



Advertising Effectiveness Research

April 2024

SMARInsights

Background & Objectives

- State of Washington Tourism (SWT) has partnered with SMARInsights to measure the effectiveness of the state's advertising campaigns since 2022.
- This wave of research evaluates the return on investment (ROI) and other impacts of the FY2024 campaign that ran April 2023 through March 2024. This campaign marks the first year that SWT advertised year-round. Data collection occurred following the end of the campaign, measuring the travel that was influenced during the campaign.
- The research will provide public accountability by quantifying the incremental travel that can be attributed to the campaign, and the resulting economic benefits to the State of Washington.
- Our approach to advertising research is to also build in measurements that inform campaign development with insights that enhance advertising efforts and increase future effectiveness.

Methodology

- Data collection was conducted via an online survey among leisure travelers in target markets determined by SWT.
- National sample providers with demographically representative panels were used in order to project the research to the population.
- The survey was conducted in March 2024. A total of 2,400 surveys were completed in the target markets. These markets cease to be grouped into tiers from 2024 onward, a difference from the prior two years.
- After data collection, the results were cleaned, coded and weighted to the population.

Market	Surveys Completed
Vancouver, Canada	511
Oregon	398
San Francisco	477
Montana	220
Idaho	284
Denver	510
Total	2,400

Insights: Results

The FY2024 campaign influenced 77,000 incremental trips to Washington State from April 2023 to March 2024, generating \$103.5 million in visitor spending with a return of \$184 for each dollar invested.

- 36% of travelers in target markets were aware of the advertising, for a reach of 2.4 million households. Despite reduced spending for digital ads by 79% and social ads by 53%, the overall awareness only marginally declined (-2%) from the previous campaign. This speaks to the longevity of video creative and the consistency of marketing that is leading brand building.
- A combination of reduction in media investment, consecutive years of advertising in key markets, exceptional advertising creative execution, and pivoting to a year-round study resulted in an ROI of \$184 (compared to \$69 in FY2023).
- Not only did the ads influence travel to Washington State, but also aware consumers spent more, did more, and stayed longer. In fact, ad-aware visitors spent \$403 more per trip and participated in more activities compared to unaware visitors.

The creative ratings for the campaign remain exceptionally high and persist across many groups of travelers.

- The FY2024 campaign creative tested well above the 10% threshold for generating interest in learning more about visiting Washington.
- Boomers are a tough audience to please. Yet the creative earned its highest positive reactions from this generation of travelers (85%). This is an industry-wide feat rarely accomplished. Strong ratings across generations is a testament to the broad appeal of the creative.

Campaign Impacts

36%
Awareness

2.4 million
Aware Households

77,000
Incremental Trips

\$103.5 million
Visitor Spending

\$184 : \$1
ROI

Insights: Market Insights

- The campaign scores exceptionally well across dynamics such as generation and demographic groups. However, there were significant differences by market.
- In particular, Denver and San Francisco showed the most promise. Travelers in these markets reacted very positively to the advertising (87% positive in Denver, and 85% in San Francisco) and gave strong ratings for the message attributes.
- The population sizes of these markets aids in their productivity. San Francisco contributed 713,000 aware households, and Denver added 483,000. In total, these two markets represent half of all the aware households.
- Distant and bulky markets are not always easy to impact, but this campaign did. While Vancouver had the strongest increment (5%), it was followed closely by San Francisco (4%) and Denver (3%). Keeping in mind the magnitude of aware households in San Francisco and Denver, it is easy to see how they impact the final ROI results.
- In addition to positive creative feedback, high volume of aware households, and strong travel increment, these consumers demonstrated trip behavior aligned with goals of the SWT campaign. Travelers in these markets engaged in more cultural activities and visited more regions than the other markets which included the Beaches, Volcanoes, Peninsulas, and the Gorge. However, these markets require greater investment to produce to their potential, as we will detail.

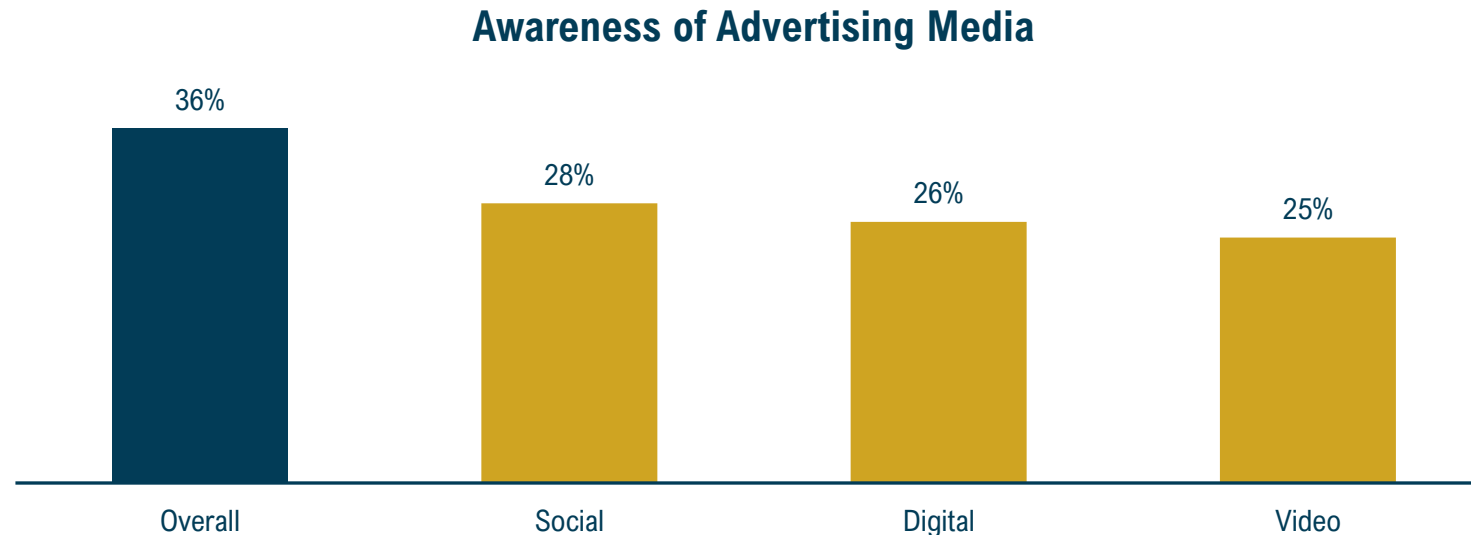
Advertising Awareness

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Total Advertising Awareness

The campaign generated 36% awareness among targeted households.

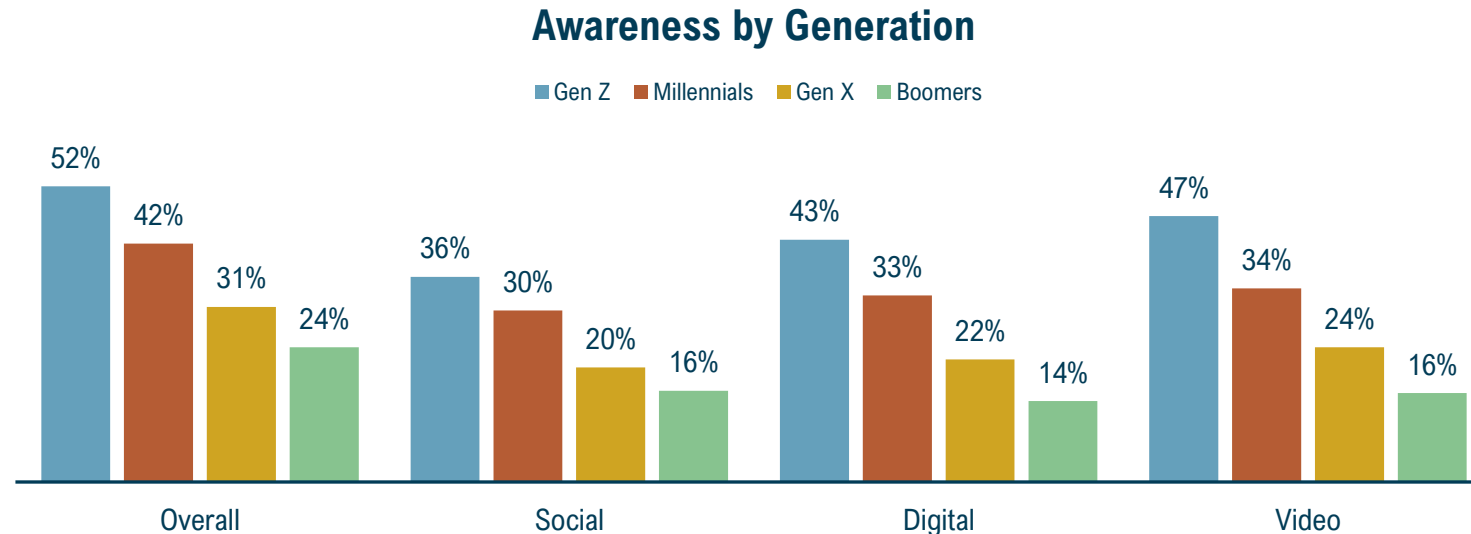
- The social ads garnered the most awareness of any medium with 28%, followed closely by digital (26%) and video (25%).
- While video generated the lowest awareness, it tends to lead other media in terms of long-lasting impact. Long-lasting impacts are key to the brand-building process. Consider exploring strategies to build awareness of this key brand-building medium.



Awareness by Generation

The campaign generated higher awareness among younger consumers.

- As with the results in FY2023, the advertising achieved stronger recall among younger consumers, with more than half of Gen Z and 42% of Millennials aware of the advertising. These consumers have high levels of engagement with digital media and typically have higher levels of awareness. This is an industry-wide trend following the fragmentation of the media landscape.
- The campaign struggled to reach Boomers (24% overall).



Awareness Demographics

Younger consumers and families are much more aware of the advertising.

- Half of Gen Z travelers and 46% of families were aware of the advertising.
- Differences in awareness among other demographic groups proved to be less pronounced.
- While this does suggest that younger consumers and families were effectively targeted, it does not measure resonance and impact.

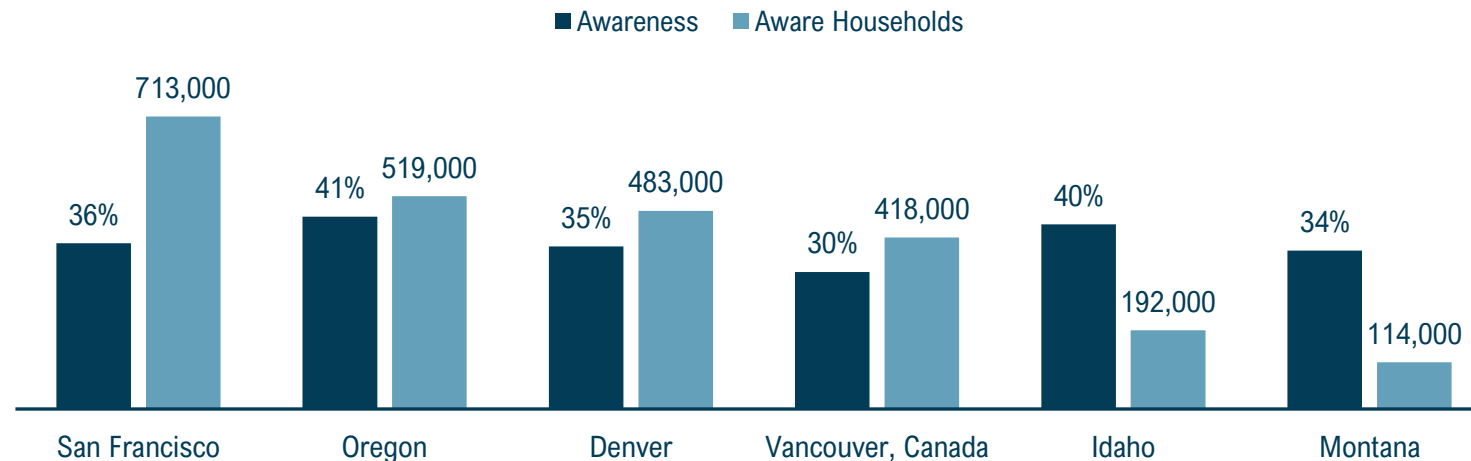
Demographic Group		Awareness
Generation	Gen Z	52%
	Millennials	42%
	Gen X	31%
	Boomers	24%
Marital Status	Married/Formerly Married	34%
	Single/Never Married	38%
Families	Kids in Household	46%
	No kids	31%
Educational Attainment	Some/No College	38%
	College Grads+	34%
Income	Less than \$60k (USD)	28%
	\$60k+ (USD)	29%
Gender	Female	35%
	Male	35%

Campaign Awareness by Market

Aware households in San Francisco and Denver represent half of all aware travelers.

- Oregon is a highly productive market, with the highest awareness rate and the second greatest volume of aware households.
- The most distant markets, Denver and San Francisco, provide ample aware households.
- In terms of campaign recall, the top markets were Oregon (41%) and Idaho (40%). The campaign succeeded less in Vancouver, generating 30% awareness, but it has 418,000 aware households.

Awareness and Aware Households by Market

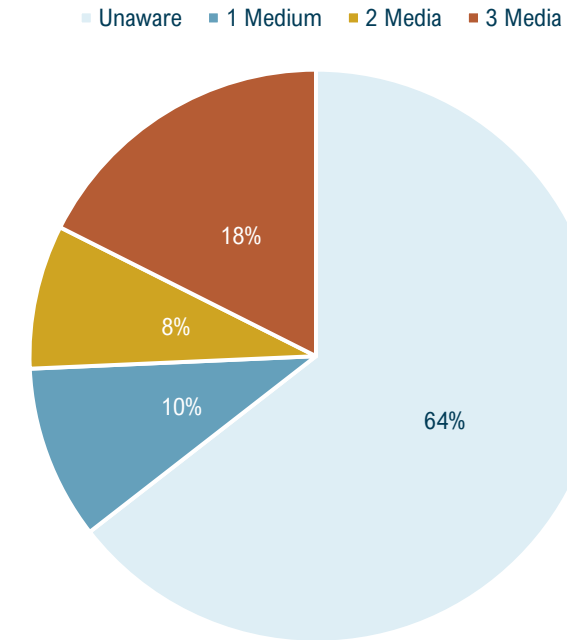


Campaign Overlap

Half of ad-aware consumers recall all three ad types (social, digital and video).

- When consumers recall more facets of the campaign, they tend to do more on their trips. This indicates a greater understanding of what there is to see and do in the destination.
- However, campaign overlap is a two-fold measure. Consider that when one consumer is reached by two media, another is not reached at all. A balance needs to be struck to maximize the effectiveness of the campaign.

Campaign Overlap



Creative Evaluation

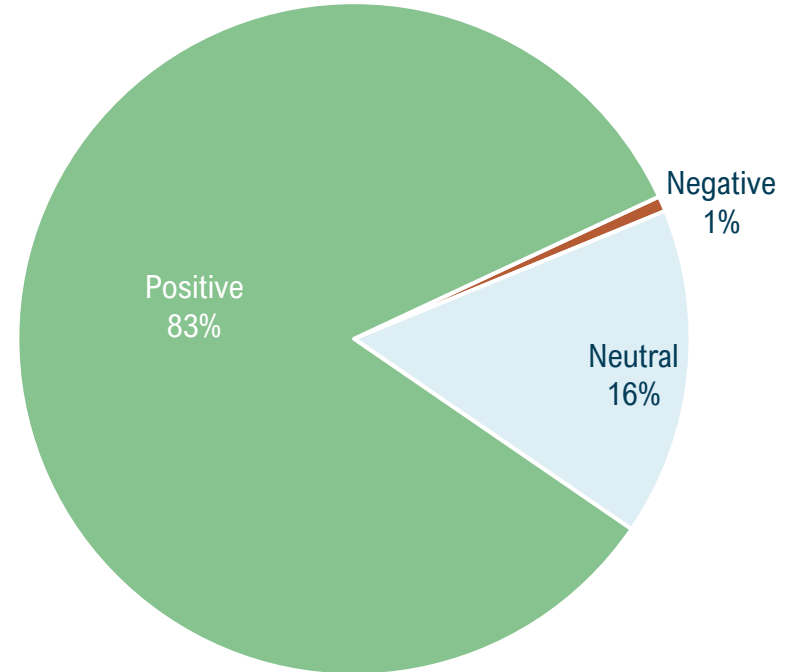
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Overall Reaction

What is your overall reaction to this campaign?

The reaction to the advertising is mostly positive and there is almost no negative reaction.

- 85% favorability puts the ads among the top campaigns that SMARInsights has tested. Based on testing many tourism advertising campaigns, SMARInsights has observed that a 75% positive response is the top 10% benchmark.

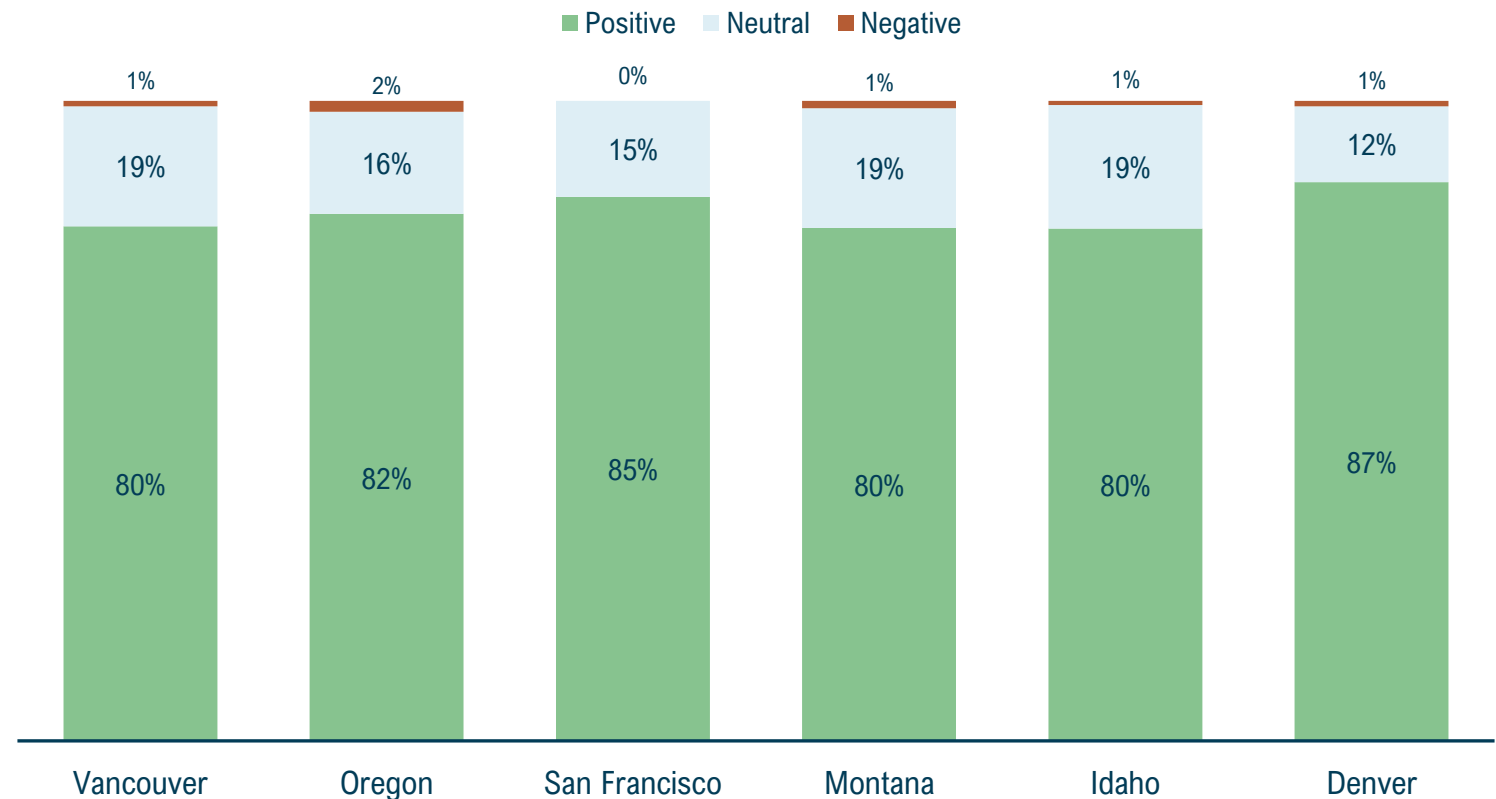


Overall Reaction by Market

The reaction to the ads is mostly positive across target markets.

- Denver and San Francisco, the two most distant markets that are the least like Washington State in terms of leisure travel product, have the most positive reaction.

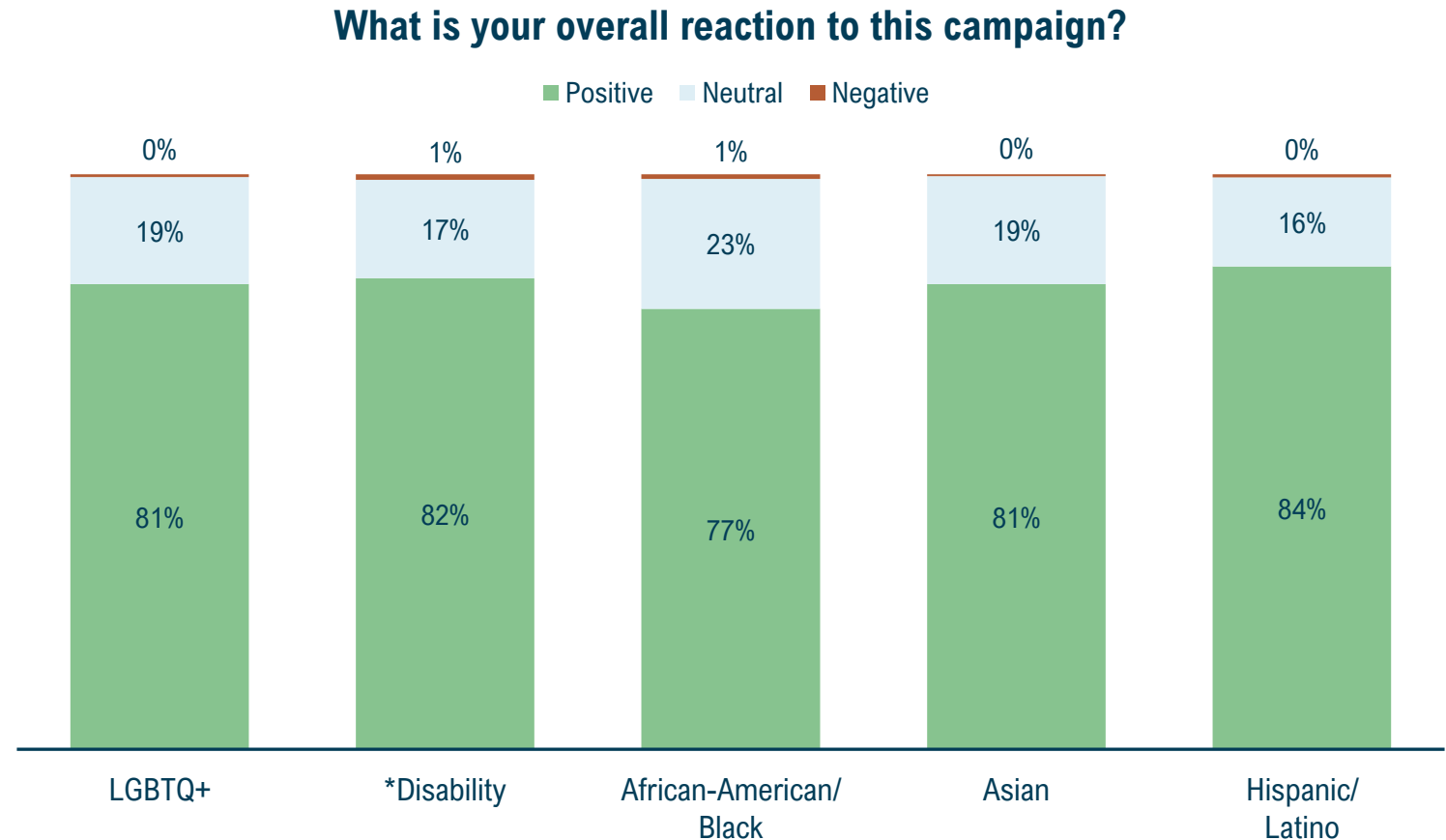
What is your overall reaction to this campaign?



Overall Reaction by Demographic Groups

Reaction to the advertising is also positive across demographic groups of interest.

- African-American/Black consumers are the least positive of these groups, but almost none are negative. Although these travelers are the least positive, a positive rating of 77% is still excellent by industry standards.



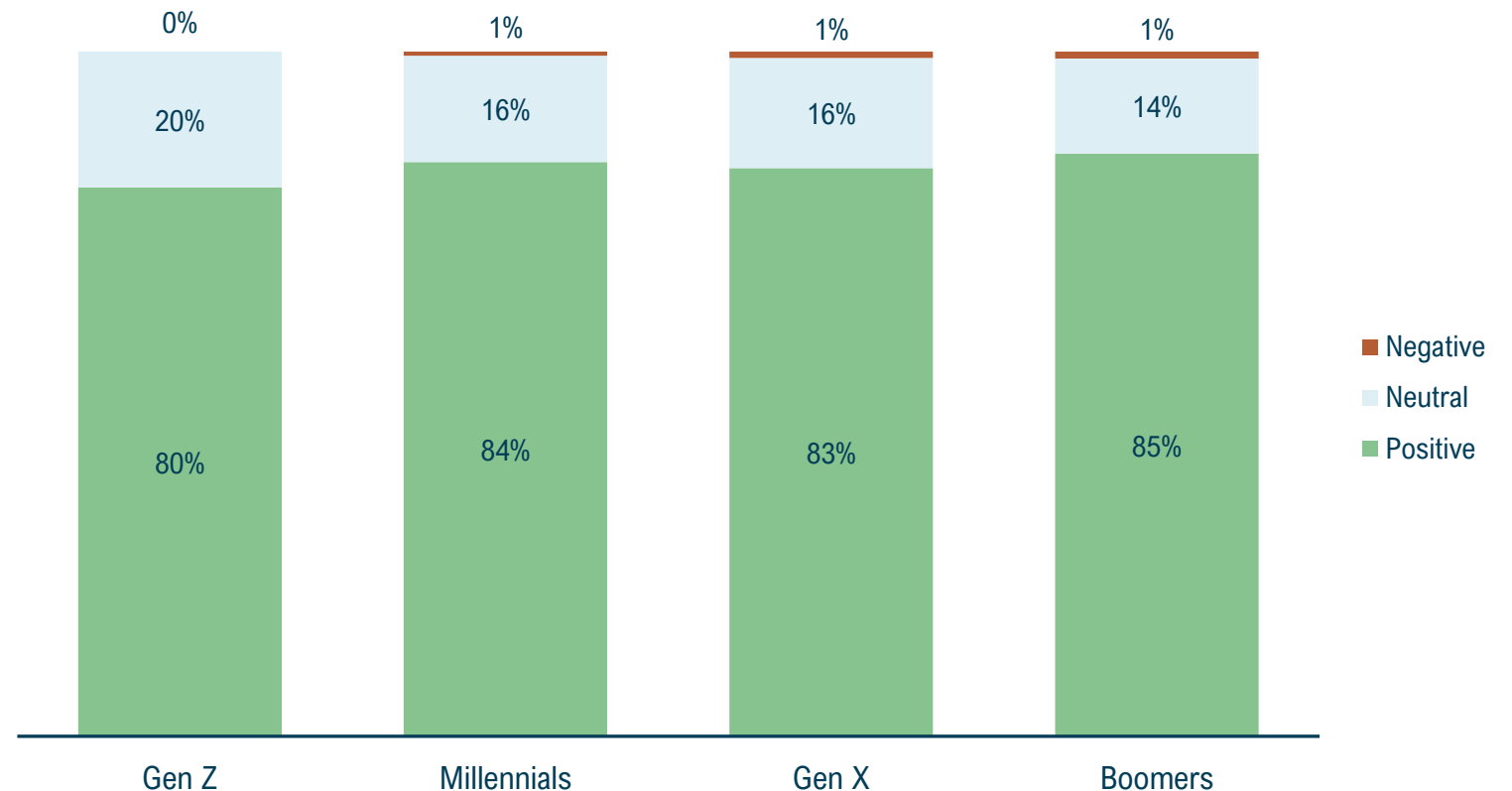
**Have a physical disability or travel regularly with someone who does*

Overall Reaction by Generation

Each generational group reacted positively to the ads.

- SMARInsights often sees Boomers having a less positive reaction than the younger generations to tourism advertising. So, it is positive to report that Boomers are the most positive group.
- This indicates that appeal spans generations and sets the Washington State advertising apart from many other destinations.

What is your overall reaction to this campaign?



Ad Communication Ratings Benchmarks Update

Before reviewing the advertising communication ratings, it's important to note that SMARInsights has **updated the industry benchmarks**.

We maintain an ongoing review and monitoring process of a creative ratings database, leading us to recognize the necessity of updating the advertising benchmarks.

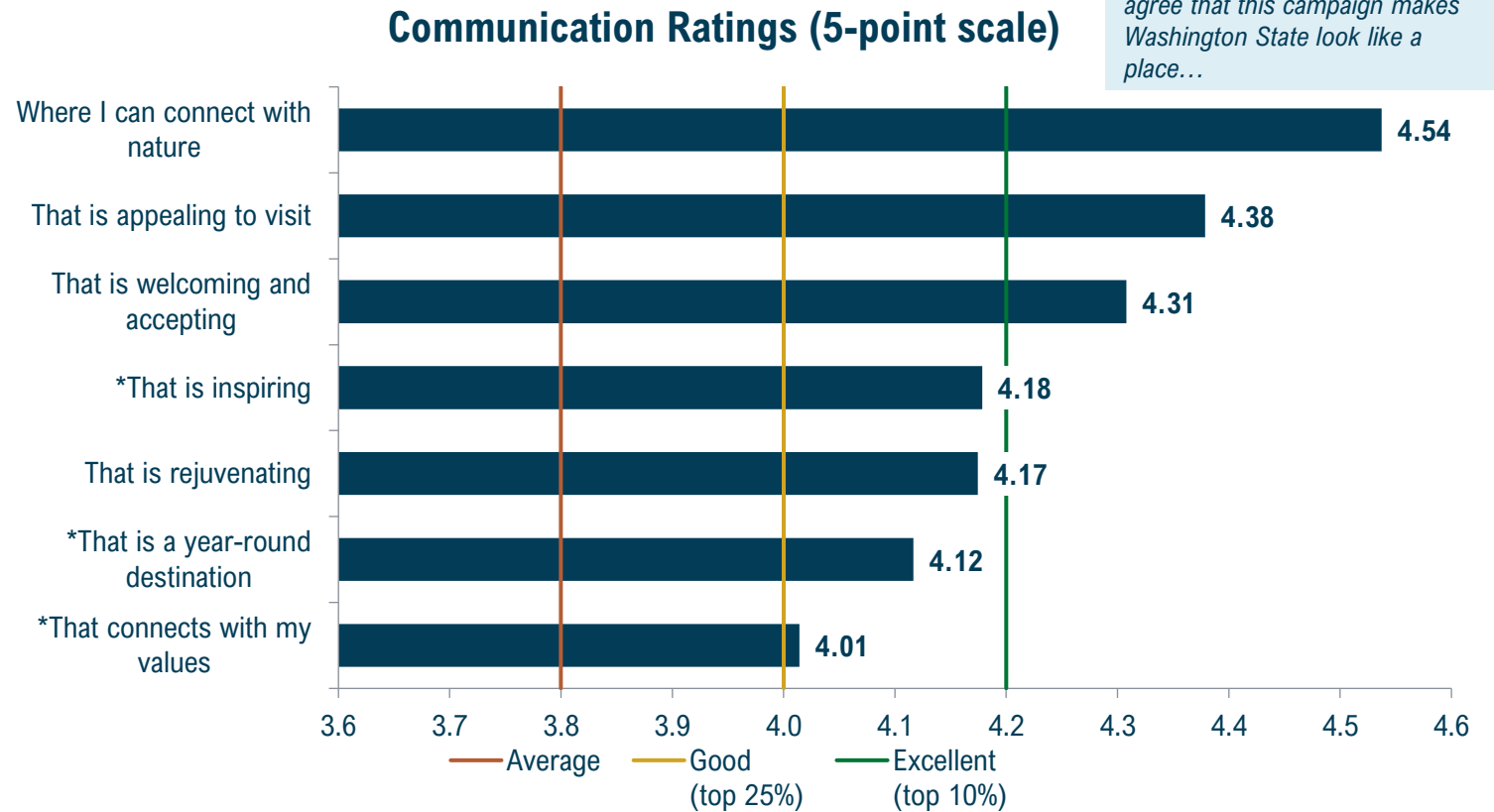
The table illustrates both the previous and updated benchmarks, which are included in the subsequent charts.

Benchmark Level	Prior Communication Threshold	Updated Communication Threshold
Excellent (top 10%)	4.10	4.20
Good (top 25%)	3.90	4.00
Average	3.75	3.80

Ad Communication Ratings

The advertising rates in the excellent or good benchmark range for communicating the intended messages.

- The ads are excellent (top 10%) at making Washington look like a place to *connect with nature, that is appealing, and that is welcoming*.
- *Inspiring, rejuvenating, year-round destination, and connects with my values* receive ratings in the top 25%. While this is a positive result, there is always opportunity to improve, and the goal should be to move these ratings to the top 10% level.
- *Connecting with my values* falls into a category of personal perspective messaging. These types of messages pertain to specific individual tastes. As such, these types of messages tend to be the lowest rated, as is the case for Washington State.



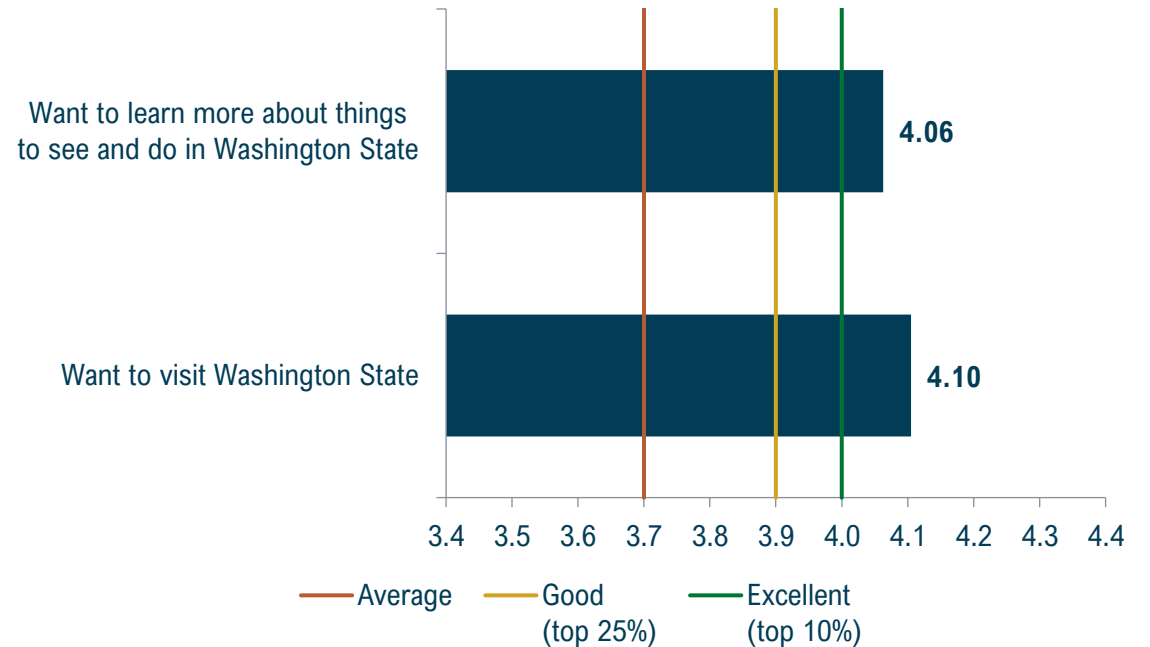
*New communication attributes

Ad Impact Ratings

The advertising excels in prompting travelers to learn more about and ultimately want to visit the State of Washington.

- New to this 2024 research is an evaluation of the advertising on “impact” attributes that relate to generating interest in visiting Washington State.
- Incremental travel is the ultimate measure of advertising impact, which is reviewed later. However, from this evaluative standpoint, the advertising generates significant interest in Washington State.

Impact Ratings (5-point scale)



Ad Ratings by Market

Travelers in San Francisco and Denver rated the ads slightly better than the other markets, while those in Montana found them less inspiring, and more disconnected from their values.

- Generally, the ads rated well across the markets. As seen in the overall reaction results, those from San Francisco and Denver are the most positive toward the ads based on these communication and impact ratings.
- Montanans are the least positive in this regard, but they still rate in the ads in the excellent range for making them want to visit the state.

Excellent (top 10%)
Good (top 25%)
Average
Below Average

Communication Ratings (5-point scale)	Vancouver	Oregon	San Francisco	Montana	Idaho	Denver
That is appealing to visit	4.28	4.43	4.39	4.33	4.42	4.42
That is rejuvenating	4.08	4.19	4.20	4.07	4.26	4.22
That is welcoming and accepting	4.24	4.39	4.32	4.23	4.31	4.30
Where I can connect with nature	4.48	4.51	4.56	4.48	4.63	4.56
That is inspiring	4.09	4.17	4.24	3.99	4.17	4.23
That connects with my values	4.01	4.03	4.03	3.81	4.01	4.03
That is a year-round destination	4.13	4.17	4.13	3.98	4.14	4.06

Impact Ratings (5-point scale)	Vancouver	Oregon	San Francisco	Montana	Idaho	Denver
Learn more about things to see and do in Washington State	3.98	4.11	4.09	3.96	4.09	4.09
Visit Washington State	4.01	4.17	4.13	4.03	4.11	4.11

Ad Ratings by Demographic Groups

The ad ratings are also mostly in the excellent or good benchmark level across demographic groups of interest.

- As seen in the overall reaction results, African-American/Black consumers are the least positive in this regard, but they still rate in the ads in the excellent range for making them want to learn more about and visit the state.

Excellent (top 10%)
Good (top 25%)
Average
Below Average

Communication Ratings (5-point scale)	LGBTQ+	*Disability	African-American/ Black	Asian	Hispanic/ Latino
That is appealing to visit	4.46	4.34	4.30	4.28	4.56
That is rejuvenating	4.17	4.13	4.20	4.15	4.23
That is welcoming and accepting	4.27	4.27	4.27	4.23	4.45
Where I can connect with nature	4.61	4.56	4.53	4.45	4.61
That is inspiring	4.18	4.09	4.19	4.14	4.36
That connects with my values	4.02	4.00	3.72	3.98	4.20
That is a year-round destination	4.08	4.13	3.95	4.09	4.11

Impact Ratings (5-point scale)	LGBTQ+	*Disability	African-American/ Black	Asian	Hispanic/ Latino
Learn more about things to see and do in Washington State	4.14	3.98	4.08	4.11	4.30
Visit Washington State	4.21	4.00	4.10	4.13	4.36

Ad Ratings by Generation

The advertising is excellent at making all generations want to visit Washington State.

- Millennials stand out as the most positive toward the ads.
- Gen Z consumers responded worse, particularly for inspiration, connecting with *their* values, and agreement on Washington State being a year-round destination. Although, take note of the high rating for wanting to visit (4.22) despite these lower communication ratings.

Excellent (top 10%)
Good (top 25%)
Average
Below Average

Communication Ratings (5-point scale)	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
That is appealing to visit	4.36	4.41	4.29	4.42
That is rejuvenating	4.05	4.19	4.19	4.20
That is welcoming and accepting	4.30	4.31	4.28	4.33
Where I can connect with nature	4.52	4.54	4.52	4.56
That is inspiring	4.05	4.22	4.19	4.18
That connects with my values	3.86	4.08	4.01	4.01
That is a year-round destination	3.91	4.10	4.16	4.19

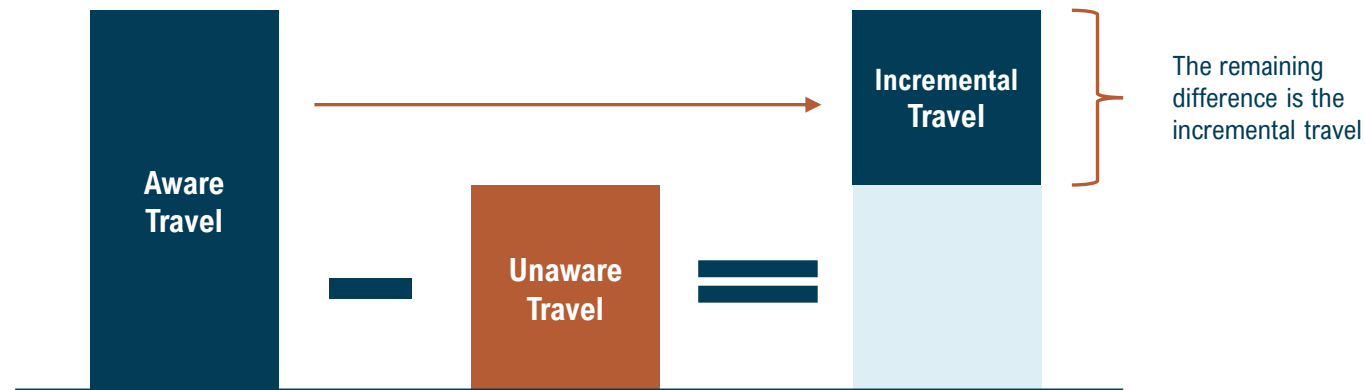
Impact Ratings (5-point scale)	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
Learn more about things to see and do in Washington State	4.11	4.14	4.05	3.99
Visit Washington State	4.22	4.18	4.04	4.03

Advertising Impact & ROI

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Measuring Ad-Influenced Travel

- While generating information gathering and strengthening perceptions are good indicators of advertising performance, effectiveness is ultimately measured by the quantity of influenced trips.
- SMARInsights' methodology for measuring the impact of destination advertising relies on establishing a base rate of travel. Certainly, there would be travel to Washington even without any paid advertising. Thus, not all visitation, or even visitation by ad-aware households, is attributed to the ads. Rather, the level of travel among *unaware* households is considered the baseline that would occur without advertising. Any travel above that baseline by *ad-aware* households is what is considered influenced, or incremental.
- We account for travel during the time frame in which the ads were running, April 2023 through March 2024.

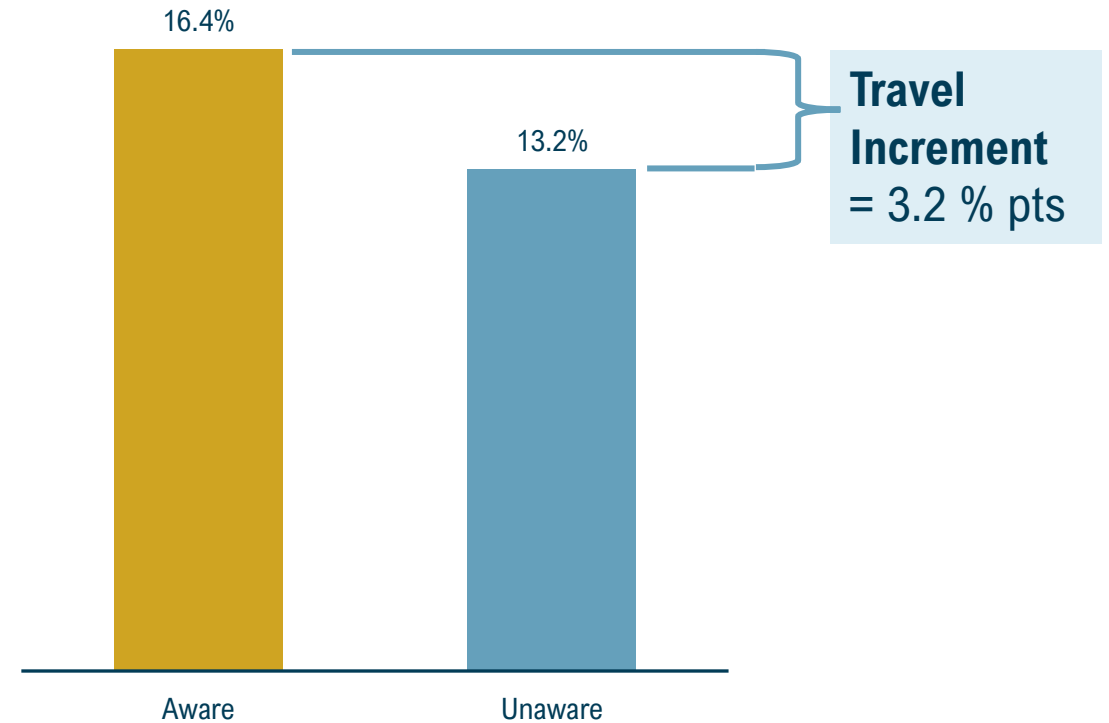


Incremental Travel

The campaign generated a travel increment of 3.2 percentage points.

- 16.4% of ad-aware consumers traveled to Washington State from April 2023 through March 2024, compared to 13.2% of unaware consumers.

Incremental Travel to Washington State

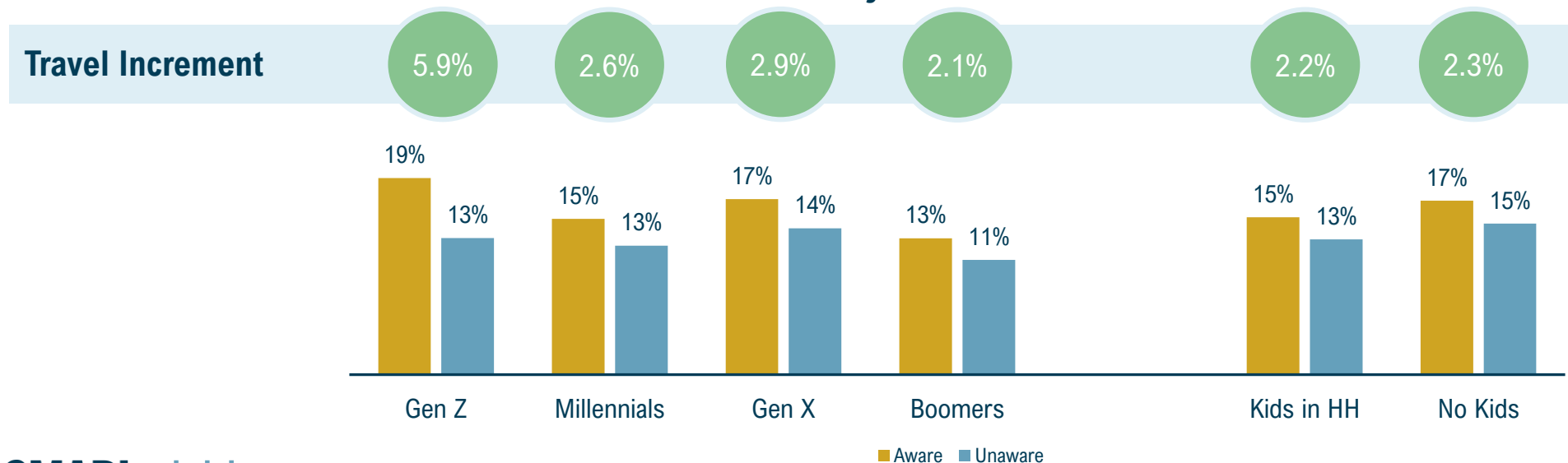


Increment by Age and Families

The FY2024 campaign successfully impacts consumers across the generational and family spectrum.

- Earlier in the awareness section, younger consumers (Gen Z and Millennials) and families demonstrated greater awareness than other travelers. Awareness simply measures recall, and not the impact. To understand the effects, we use travel increment.
- The travel increment (ad-aware travel minus unaware) is highest for Gen Z (5.9%), and strong for each of the other generations.
- Families and non-families were impacted equally, leading us to conclude that the advertising, while targeted at a very specific group, has mass appeal.

Increment by Generation and Families

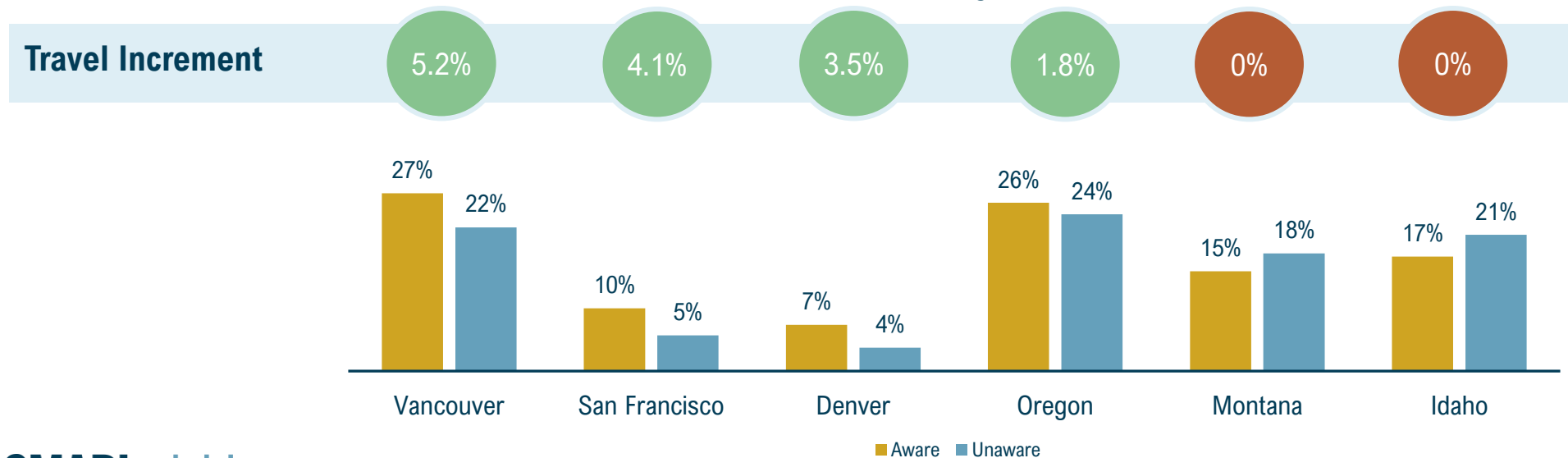


Increment by Market

The distant markets produced greater incremental travel than Washington's American neighbors.

- The advertising impacted travelers in Vancouver the most with a travel increment of 5.2%.
- San Francisco and Denver were the next most productive markets. Consumers in these markets were the most positive about the ads, rated the communication attributes the strongest, and represent a significant portion of aware households. This supports the assumption that the campaign successes largely draw upon impacting these two markets.
- Montana and Idaho markets have no incremental travel, indicating a lack of impact from the ads among travelers in these markets.

Increment by Market



Pathfinder Segment

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Pathfinder Segment

Washington State specifically targeted the Pathfinder segment for the past few years.

- Pathfinders are defined by a series of qualitative and quantitative attributes. The qualitative include:
 1. Passionate travelers
 2. Positive, good hearted, well informed, active, and open-minded
 3. Cares about ethics and the environment
 4. Enjoy a variety of both urban and rural activities
 5. Care about price, but care more about the experience
- Quantitatively, this segment consists of the following:
 1. Adults 25+ years old
 2. Educated and employed with a household income of \$60,000 or more
 3. Married couples
 4. Family interests included



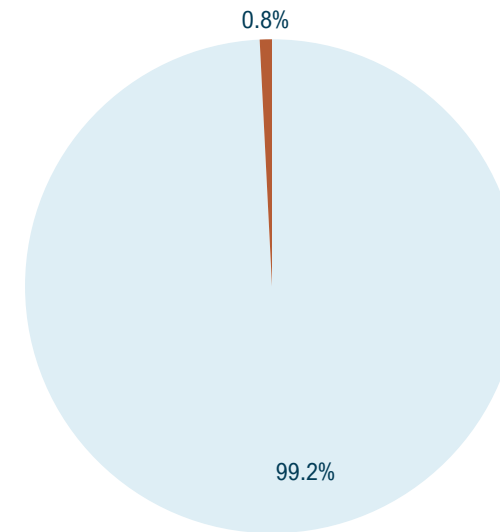
Pathfinder Segment

Pathfinders represent is a highly specific micro-target.

- This segment represents just under 1% of travelers in the targeted markets, or roughly 55,000 households.
- The demographic constraints impacted the overall size of this group. Without the demographic constraints but keeping the qualitative traits, we estimate the segment to be 15% of the target market.
- While the campaign was intended to focus on this micro-target, the spill produced some positive consequences. Many consumers are positive about the ads, including Boomers, who are historically and industry-wide a tough audience. This campaign, with creative assets focused on open-minded, experience-seeking, passionate travelers, excels among all audiences. This indicates that a media buying strategy targeting Pathfinders is not advised but targeting them through messaging and creative will work.

Pathfinders

Other Pathfinders

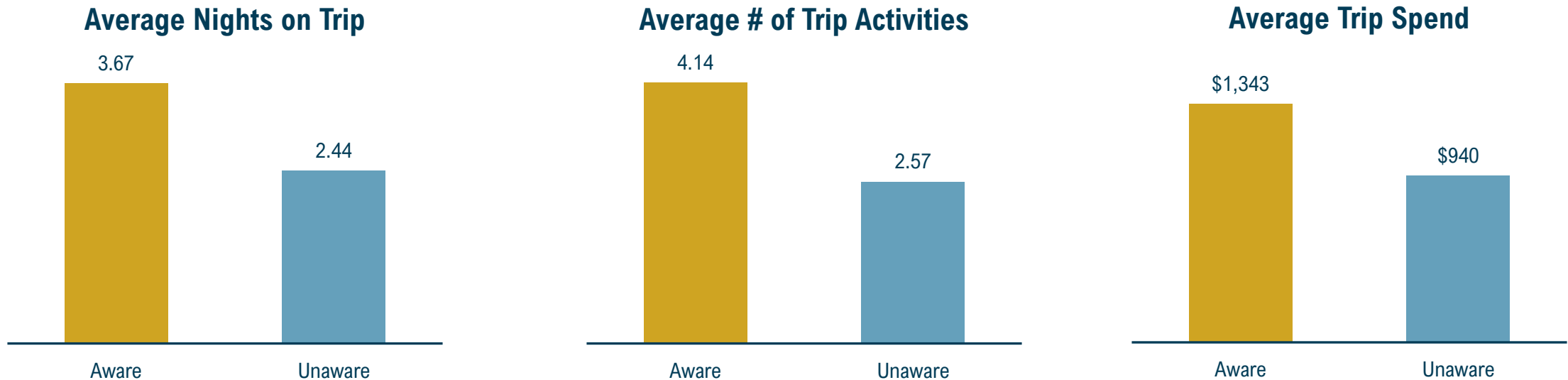


Ad Impact Trip Specifics

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Trip Length, Activities, and Spending

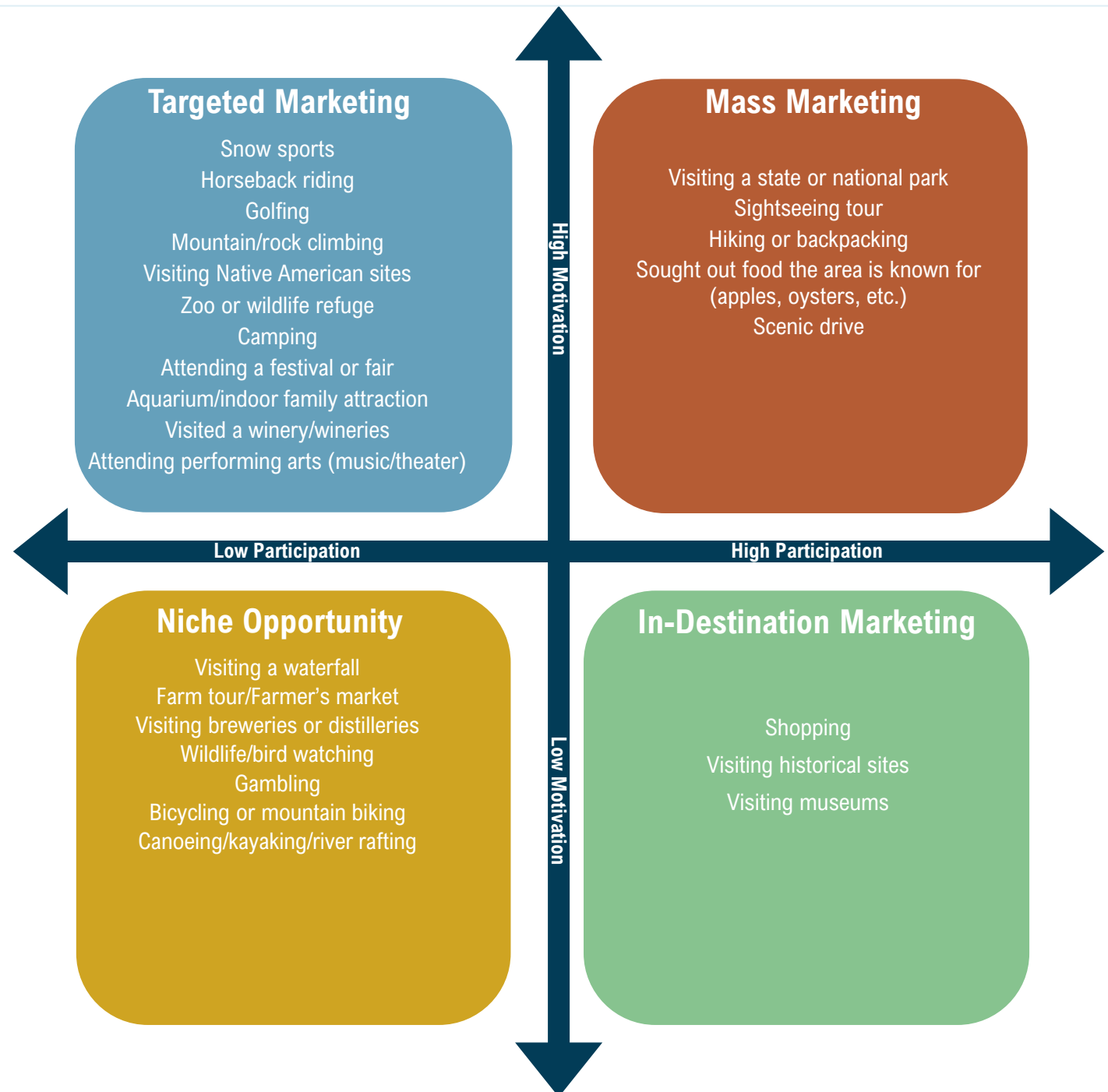
We previously saw that the advertising influenced Washington State travel. Not only did the advertising influence the decision to visit the state, but it also effectively showcased the state's tourism product, leading to longer, more active trips with higher average visitor spending.



Trip Activity Classification

Washington trip activities can be classified into four groups with different marketing potential based on participation and motivation rates.

1. Activities with high rates of both participation and motivation offer the most potential for **mass marketing** materials. These include things like parks, hiking, local food, and scenic drives.
2. Activities with lower rates of participation but strong motivation among participants are niche appeals that are best for precisely **targeted marketing**. These include niche activities like snow sports, golf, and mountain climbing.
3. Activities with high rates of participation that are less motivating should be presented **in-market** to give visitors ideas of things to do once in the county. These include things like shopping.
4. The activities with lower participation and motivation are **niche opportunities**. Think of these activities as additive to the overall experience but not necessarily focal points of marketing initiatives..



Trip Activities by Market

Above average participation
Average participation
Below average participation

More travelers from Denver and San Francisco participate in cultural activities than other markets.

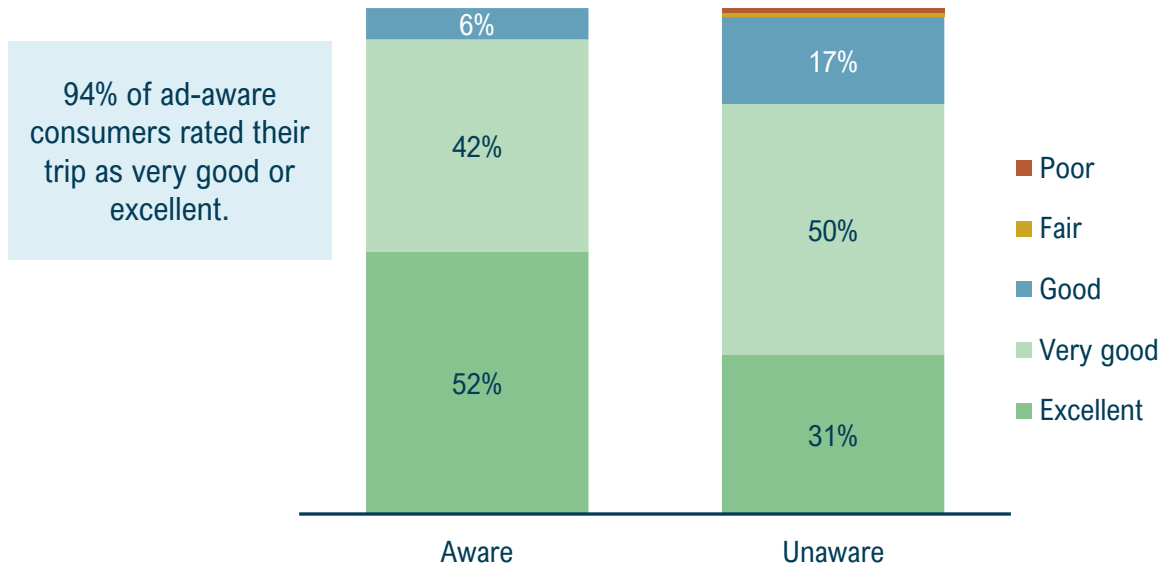
- **Cultural amenities** such as local food, historical sites, museums, and wineries for **San Francisco** visitors.
- **Outdoor activities** such as parks, hiking, and waterfalls; as well as **cultural activities** including museums and breweries for visitors from **Denver**.
- **Shopping** for **Vancouver**, likely a byproduct of availability of certain goods only in the United States.
- **Scenic drives** for visitors from neighboring **Idaho**.

Trip Activity	Vancouver	Oregon	San Francisco	Montana	Idaho	Denver
Shopping	72%	44%	59%	44%	51%	47%
Scenic drive	36%	45%	32%	43%	56%	45%
Visiting a state or national park	19%	24%	32%	21%	14%	42%
Sought out area-specific food	18%	25%	50%	33%	33%	44%
Visiting historical sites	16%	22%	37%	16%	14%	29%
Sightseeing tour	14%	18%	35%	7%	9%	24%
Hiking or backpacking	13%	18%	28%	13%	29%	41%
Visiting museums	12%	20%	37%	8%	11%	42%
Farm tour/Farmer's market	11%	16%	32%	10%	15%	21%
Gambling	11%	13%	9%	7%	6%	7%
Aquarium/indoor family attraction	11%	7%	19%	6%	7%	13%
Visiting breweries or distilleries	10%	12%	23%	11%	16%	27%
Attending a festival or fair	10%	9%	13%	6%	5%	18%
Attending performing arts	8%	11%	18%	7%	10%	11%
Bicycling or mountain biking	8%	4%	5%	3%	5%	11%
Visiting a waterfall	8%	18%	26%	11%	14%	34%
Visited a winery/wineries	8%	8%	24%	3%	8%	13%
Camping	6%	9%	13%	8%	13%	14%
Zoo or wildlife refuge	6%	9%	15%	0%	7%	13%
Wildlife/bird watching	4%	12%	12%	8%	16%	13%
Visiting Native American sites	3%	8%	12%	3%	3%	8%
Mountain/rock climbing	3%	3%	12%	1%	5%	9%
Snow sports	2%	1%	6%	0%	2%	1%
Canoeing/kayaking/river rafting	2%	6%	7%	3%	5%	8%
Golfing	1%	2%	9%	0%	1%	3%
Horseback riding	1%	3%	6%	2%	1%	2%

Satisfaction and Advocacy

Not only does the advertising influence longer, more active trips with higher spending, but those aware of the ads are also more satisfied with their experience and are more likely to share their trip on social media.

Trip Satisfaction



Shared Trip Experience on Social Media	Aware	Unaware
Facebook	44%	25%
Instagram	42%	23%
Snapchat	18%	4%
X (formerly Twitter)	17%	3%
TikTok	17%	4%
YouTube	14%	3%
Pinterest	3%	1%
Blogs	2%	2%
Other social media outlets	0%	1%
None	32%	61%