



2016 Wild, Wonderful West Virginia Accountability and Image Study Executive Summary

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the 2016 study, conducted by Longwoods International, is to measure the effectiveness of Wild, Wonderful West Virginia's marketing and advertising efforts.

The study includes:

- Return on Investment of the advertising campaign
- Total visitor spending generated by the campaign
- Impact of advertising on image
- "Halo effect" - advertising and visitation's role in economic development
- Key travel motivators

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The 2016 study concluded the current branding and marketing campaign significantly increased the positive image of the state, and doubled the return on investment in the advertising and marketing program within the last year.

The 2014 study cited travel and tourism in West Virginia returned \$7 in state taxes for every \$1 spent on advertising and marketing, a \$7 to \$1 return on investment.

The 2016 study shows substantial growth reporting a \$14 to \$1 return on investment.

TOTAL VISITOR SPENDING GENERATED BY THE CAMPAIGN

In 2016 the campaign generated:

- 1.2 million trips to West Virginia
- \$165 million in visitor spending
- \$11.9 million in state and local taxes

IMPACT OF WEST VIRGINIA'S ADVERTISING ON ITS IMAGE

When comparing those aware vs. unaware of the 2016 advertising, the differences are remarkably higher--meaning those seeing the 2016 advertising are impacted by it. In 2014, these measured gaps showed very little difference.

When compared to the 2014 study, West Virginia is closing the gap on the image ratings of the other competitive states: OH, PA, MD, VA, and NC.

Of particular note, the campaign created a 20-25% lift on many of the key hot button image attributes that drive destination interest, including being perceived as:

- a fun place
- a unique vacation experience
- a must-see destination

“HALO EFFECT”

Through Longwoods research, a link has been established between tourism advertising and economic development image ratings.

“It is a common myth that tourism marketing promotes only tourism.” (via Bob Kunkel, executive director of the Durango Area Tourism Office)

Tourism promotion campaigns create a “halo effect,” lifting not only visitorship but driving business development, real estate sales, purchase of second homes and even college recruitment.

Investing dollars in marketing and advertising for Wild, Wonderful West Virginia is not just investing in travel and tourism. Think of the state’s marketing efforts as the “global branding” for everything Wild, Wonderful West Virginia.

The “halo effect” has raised West Virginia’s image on key economic development measures such as:

- a good place to live
- a good place to start a career
- a good place to retire
- a good place to attend college

HOT BUTTONS

The 10 hot buttons from the 2014 Longwoods study were used as a foundation for building the Real. Wild, Wonderful West Virginia campaign--everything from new ads to content pieces and photography.

Although much of the list is the same, "children would enjoy visiting" and "good place to relax" dropped off--bringing into the mix, "good for an adult vacation" and "a place I would feel welcome."

- A fun place
- Must-see destination
- Lots of things to see and do
- An exciting place
- Good place for families to visit
- Unique vacation experience
- Good for an adult vacation
- Good for couples
- A real adventure
- A place I would feel welcome

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The FY2016 campaign generated \$14 in tax revenue for each dollar spent on advertising – a 14 to 1 ROI. This has doubled since 2014.

Image has shown lifts across the board.

West Virginia is closing the competitive gap in terms of image when compared to competitive states.

The combination of advertising awareness and visitation raises West Virginia's image on key economic measures, creating a "halo effect."

New ads/photography/content have made a difference.