

A PERFECT COMBINATION

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DESTINATION MARKETING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: CREATING A SINGULAR PLACE BRAND

Advertising image and return-on-investment research has long demonstrated that in varying degrees—but almost always to the positive—tourism advertising and the visitation it inspires have a positive impact on consumers' image of destinations as a place for leisure travel and recreation. Potential visitors who are exposed to positive messaging about a destination, and subsequently choose it for a leisure trip, are very likely to come home with a more positive opinion of that place than someone who has never seen the destination advertised or visited it.

Psychologist Edward Thorndike described what we now call the Halo Effect as follows: "Our judgments of a person's character can be influenced by our overall impression of them." Applying this concept to advertising, in this case tourism promotion advertising, it would imply that the gains in image by a destination from its tourism advertising would extend beyond the destination's image as a place to visit.

States, cities and regions have a wide range of economic development goals and objectives. In the middle of the second decade of the 21st century, virtually everyone is devoting time, energy and resources to attract entrepreneurs, new businesses and skilled knowledge workers. In an age when



In partnership with DMAI, Longwoods International surveyed more than 18,000 consumers about destination marketing campaigns and economic development.

The following is a summary of the results, which will be presented in full on July 16 at the DMAI Annual Convention in Austin, Texas.

approximately 10,000 baby boomers retire every day in the United States, affluent retirees can bring new economic vitality to an area or region. And colleges and universities are now seen not just as educational institutions, but also as catalysts for economic development.

GROUNDBREAKING NEW STUDY

And while it has been suspected that tourism advertising and visitation has a role in every aspect of economic development, what has been missing is data quantifying that impact—until now. Longwoods

International undertook new research last fall to unlock the relationship between tourism advertising and visitation on a destination's image for other key economic development objectives. The results of that research are in, and they are groundbreaking.

Longwoods International surveyed more than 18,000 consumers regarding 10 destination marketing campaigns, a combination of cities, states and regions. And while the data points varied somewhat by destination, the results of this research were consistent across all destinations. In every case, tourism advertising by a destination and subsequent visitation significantly improved the image of that destination not just as a place to visit, but also for a wide range of other economic development objectives.

The research identified those consumers who rank a destination highly for each economic development objective. It compared the rankings by those who had not seen the tourism ads or visited the destination with those who did see the tourism ads and/or visited. For each economic development objective, the most dramatic improvement in image for a destination was by those consumers who both were exposed to the advertising message and visited the destination, often double the improvement over those who either



“A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE”

One factor in determining how people view a destination is whether they deem it a good place to live. And those who see tourism advertising and then visit come away with a good impression of those destinations.

Image Lift Across 10 Destination Marketing Campaigns

Source: Longwoods International



“A GOOD PLACE TO START A BUSINESS”

Destinations have many economic development goals, including the launch of new businesses. When executives are exposed to advertising and visits, those destinations are more likely to be viewed as desirable locations.

Source: Longwoods International

Image Lift Across 10 Destination Marketing Campaigns



“A GOOD PLACE TO START A CAREER”

Attracting a strong workforce can be a key factor for cities looking to grow their economy. Research shows that those who are exposed to a city's advertising and later visit are more inclined to consider a career there.



Image Lift Across 10 Destination Marketing Campaigns

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saw the ads but did not visit or visited but had not seen the ads.

SUCCESS IN MICHIGAN

The state of Michigan provides a good case study into the pros and cons of using a single brand for both tourism promotion and economic development. In 2006, Michigan launched the award-winning Pure Michigan branding campaign for tourism, first regionally, and by 2009, nationally.

Simultaneously, Michigan launched a separate economic development brand, the Upper Hand campaign featuring actor Jeff Daniels. However, in 2011, after spending tens of millions of dollars on the Upper Hand brand, Michigan dropped it and unified all branding and marketing for all purposes under Pure Michigan.

Michigan united behind Pure Michigan as a single brand in 2011

based on its success as a tourism promotion brand and the belief that the power of Pure Michigan would add value to the economic development marketing effort. And although they did not have access to the new Longwoods research demonstrating the positive impact that tourism advertising and visitation have on a destination's image for all purposes, there was certainly anecdotal evidence of that linkage. For example, after Pure Michigan advertising went national in 2009, Traverse City-area Realtors began reporting second-home sales to consumers from markets not typical of Traverse City, including New York City. This trend became pronounced enough to generate a 2012 news story by Bloomberg titled: "Hamptons of Michigan draws New Yorkers with Bargain Homes."

This new research not only sheds new light on factors relevant to such deci-

sions, but it also poses a whole new set of questions about how tourism and economic development marketing efforts for destinations can and should be branded, coordinated and funded.

One obvious conclusion of this research is that a destination's tourism advertising effort should be viewed as the destination's primary mass marketing for all purposes and supported as such. And the research supports the expansion of such tourism advertising, including the budget and the scope and the reach of these types of campaigns, to both maximize the attraction of visitors and promote the destination's image for economic development.

It's time for tourism marketing to be acknowledged as the primary branding for states, cities and regions, and for tourism marketers to take the lead in promoting their destinations for all purposes. ■



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