

# Visit Mendocino County

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## Visitor Information Study

*Services for the implementation of a seasonal visitor profile Information*



**Ideas and solutions for your competitive wor**

## Project Overview

Note: In an effort to shape marketing strategy for Visit Mendocino has an interest in developing meaningful measurements to assist them in determining the effective of the Destination marketing organizations competitive strategy.

Why Measure? The importance of measurement is subtle and more powerful and that is to drive learned behavior. The true value of measurement is not just knowing how many likes a DMO has on Facebook book but understanding both consumer behavior and the DMO's reaction to it. What we are really trying to get at with measurement is a more insightful understanding of how consumers are to the DMO's strategy efforts. Its insight that is sought not just the numbers.

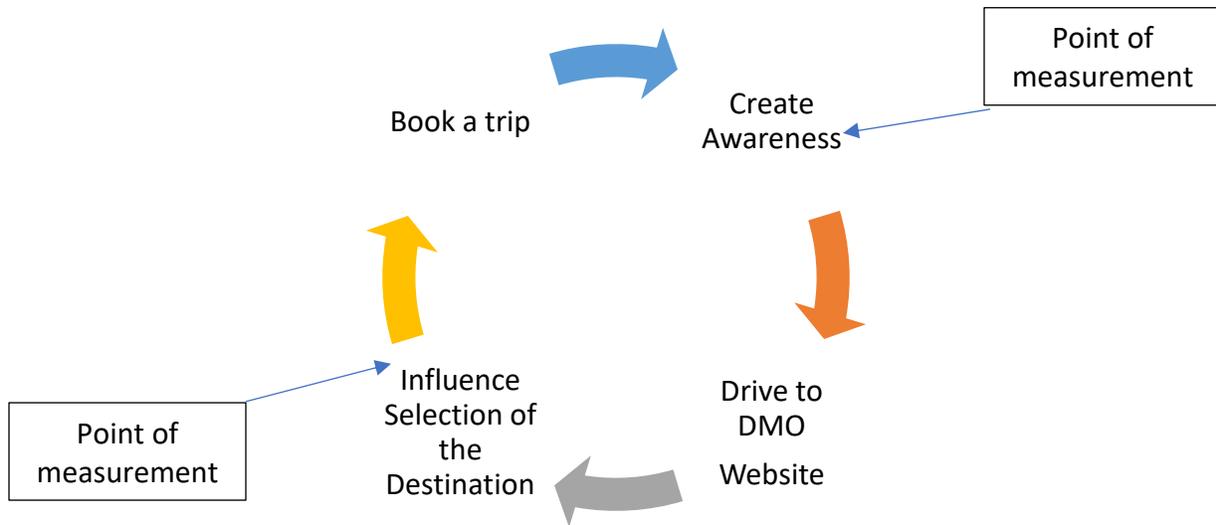
To that end, the task is to measure those things a DMO is truly responsible for. Creating awareness and influencing visitors to visit. This is reflected in the flow chart below.



Based on these activities it is critical for a DMO to manage those things they can control. A such we are recommending two types of studies for consideration; a destination awareness tracking study and DMO advertising and website influence study These combine studies to assess the effectiveness of DMO marketing efforts and provides insight for future marketing strategy refinements.

What the DMO is looking for is continuous improvement in these two areas. Always looking to get better and in the process improving their efficiency and the return on investment (ROI) for the destination efforts.

The chart below illustrates the two key points of measurement — destination awareness and Influencing visitors to select Mendocino County.



In considering both of these projects over the course of the next three years SMG has developed a recommended schedule that provides the organization with an opportunity to maximize the data that is collected.

Year	Study	Comments
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Awareness Study</li> <li>• Website Influence Study</li> </ul>	Baseline study for both
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website influence study recalibration</li> </ul>	Use previously collected data with new google analytics website volume data.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Awareness Study</li> <li>• Website influence study recalibration</li> </ul>	Redo the awareness study to determine if the markets increased awareness etc. from the baseline year.

# I. Destination Awareness Study

## Project Objectives:

- ✚ **To understand the current awareness, perception and value** of the Mendocino County destination and brand.
- ✚ **To establish baseline levels of visitation** and general awareness to Mendocino County and its competitive set among its target geographic markets.
- ✚ **To determine consumer understanding and potential confusion** of Mendocino County from other regional destinations.
- ✚ **Develop recommendations** that work to improve the effectiveness of the organization’s marketing programs and collaboration among intra-regional areas.

## Understanding the Importance of a Baseline

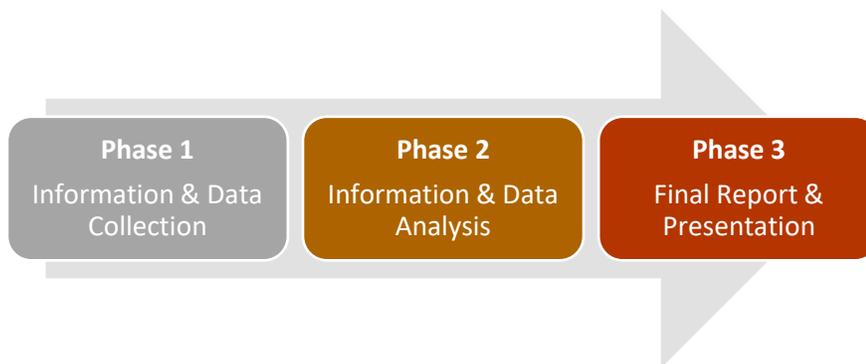
The **purpose** of a baseline study is to provide an information base against which to monitor and assess an activity's progress and effectiveness during implementation and after the activity is completed. In the case of Mendocino County tourism promotion activities this study would establish a baseline for key awareness and destination elements. The study can be duplicated in future years to assess the progress toward the destinations positioning and marketing goals.

It should be noted that the baseline study should be used in conjunction with a wide range of other measurements to provide tourism decision-makers with a comprehensive view of the destinations marketing efforts.

## Project Scope & Methodology

### Project Scope

In an effort to achieve the project goal and objectives SMG proposes the following project scope:



### **Phase 1 – Information Collection**

- Implement primary research data collection process.

### **Phase 2 – Information Analysis & Synthesis**

- Review collected information and analyze with an eye toward synthesizing information and crafting a final report and recommendations.

### **Phase 3 – Final Report and Presentation**

- In this phase SMG develops the final report and presentation. This phase includes recommendations to strengthen Mendocino County's competitive position as ideas are integrated into the destinations marketing program

## **Methodology**

SMG has developed the following methodology that includes an online survey to a panel of active California travelers from targeted Northern California consumers.

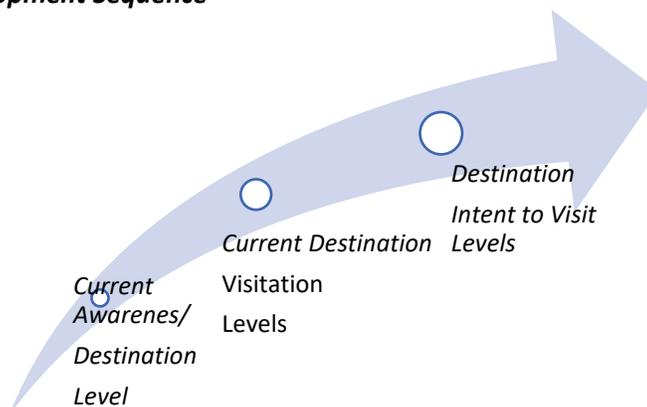
- Survey to be sent to a preformed panel of active California travelers
  - Screen: Respondents must be 18 years or older and have traveled away from home with an overnight stay in the past year.
  - Sample size 600-800 total
  - Cover letter and incentive (\$200 American Express gift card) would be included with the survey.
- Potential Northern California Markets include:
  - Sacramento
  - Stockton
  - Bay Area
  - Other TBD

## **Phase 1 – Data Collection**

1.1 Questionnaire Development – Develop a questionnaire to solicit appropriate information. It is recommended that to obtain the highest completion rate the survey length be kept to 30-35 questions.

- ▶ Implement Survey – Survey questionnaire is implemented.

## Questionnaire Development Sequence



### I. Awareness Levels/Brand Strength

- ▶ Awareness Levels
  - Awareness of Mendocino County location
  - Current awareness of Mendocino County brand
- ▶ Brand Strength
  - Awareness of Mendocino County vs. other areas
  - Likelihood of recommending visiting Mendocino County to a friend or relative
  - Likelihood to visit Mendocino County within 24 months

### II. Competitive Brand Analysis *(Note: With input from the client SMG can adjust or modify the competitive brands in the comparison)*

- ▶ Sonoma County
- ▶ Humboldt County
- ▶ Santa Cruz County
- ▶ Etc.

### III. Mendocino County Concept Testing

Understand or test ideas related to Mendocino county branding, taglines etc. i.e. What does Mendocino County mean to you?

### IV. Additional Questions

#### All Respondents

- ▶ Familiarization with Mendocino County and its location.
- ▶ Overnight visitation to Mendocino County
- ▶ First time vs. repeat visitors

#### Previous Visitors

- ▶ The number of times visited Mendocino County in the last 2 years?
- ▶ Thinking about the last trip to Mendocino County where did respondents tell friends they were going?
- ▶ Season of the last visit

- ▶ The primary reason for visiting Mendocino County?
- ▶ Activities participated in while on that trip to Mendocino County?
- ▶ Agree/disagree statements about Mendocino County
- ▶ Attributes that set Mendocino County apart from other areas
- ▶ Destination attribute ratings
- ▶ Ability to identify Mendocino County on a map

#### **Never Visited**

- ▶ The specific reason why respondents have not visited Mendocino County
- ▶ Agree/disagree statements
- ▶ Attributes that differentiate the destination
- ▶ Areas most likely to visit in the 24 months
- ▶ Important attributes considered in a coastal destination trip

#### **All Respondents**

- ▶ Likelihood of visiting Mendocino County for a pleasure vacation in the next 2 years
- ▶ Tagline measurement
- ▶ “Mendocino County Legends” as a motivator for more information
- ▶ Gender
- ▶ Age
- ▶ Household income
- ▶ Children
- ▶ Ethnicity

### **Phase 2 – Data Tabulation and Analysis**

- ▶ Collected data will be tabulated and banner points selected
- ▶ Segment and analyze collected data

### **Phase 3 – Final Report and Presentation**

- ▶ Final report- The final report includes the research findings as well as recommendations that can be used to strengthen Mendocino County Tourism marketing efforts.



## Project Deliverables and Timeline

### Project Deliverables

Project deliverables include the following:

- ▶ A comprehensive quantitative study of Mendocino County branding/destination issues
- ▶ Final Report
- ▶ Final Presentation

### Timeline

The estimated timeline for project completion is 45-60 days, as illustrated below.

	Month 1	Month 2
Survey Development		
Survey Sampling		
Survey Implementation		
Data Tabulation		
Data Analysis		
Final Report		
Final Presentation		

## Project Fees

Project fees include the following:

- Survey development
- Data collection
- Data tabulation/data analysis
- The final report with recommendations

Total Project Cost: \$14,000

Our standard payment program to be mutually agreed upon by SMG Consulting and the Mendocino County is one-half payment upon project agreement and a final payment upon delivery of the final products/ reports.

**This project comes with the SMG Consulting  
guarantee for your total satisfaction.**

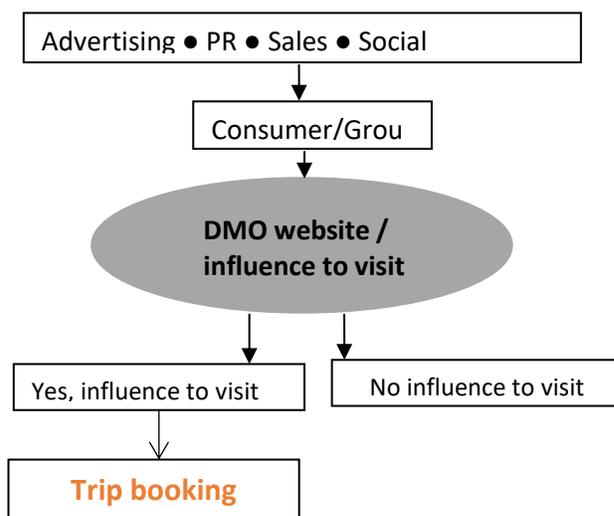
## II. Website Conversion/Influence Study

One of the biggest challenges for destination marketing organizations (DMOs) is the issue of measurement. While many DMOs are able to measure their effectiveness at the program level including such measurements as website user sessions, bounce rates, and social media programs, the biggest challenge remains. Namely how to measure the organization's effectiveness through the number of room nights generated, the amount of revenue generated and the return on the invested capital.

To that end SMG believes many of the challenges stem from the failure to understand what DMOs are responsible for. Are they responsible for generating transactions for room nights? Are they responsible for branding and advertising awareness? Often times the issue of accountability is not clearly understood or discussed. As a result, many DMOs fall back on using broad measurements like occupancy, or average daily rate data generated by the local jurisdiction, or data from an outside provider like Smith Travel.

At SMG we believe there is a comprehensive approach to macro-level DMO measurement. This approach is based on the core premise that **the primary duty of the DMO is to influence prospective visitors to visit the destination**. Once a DMO has accomplished that, the consumer is free to book a trip with any number of sources, including property direct or an online travel agent.

The key is to understand **how a DMO measures its influence on potential visitors to the destination**. To that end we believe it is the role of the DMO to use the appropriate marketing mix to drive as many people to its website in an effort to present the destination in such a way that consumers are influenced to visit the area. The figure below illustrates this concept.



The SMG DMO measurement system objective is **to understand the effectiveness of the DMO in influencing potential visitors to visit the destination**.

## Project Objectives:

- ▶ **Determine the influence of DMO marketing efforts on the consumer decision-making process to visit the area.**
- ▶ **Estimate the economic impact and return on investment of website users.**
- ▶ **Identify key visitor segments characteristics.**
  - Better understand those individuals who did not visit the area, including specific reasons why they chose not to visit.
- ▶ **Identify the effectiveness and efficiency of Mendocino County marketing programs including:**
  - "Gross" conversion rates
  - "Net" conversion rates
  - Cost per inquiry
  - Cost per visitor
  - Return on Investment (ROI)
  - Method of response
- ▶ **Continually improve the effectiveness and efficiency of DMO marketing programs thus improving invested capital return on investment.**

## Methodology:

### Phase 1 – Information Collection

SMG has developed the following proprietary methodology that includes multiple surveys to assess the influence of a DMO website and develop the needed information to assess the return on invested capital.



### **1.1 Preliminary Survey**

SMG will develop a preliminary pop-up survey that will be attached to the DMO website. Every consumer that comes to the DMO site will be asked to participate in a short five-question survey in exchange to win a weekend trip to Visit Tuolumne County and or participating area(s). Those who participate will be asked to leave their email address to further participate in the survey program.

### **1.2 Trip Survey**

Once three/four months has passed SMG will send those that have agreed to participate a follow-up trip survey that will ask approximately 20-25 questions related to whether or not they took a trip, lengths of stay, trip expenditures and specifically if they were influenced on their trip decision in any part by the DMO site.

### **1.3 Google Analytics**

Once the trip survey is completely tabulated SMG will integrate Google Analytics and the survey results and develop the appropriate financial impact model data inputs.

## **Phase 2 – Information Analysis/ Financial Model Building**

Once the data is collected from Phase 1 above, SMG will then develop a custom financial model(s) to assess the number of rooms generated and the economic impact of those that have been influenced to visit the destination.

The financial models will be developed using specific assumption for this destination and will be presented and reviewed by the DMO and stakeholders in the lodging industry for input and agreement.

The financial impact model will be calibrated based on the unique situation in that destination.

## **Phase 3 – Information presentation**

SMG will develop a presentation that includes the survey and financial modeling results, including the following:

- Room nights generated
- Lodging revenue generated
- Return on Investment (ROI)
- Efficiency measures:
  - "Gross" conversion rates
  - "Net" conversion rates

- Cost per inquiry
- Cost per visitor

### Phase 4 – Ongoing Management

SMG will provide ongoing measurements system management and ongoing results based on client needs.

### Project Deliverables and Timeline

Project deliverables include the following:

- ▶ A comprehensive influence quantitative study.
- ▶ Final Report
- ▶ Final Presentation

The estimated timeline for project completion is illustrated below.

	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4
Participation Survey Development				
Participation Survey Implementation				
Email Collection				
Trip Survey Implementation				
Data Tabulation				
Data Analysis				
Financial Model Building				
Return on Analysis				
Final Report				

Note: Depending on website volume the data collection period may be longer.

## Consultant Profile

### Carl Ribaldo – Project Director

Carl is a strategic thinker, thought leader and innovator in the tourism industry. As the founder and president of SMG, Consulting Carl has developed and implemented a wide range of services designed to improve the competitiveness of destinations. Most recently he has developed programs to assist the organization's, and destinations develop effective change strategies that link a DMO's capabilities to the ever-changing market environment. Carl is a trusted advisor to a CEO's and senior executives throughout the industry.



Carl has served the marketing and strategy needs of clients throughout both the public and private sectors. In each case, he and his team design solutions unique to each client's needs. Carl is also a writer and writes a monthly op-ed page, he has published a variety of marketing strategy, tourism, and motorcycle touring related articles. His most recent articles include [Crisis Thinking for Destination Disasters](#), [Remembering Why Travel Matters](#), [Overtourism: When is There Too Much Tourism?](#) and [Is Marijuana Tourism the Next big thing in California tourism? Maybe not.](#) He has also been both a guest speaker and panelist at industry conferences. He serves on two different State Tourism Committees including Vist California's Research and ROI Committee and the Travel Nevada's Tourism Marketing Committee.

Carl obtained a Bachelor of Science degree from California State University at Northridge. He received his master's degree in Business Administration (MBA) from San Francisco State University Graduate School of Business. He has recently completed a certificate program at Cornell University in Organizational Change Leadership and a certificate program in Strategic Thinking from Dartmouth College.

He enjoys riding his BMW motorcycle on two-lane roads throughout the west, trap shooting, river rafting and skiing.

## SMG Consulting References and Related Experience

SMG has participated in a wide variety of related projects. SMG Consulting can provide a full list of references upon request

## Project Fees

### Mendocino County DMO Measurement Program

#### Year 1 Inclusive

- Survey development, implementation
- Economic model
- ROI analysis
- Final report

\$8,500.00

-----Optional-----

#### Year 2 Inclusive

- Model recalibration
- Final presentation

\$2,500.00

#### Year 3 Inclusive

- Model recalibration
- Final presentation

\$2,500.00

*Does not include travel expenses to Mendocino County including travel time and half-hourly rate lodging and F&B which will be billed separately and at cost.*

Our standard payment program to be mutually agreed upon by SMG and the Mendocino County is one-half payment upon project agreement and the final payment upon delivery of the final products/ reports.

Thanks again for your consideration of SMG Consulting for this important project.

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