

Sustainability Survey Analysis - April 2022

Background-

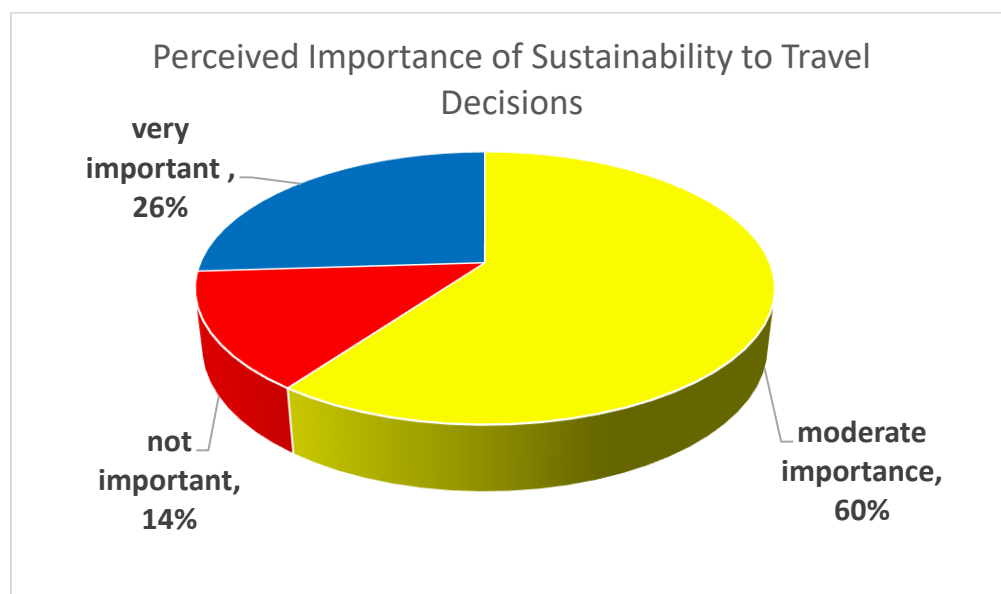
The Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST) has long worked toward the sustainability of its tourism assets. In 2022, ROOST employed a survey to a sampling of those who inquired about travel to the region during year. The purpose of this survey was to ascertain visitor and potential visitor opinions and perceptions about sustainability relative to travel decisions.

In the first time of employing this survey, nearly one thousand (991) visitors and potential visitors to the region responded. Over half (56%) of respondents reported that they are New York residents, with 28% from central and western New York state and 20% from the capital district north. Eight percent (8%) of respondents were from downstate or the New York City region.

Just over one in five respondents (21%) are from the northeast U.S. outside of New York state. Eight percent (8%) each of respondents are from the southern U.S. and Canada. Four percent (4%) state that they come from the midwestern U.S and three percent (3%) from the western U.S.

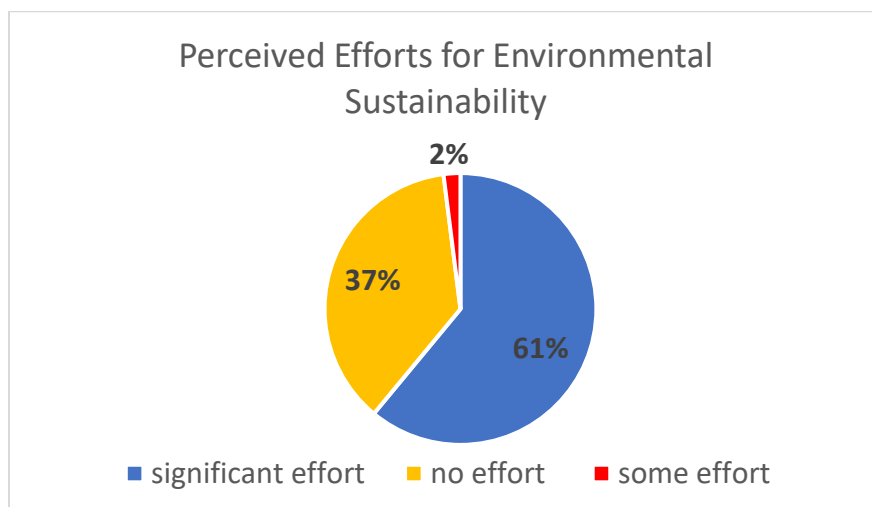
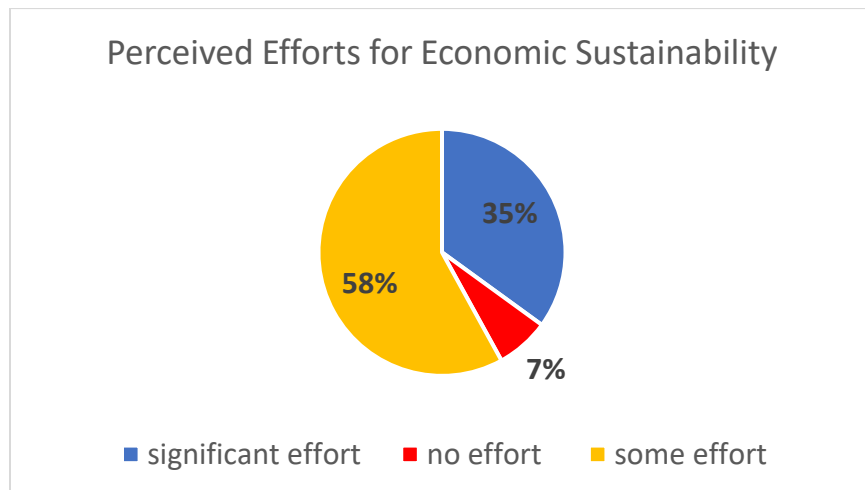
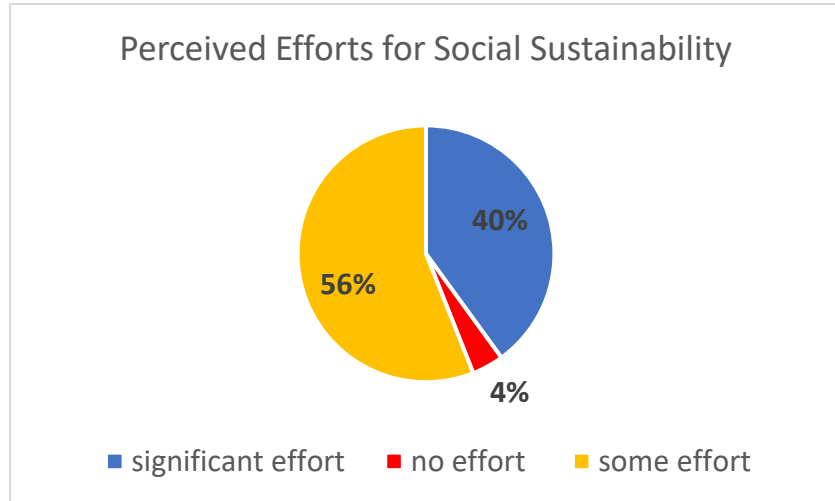
Importance of Sustainability in Planning a Trip

Survey respondents were asked how important sustainability factors are when they plan a trip. The following provides the results of this question, which demonstrates that to a strong majority (86%) of this group, sustainability is at least a moderate consideration. Of note is also that more than one in four (26%) state that this is a “very important” consideration.



Perceived Sustainability of the Adirondacks as a Destination

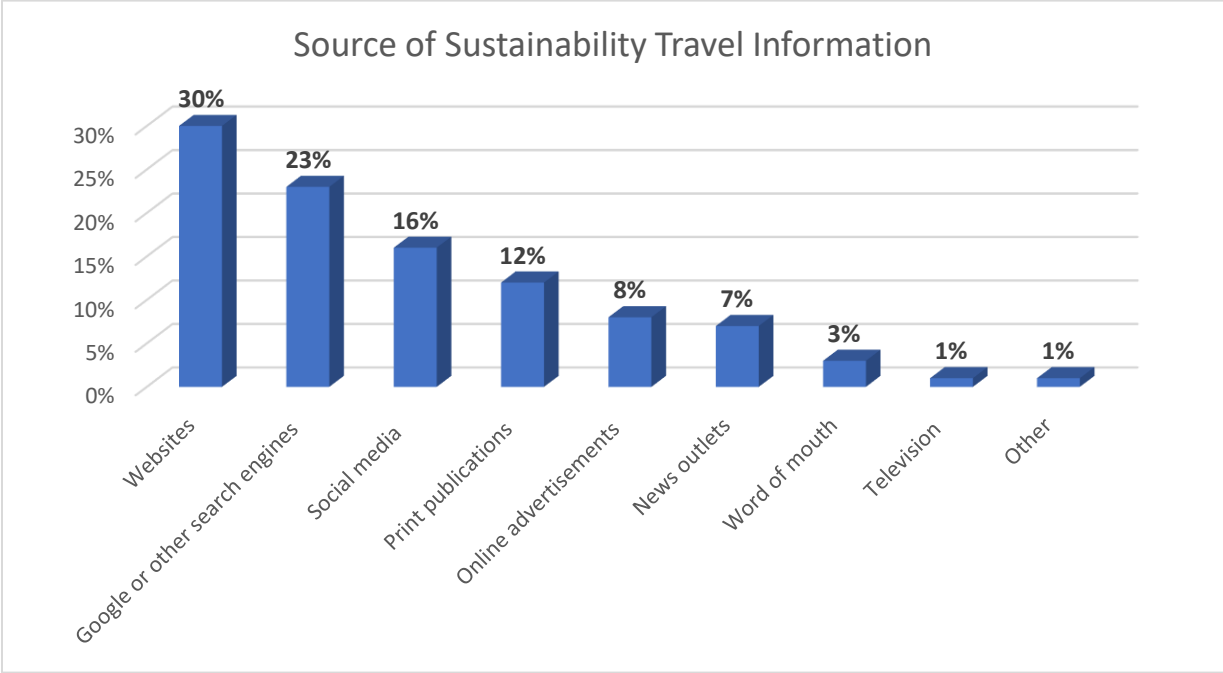
The survey asked respondents the level of effort that they perceived in the region as a travel destination in three different categories- socially, economically, and environmentally.



The environmental aspect of sustainability shows strongest perception, followed by economic and then social.

Travel Information- Sites for Sustainability Research

The survey asked visitors and potential visitors where they typically find their information about the sustainability of a destination, permitting as many responses as applicable. The following list depicts the highest to lowest most common responses:

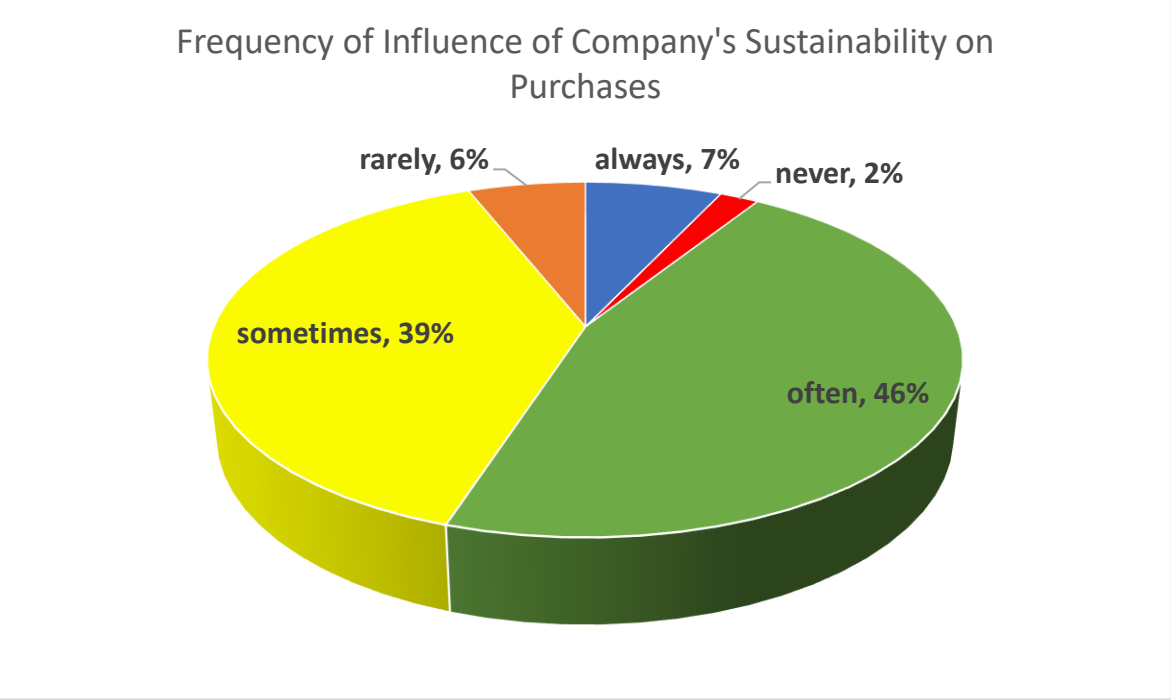


Any respondents who selected “websites” as a response to the above question were asked in follow up which websites they used for this information. The following list of responses is provided in order from most to least commonly selected:

- Destination websites (e.g., LakePlacid.com, AdirondacksUSA.com) (33%)*
- Travel websites (21%)*
- Local government websites (11%)*
- Online booking sites (Expedia, Airbnb) (11%)*
- Travel blogs (9%)*
- Sustainable travel websites (8%)*
- Business websites (6%)*
- Other (1%)*

Influence of Sustainability Practices

The survey asked how often a company’s sustainability practices influenced the respondents’ decision to purchase from them. The following depicts the proportionate responses.



More than ninety percent (91%) of respondents indicate that sustainability at least “sometimes” affects purchase decisions. More than half of respondents (53%) indicate that this is a factor of consideration at least “often”.

Impacts on Traveling Decisions by Possible Sustainability Factors/Actions

The survey asked respondents to check from a substantial list of sustainability practices which they “looked for” when planning a vacation destination. Respondents were allowed to select as many as applied. The following list provides results from the most common to least common selections.

- Restaurants in the region buy from local suppliers-23%
- Businesses in the region support the local economy- 22%
- Businesses sell local artisan products and services- 20%
- Businesses donate to local nonprofits-18%
- Businesses in the region give back to the community through work with local charities- 18%

- Plans to manage hiking traffic and limit impacts on trails- 17%
- Restaurants focusing on reducing food waste- 17%
- Choosing road trips over airlines and cruises- 17%
- Businesses in the area founded by residents- 17%
- The option to pay extra to offset carbon emissions- 16%
- Public transportation to popular attractions- 16%
- Businesses using renewable sources of energy- 14%
- Filtered refill stations for reusable water bottles- 14%
- An effort to reduce single use plastics- 11%
- Use of environmentally safe snow removal practices (e.g., avoiding the use of products with high salt concentrations) -10%
- The ability to donate money to support environmental efforts in the region- 10%
- Lodging and restaurants partnering with local compost producers- 10%
- Bicycles rentals available as a means of transportation- 9%
- None (applicable)- 5%
- Availability of electric vehicle charging stations- 4%
- Zoning restrictions to prohibit short term rentals- 3%
- Access to electric scooters- 3%
- Other (please specify)- 1%

The input is, not surprisingly, widely varying in response. Blocks of more common responses may be used for focus of impacts of the “top 3-5” or “top 10-12” responses.

Ease of Finding Information on Sustainability

Respondents were asked if it is “easy” or “difficult” to find information about the sustainability of a travel destination. A slight majority of respondents (58%) stated that it is “difficult” to find information, with the balance (42%) finding it “easy”.

Conclusion

While sustainability has been a focus within ROOST for many years, this is the first year that a survey was conducted to gauge information specific to visitor perceptions regarding sustainability. The initial data provides interesting indications of priorities that may be applied in the near term and compared to future results if the survey is repeated.

Now more than ever, guests are looking for proven-green experiences. Green hotels are positioned to capture the burgeoning interest in wellness tourism, which is growing markedly faster tourism overall. And with leading corporations, governments and associations making green meetings a requirement, earning a sustainability certification is a valuable differentiator that unlocks lucrative business opportunities. The Adirondack region is extremely well poised to utilize sustainable practices as a marketing tool to the individual and group markets moving forward.

Travel experts emphasize that sustainability is a growing concern expressed by an increasing proportion of visitors. Younger visitors may, in general, have a different expectation and understanding of sustainability in comparison to older generations. This baseline data is useful in moving forward with better understanding visitor preference in this topic area.