration into various campaigns and events throughout the year. The program was also featured in Visit Seattle's semi-annual Official Visitor Guides which have an annual distribution of roughly 300K copies. Social posts across Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter generated 409.3K impressions and 4,833 engagements.

- Visit Seattle's Public Relations team has worked closely with Intentionalist to lead tours with national media visiting on press trips and they have facilitated interviews with Intentionalist representatives. These trips have provided media with an opportunity to meet local business owners, listen to their stories, and explore distinctive Seattle neighborhoods.

“

Seattle's diverse neighborhoods and small businesses are the essence of our city, and we firmly believe that exploring and experiencing these establishments should be at the heart of every visitor's journey. It is imperative that we sustain this initiative that reflects the values of our community.

”

**TAMMY CANAVAN**  
President and CEO,  
*Visit Seattle*

### **Visit Seattle's Community Partnership Program**

In the spring of 2022, Visit Seattle launched a Community Marketing Partnership with fiscal sponsor, Global Real Estate and Facilities, with the intent to bring more visibility and visitors to the South Lake Union neighborhood. As part of this annual partnership, Visit Seattle is providing marketing benefits to ten South Lake Union restaurants and retail businesses as well as additional enhanced marketing assets for the neighborhood.

In 2023, Visit Seattle partnered with Seattle Bank to extend the same kind of support to another cohort of businesses. Sixteen BIPOC-owned businesses were chosen, situated in or near Seattle's Capitol Hill and First Hill neighborhoods. By actively promoting these businesses, the program seeks to boost tourism and drive foot traffic, including individuals attending meetings and events at the recently opened Convention Center Summit building, which is expected to attract an influx of visitors to the area.

Each business benefits from direct promotional support through Visit Seattle's extensive channels and editorial content, gaining access to leads and referrals generated by Visit Seattle to encourage leisure visitors, business travelers, and meeting attendees to patronize their establishments. Furthermore, businesses receive comprehensive collateral and toolkits to leverage for promotional purposes. In addition, Seattle Bank provides complimentary financial consulting services to each participating business.

### **Investment-attraction support**

#### **The Future of Electric Vehicles in Chattanooga**

Our team met with Emily Mack, President and CEO of the River City Company to talk about the role of the Chattanooga Tourism Co. in downtown placemaking projects and how important destination promotion is in investment attraction decisions.

From the time Volkswagen first announced plans to open its U.S.-based automotive assembly plant in 2008 to today, Chattanooga has played a crucial role in Volkswagen's journey toward electric mobility. Since 2012, Volkswagen has invested more than \$3.5 billion in its Chattanooga operations, employed more than 4,000 individuals, and produced more than one million cars—all while positioning itself to become North America's Electric Vehicle test hub.

Mack told us that "Volkswagen is a huge success story for Chattanooga". Chattanooga is Volkswagen's North American headquarters, and the location of the company has encouraged many executives to come over from Europe; one example is Johan de Nysschen, former CEO of Volkswagen who moved to Chattanooga with his family from Germany, and he and his wife have since become very involved in the community. De Nysschen now chairs the board of directors of the Chattanooga Area Regional Transportation Authority.

When Volkswagen revealed the all-new ID.4 electric SUV in the fall of 2020, Chattanooga was named as the future site for U.S. assembly. From 2020 to 2022, Volkswagen constructed a Battery Engineering Lab at Chattanooga's Engineering and Planning Center. The facility is designed to be the flagship facility for VW's battery expertise in North America. Volkswagen Chattanooga officially began assembling its first all-electric SUV in 2022 and will ramp up to 7,000 vehicles per month, paving the way for greater national adoption of electric vehicles.

“  
Chattanooga's tourism industry is  
extraordinarily important from an  
economic standpoint.

”

**EMILY MACK**  
President and CEO,  
*The River City Company*

### Amazon's Presence in Mesa

In the summer of 2023, Mesa welcomed Amazon's 1.2 million-square-foot facility to Mesa's Gateway Area, bringing 800 to 1,300 jobs. Notably, this is the largest facility of its kind in the nation and Amazon's first major facility in the East Valley. Our team met with John Pombier, Senior Manager of Community Engagement at Amazon to talk about the company's decision to open the facility in Mesa.

Pombier spoke about the unique attributes of Mesa and highlighted that the quality of life offered is a major driving force for the region's workforce—with access to that workforce being a major part of any large corporate relocation and expansion decision. Whereas several other communities in the Phoenix metro area would offer the same regionalization opportunities, “Visit Mesa is developing the environment and the infrastructure that makes people want to come to Mesa”.

Pombier specifically mentioned the accessibility of Mesa and the efforts Visit Mesa is doing in this respect and how the organization's efforts around neuro-accessibility and inclusion in general add to the quality of life of residents, and it's not just one initiative “but rather a commitment to being accessible and family-friendly and maturing as such... rather than being a cookie-cutter city.” Talking about the attractions offered in Mesa and the environment that Visit Mesa promotes, Pombier called it “creating that atmosphere that's inclusive across the spectrum from 18 to 80.”

“  
Visit Mesa knows how to attract  
people to the community by  
highlighting the differentiators  
from anywhere else in the valley.

”

**JOHN POMBIER**  
Senior Manager, Community Engagement,  
*Amazon*

## Glossary

### Direct economic impact

Impacts (business sales, jobs, income, and taxes) created directly from spending by visitors to a destination within a discreet group of tourism-related sectors (e.g., recreation, transportation, lodging).

### Employment

Jobs directly and indirectly supported by visitor activity (includes part-time and seasonal work). One job is defined as one person working at least one hour per week for fifty weeks during the calendar year.

### Group sales

Total number of group room nights influenced by the destination organization.

### Indirect economic impact

Impacts created from purchase of goods and services used as inputs (e.g., food wholesalers, utilities, business services) into production by the directly affected tourism-related sectors (i.e., economic effects stemming from business-to-business purchases in the supply chain). An example of an indirect economic impact would be a restaurant purchasing additional food to meet an increase in demand.

### Induced economic impact

Impacts created from spending in the local economy by employees whose wages are generated either directly or indirectly by visitor spending. An example of an induced economic impact would be the increase in spending by employees in the tourism sector in various sectors throughout the economy (e.g., entertainment, healthcare, etc.).

### Labor income

Income (wages, salaries, proprietor income and benefits) supported by visitor spending.

### Local taxes

City and County taxes generated by visitor spending. This includes any local sales, income, bed, usage fees, licenses and other revenues streams of local governmental authorities – from transportation to sanitation to general government.

### State taxes

State tax revenues generated by visitor spending. This will include sales, income, corporate, usage fees and other assessments of state governments.

### Tourism Improvement District

A type of business improvement district with the aim of increasing the number of overnight visitors using business and services in that area. Traditionally raises funds through specially levied taxes or through self-assessments (private funds collected by a government in the role of a contractor).

## Acknowledgments

Tourism Economics would like to thank the following organizations for their support of this research—in providing details of real-world experiences regarding the synergies between destination promotion and economic development. We would also like to thank the counterpart organizations that provided extensive background on their activities and connectedness with the visitor economy. Although the analysis and conclusions presented in this report were independently developed, they would not be possible without the support of these organizations.





**DI**