

## Appeal of the Aspen Brand

### KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Economic Impact of visitors
- Visitor median age
- Level of visitor satisfaction
- % of repeat visitors to Aspen

**Desired Outcome:** Aspen is the destination of choice for an international blend of businesses, home and condo owners, and short-term visitors. It is an economic engine with global reach. Visitors and residents expect and receive the very best of recreational, educational, cultural and business amenities. The resort is rated highly in comparison with its competitors due to a unique blend of offerings that anticipates and meets evolving customer expectations.

The importance of tourism as a sector in the economy is well established. It provides an essential contribution to economic prosperity and by extension to the host community.<sup>1</sup> But to attract and sustain tourist visits to a place there must be a certain appeal.

The *Aspen Brand* promises a distinctive mountain town with global appeal. This brand combination developed over time is perhaps best understood from the historical perspective. Aspen has its settlement roots in the silver mining boom days of the late 1870s. While the mining industry ultimately languished, the town persevered. In the 1940s, Aspen reemerged as a ski town and cultural center.<sup>2</sup> Chicago industrialists, Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke introduced their “*Aspen Idea*.” Their conception envisioned that a community should seek to nourish the *Mind, Body*, and *Spirit* of its citizens.<sup>3</sup> This has remained a core value and unique brand image of the Aspen community ever since. Even then, there was something unique about this place that made people come, prevail, and thrive. It is this ‘*capacity to endure*’ that forms the basis of Aspen’s sustainability today.

Over the years, Aspen continued to beckon visitors to experience the *Aspen Idea* through the unique qualities that the community and surrounding area had to offer such as:

- ❖ Place identity & character
- ❖ Scenic landscapes & wildlife
- ❖ Outdoor recreation
- ❖ Wellness philosophy
- ❖ Culture, history, art
- ❖ Festivals: music, food, ideas
- ❖ Restaurants & lodging
- ❖ Businesses & shops



Figure 1. Maroon Bells<sup>4</sup>



Figure 2. Downtown Aspen<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Travel and Tourism Economic Impact World Report 2016. Web. April 2016. <http://www.wttc.org/research/economicresearch/economic-impact-analysis/>.

<sup>2</sup> Aspen Rebounds: 1936-1948. Web. July 2018. <http://aspenhistory.org/aspen-history/aspen-rebounds-1936-1948/>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Giudice, Linda. 2012.

<sup>5</sup>Babbie, Sheila. 2016.

As an internationally renowned resort destination, Aspen strives to continuously deliver on its brand promise. It not only aims to attract an optimal number of visitors for year-round activities and events, but to also satisfy their expectations through unique, high quality offerings. To support visitors from other places, an infrastructure of services must be in place to support their needs including different modes of transportation, accommodation, restaurants, recreation, entertainment, as well as, other services. In short, the right measure of tourism (*supply*) is linked to the right level of visitor consumption of goods and services (*demand*).

From an economic prosperity point of view, the sustainability of a visitor-based economy is not just important for visitors but also for the community as it generates many benefits. First, an optimal number of visitors contributes directly to local enterprises through spending. Second, much of the revenue from visitor spending is reinvested back in to the local economy leading to employment and job creation. Third, tax revenues are used for investment in public works (roads, parks, and public spaces), programs, and services. Better facilities and infrastructure brings in more visitors but also benefits the local community by contributing to an overall better quality of life.

The key performance measures that offer a relatively good indication of how well a visitor based economy is doing include:

- *Economic impact of visitors*
- *Median age of visitors*
- *Satisfaction level of visitors*
- *% of repeat visitors to Aspen*

[\*] As there are no borders for domestic or interstate travel visitor flows, total visitor numbers are not always available. Per Longwood International's *Colorado Travel Year 2014 Final Report (May 2015)* produced on behalf of the Colorado Tourism Office there are an estimated 71.3 million overnight visitors to Colorado each year. Of these, 29.4 million or 41% fall under the overnight/leisure category.<sup>6</sup> There is no further break down specific to the Roaring Fork Valley/Aspen area.

The metrics listed above are presented in the respective "Sustainability Measures" section of this report.

## **Current & Proposed Actions**

The Aspen community aims to attract visitors through its small-town character coupled with its international brand appeal. Some of the current and proposed actions as relates to both aspects are briefly summarized below. Note the web links highlighted for each for more detailed information.

### **Current Actions**

- The [Aspen Chamber Resort Association \(ACRA\)](#) continues to market and promote Aspen to domestic and international visitors through a wide range of activities and channels. Some of these include:
  - **Membership:** Developing relationships between businesses and government entities through events and improving marketing of members through shared advertising.
  - **Communications:** Providing information to its member-businesses through newsletters, social media and other sources.

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<sup>6</sup>Longwood International's *Colorado Travel Year 2014 Final Report (May 2015)*. Web. June 2016.  
<http://www.colorado.com/sites/default/master/files/Colorado2014VisitorFinalReportonline.pdf>.

- **Employee Sustainability:** Developing methodologies and strategies for assessing Employee Sustainability in Aspen.
  - **Public Affairs:** Enhancing relations with City and County governments and increasing involvement in local public affairs to assist with the local economy.
  - **Marketing:** Utilizing advertisement, PR, social media, events, and promotions to improve the occupancy rates during Spring and Fall seasons, improve the “Fall in Love” and “Secret Season” campaigns, and increase the overall appeal of Aspen year-round.
  - **Interactive:** Improving ACRA’s website presence and other platforms to improve the experience of members and users of the ACRA website.
  - **Partnerships:** Partnering with local and government resources to improve ACRA’s destination marketing campaigns.
  - **Community Outreach:** Supporting members with marketing and advertising campaigns to benefit the community.
  - **Special Events:** Promoting and assisting with Aspen events to increase the appeal of the events and increase the attendance.
  - **Visitor/Guest Services:** Enhancing the visitor experience by emphasizing the “Defy Ordinary” brand and uniqueness of Aspen with their Visitor Center.
- [Aspen Skiing Company](#) attracts visitors (of all ages) to 4 mountains in the Aspen area for world class skiing and outdoor activities year-round. Some of its marketing activities include digital marketing, emails, and other methods.
  - The [Aspen Institute](#) is a non-partisan forum for values-based leadership and exchange of ideas. It is host to the [Aspen Ideas Festival](#) each year. It also has a wide range of programmatic areas and events that gather global leaders to address complex societal problems such as:
    - [Aspen Center for Urban Innovation](#)
    - [Economic Opportunities Program](#)
    - [Education and Society Program](#)
    - [Energy and Environment Program](#)
    - [Financial Security Program](#)
    - [Future of Work Initiative](#)

The Institute is host to a wide range of events to support its programs at its Aspen campus throughout the year.

In support of the *Aspen Idea: Mind, Body, Spirit* there are a wide range of cultural and recreational offerings and initiatives that engage this principle such as:

- [Aspen Music Festival](#) founded in 1949, the Aspen Music Festival and School is regarded as one of the top classical music festivals in the United States, noted both for its concert programming and its musical training of mostly young-adult music students.
- [Food & Wine Classic in Aspen](#) is a premier event where the world's most accomplished winemakers, celebrity chefs, and culinary experts come together.
- [Aspen Words](#) Founded in 1976 this organization is now one of the nation’s leading literary centers and a stage for the world’s most prominent contemporary writers.
- [Aspen Santa Fe Ballet](#) through a bold vision – top global choreographers, distinctive groundbreaking repertoire, and virtuoso dancers – has fostered a jewel of a dance

- company in the American West.
- [Theatre Aspen](#) Aims to rekindle a sense of discovery in audiences who live in and visit the Roaring Fork Valley by producing big theatre in a small space with intimate, exciting storytelling; to educate the next generation of theatre artists and enthusiasts and to support the creation of new work for the American theatre canon.
- [X-Games Aspen](#) is one of the nation's premier events for snowboarding, skiing, and other various Winter Sports.

### **Proposed Actions**

[ACRA's 2017 Strategic Plan](#) sets out objectives and goals in support of the metrics and outcomes. As relates to *Destination Marketing*, ACRA continues to plan the following actions:

- Position Aspen as a premier resort destination with initiatives and resources strategically allocated based on historical occupancy data.
- Utilize interactive platforms to ensure ACRA is the best source of information during all phases of the travel planning process, while providing valuable exposure to members.
- Work with partners on the local, state and national level to leverage ACRA's marketing resources and reach.
- Facilitate collaboration with local stakeholders on sales, marketing and PR initiatives for maximum benefit to the community.
- Produce, act as umbrella organization to promote, and/or act as event manager of 3-5 high quality special events that drive visitation, add vitality and benefit the community, visitor and ACRA membership.
- Ensure menu of events and components within each event ACRA is producing is aligning with organizational mission.
- Obtain support, both financial and in-kind, and maintain sponsor relations for the sustainability of ACRA's special events.
- Be a source of event information for the community.
- Provide the highest level of service and training available to showcase aspen as a premier destination.