



# SPOKANE REGIONAL CVB WEB SITE RETURN ON INVESTMENT STUDY

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Report of Findings

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# Introduction

## Research Objectives

This report presents the findings of a year-long study of visitors to the Spokane Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau's Web site, [www.VisitSpokane.com](http://www.VisitSpokane.com). This research was conducted on behalf of the SRCVB by Destination Analysts, Inc., with the primary objective of generating detailed Return on Investment (ROI) estimates for Spokane's tourism Web site.

## Methodology

The findings presented here are based on the results of two surveys conducted specifically for this project, which were fielded from December 2009 through December 2010. The use of this survey data in the ROI estimation methodology is explained immediately below:

### 1. Web site ROI Estimation Methodology

As forementioned, this Web site ROI research was comprised of two surveys conducted amongst persons who visited the Spokane Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau's Web site. These surveys<sup>1</sup> were interconnected, and included a Web site Visitor Intercept Survey and a Web site Visitor Follow-Up Survey sent after the Web site visitor had a chance to visit Spokane.

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<sup>1</sup> Data presented in this report is from surveys collected from persons who visited the Web site between December 2009 and December 2010.

Destination Analysts developed these survey questionnaires (Sections 7 and 8, pages 51 and 56), which were then implemented online. The surveys were collected for the entire twelve-month period of study (December 2009-December 2010). Each is described below:

**Web site Visitor Intercept Survey:** A survey invitation was placed on the Spokane Regional CVB Web site's homepage which asked every third visitor to take a brief survey. This survey looked into topics such as Web site users' motivations for visiting the Web site, how far along they were in their destination decision process, and their expected date of arrival in Spokane, as well as permission to send them a follow-up survey after they planned to travel to Spokane. As an incentive to take the survey, all respondents were entered into a prize drawing. In total, 2,489 completed surveys were collected.

**Web site Visitor Follow-up Conversion Survey:** As aforementioned, respondents were asked in the initial Web site Intercept Survey what month they expected to visit Spokane. At the end of this month, these respondents were sent an invitation to take the Follow-Up Survey<sup>2</sup>. This survey questionnaire asked respondents about topics related to their visitation to Spokane. A sweepstakes was again offered as an incentive. In total, 475 completed surveys were collected.

The data from the two surveys was then combined for each respondent, leaving our research staff with a robust set of data from visitors. For each respondent, beginning with their initial planning interactions with the Web site, the research process allowed for tracking actual subsequent in-market behavior. Ultimately, this research technique allowed Destination Analysts to develop estimates of the proportion of users who are converted to a visit by the Web site and other metrics needed for developing reliable return on investment estimates for the SRCVB.

Section 4 of this report (ROI Summary) presents a summary of the economic impact of the Web site to Spokane using Destination Analysts' proprietary economic impact model for DMO Web sites. Data collected in the surveys (both motivational and reported direct in-market spending) were used for this analysis, with the goal of estimating the amount of visitor spending in

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<sup>2</sup> Only survey respondents who opted-in for this follow-up survey were sent the invitation.

Spokane that is directly generated by the Web site.

We use a hypothetical estimate of 1,000 unique visitors (less “bounces” — those who only look at one page before leaving) to the Web site for the calculation of ROI estimates. This provides the SRCVB a simple basis from which to estimate the real and potential ROI of the significantly higher visitor volume that Web site can and does generate.

## Quick Facts:

The profile below shows a summary of fundamental findings and descriptive statistics emerging from this research. These data are annualized to estimate visitor activity during the period from December 2009 through December 2010.

### Web site ROI Estimates (per 1,000 unique visitors)

Trips to Spokane generated by Web site (i.e. incremental trips):	42
Average visitor spending per day on these incremental trips to Spokane:	\$216.50
Total visitor spending on incremental trips to Spokane:	\$28,270
Days spent in Spokane on trips extended by Web site:	15
Total visitor spending on trip days extended by Web site:	\$3,331
Total economic impact/ROI of the Web site:	\$31,600

## Executive Summary

### Web site ROI

The research suggests that the SRCVB Web site's economic impact to Spokane is significant. The key ROI findings from this study of Web site users are summarized below.

- **VisitSpokane.com attracts a high volume of the types of Web site visitors who represent opportunity for the site to generate economic impact to Spokane.** Over 80 percent of the SRCVB's Web site audience is from the non-professional segment (the professional segment includes meeting planners, travel trade, media and others using the Web site for purposes unrelated to travel and/or individual trip planning). Of this non-professional segment, 93.0 percent reside more than 50 miles from Spokane. As 50 miles is the standard in tourism research to designate that a "trip" has occurred, any spending on trips by those residing outside this radius can be considered in the ROI analysis.
- **There is a significant rate of visitation to Spokane by VisitSpokane.com users post use of the Web site.** Based on the study's findings, the estimated rate of visitation after using VisitSpokane.com is 83.6 percent for both leisure travelers and business/conference travelers.
- **The Web site enjoys strong incremental trip generation potential.** An incremental trip is one in which the visitor decided to visit Spokane based significantly on their experience with the Web site. These are trips to the county that would not have happened if the Web site did not

exist, and thus any visitor spending in Spokane on these trips can be counted as part of the Web site's economic impact. The first criteria for considering a trip incremental is that the visitor must have traveled to Spokane for leisure or other personal reasons and thus fully responsible for the destination decision (unlike a business or convention trip, in which the destination is largely determined by outside sources). 83.6 percent of the non-professional, non-resident Web site audience were planning or considering leisure travel to Spokane. Of this group, 37.6 percent were subject to influence by the Web site, meaning they had NOT made up their mind to visit Spokane when arriving at the site and thus any trip made by them is eligible to be considered incremental.

- **VisitSpokane.com is influencing its audience's decision to visit Spokane at an effective rate.** In the study's findings, 64.8 percent of potential incremental visitors agreed the Web site indeed influenced their ultimate decision to take a trip to Spokane. Of these persons, 46.3 percent assessed the site as "Important" or "Very important" to this decision when asked to rate its relative impact on their decision process.
- **The average incremental trip generated by the Web site lasted 3.1 days, with reported in-market spending of \$216.50 per day.** These averages are based on trip details reported in the Web site Visitor Follow-Up Survey.
- **Using data in our ROI model and the findings on incremental visitation summarized above, VisitSpokane.com is estimated to have generated 42 incremental trips and \$28,270 in new visitor spending in Spokane per 1,000 unique visitors to the Web site.** Alternatively, it's estimated that for every unique visitor to the Web site, \$28.27 is generated for Spokane County.
- **The Web site also has significant potential to inspire users to spend additional days in Spokane.** A second way the SRCVB Web site can generate economic value for Spokane County is by convincing visitors to extend their intended stays in Spokane. This group of visitors includes business travelers (14.5% of non-professional, non-resident Web site users) and leisure/personal travelers who already made up their mind to visit Spokane when they came to VisitSpokane.com (54.2% of leisure-driven



Web site users).

- **Content on VisitSpokane.com influences approximately one-in-ten non-incremental visitors to lengthen their stay in Spokane.**

Business/conference travelers and those who had already made up their mind to visit Spokane when arriving at the SRCVB Web site were asked if the site in any way influenced the number of days they ultimately spent in the county. 9.7 percent agreed that the Web site caused them to lengthen their intended stay.

- **Those influenced by the Web site to extend their Spokane trip typically lengthened their stay by 1.2 days, while spending an average of \$216.50 per day in-market.** These additional visitor days—and reported spending—can be included in the site’s overall economic impact.

- **Using data in ROI model and the findings on lengthened stays summarized above, VisitSpokane.com is estimated to have generated 15 additional visitor days and \$3,331 in additional visitor spending per 1,000 unique visitors to the Web site.** Alternatively, for every unique visitor to the Web site, \$3.33 in additional visitor spending was generated for Spokane.

- **The total estimated ROI/economic impact of the Web site per 1,000 unique visitors is \$31,600.** The two components detailed above—spending on incremental trips and additional days in-market—comprise the program’s ROI/economic impact as defined in this study. From another perspective, every unique visitor to VisitSpokane.com would lead to an additional \$31.60 in incremental visitor spending in Spokane County.

## ROI Summary & Estimates

Return on Investment for a destination marketing organization's marketing program can best be defined as the total amount of direct visitor spending in the destination that is generated by the program. Alternatively, a DMO marketing program's ROI can be defined as the amount of visitor spending in the destination that would not have occurred in the absence of the program. In short, we want to use this research to measure how much the Web site brought back to the community in economic impact per dollar spent developing/maintaining the Web site.

The method used is detailed below, followed by the actual ROI estimates.

### Calculation of Web site ROI Estimates

This Web site ROI study used a two-step survey process.

**Step 1:** A large random sample of surveys was collected from visitors entering the Web site. An invitation to take the survey was presented in a unique window to every 3<sup>rd</sup> visitor to the Web site, and the survey collected the following four key pieces of information:

1. The type of Spokane trip the Web site visitor was planning, if any (i.e., leisure, convention, business, etc.).
2. The Web site visitor's current stage in travel planning (i.e., upon entering the Web site, had they already made up their mind to visit

Spokane?)

3. Expected month of arrival in Spokane.

4. Contact information and opt-in for a follow -up survey

**Step 2:** A follow-up survey to the first survey was sent to respondents at the end of the month they expected to visit Spokane. If a respondent to the first survey did not have a date for their trip in mind, they were sent the survey invitation three months after their visit to the Web site.

Data collected in the first survey was then appended to responses to the second survey. By doing so, we could identify visitors who had already made up their mind to visit Spokane before visiting the Web site. We could also differentiate between leisure and business/conference visitors and others and measure in-market spending by visitors influenced by the Web site to visit or extend their stay in Spokane. The economic impact estimates derived for this report include all direct spending in Spokane by two types of visitors: those who took incremental trips to Spokane and those who extended the length of their trip based on information found on the Web site. These two visitor types are distinguished following:

1. Visitors on **incremental trips** had not fully made up their mind to visit Spokane when they came to the Web site and stated that the Web site influenced their decision to ultimately visit the area. Influence on the decision to visit is based on two follow-up survey questions (Questions 14 and 15, pages 59 and 60). To be considered an incremental visitor, respondents who had not made up their mind to visit prior to arriving at the Web site (stated in intercept survey) must then state in the follow-up survey that the Web site helped them make their decision to visit and that it was "Important" or "Very important" to their decision to visit.

2. Web site visitors who **extended their stay in Spokane** can be leisure travelers, business travelers or conventioners. Leisure travelers who did not state that the Web site influenced their decision to visit Spokane, and all business and convention travelers were asked a series of questions on the influence of the Web site on the length of their stay in Spokane. Economic impact estimates for this group only include spending during reported "additional" days in market generated by the Web site.

The study's key ROI findings are summarized below.

- **Incremental trips to Spokane generated by the Web site:** For every 1,000 unique visitors to the Web site, an estimated 42 incremental trips were generated for Spokane County. An incremental trip is one in which the visitor decided to visit Spokane based on their experience with the Web site. These are trips to the county that would not have happened if the Web site did not exist, and thus any visitor spending in Spokane on these trips can be counted as part of the Web site's economic impact. The average incremental trip lasted 3.1 days, with a reported in-market spending of \$216.50 per day. These incremental trips are estimated to have generated \$28,270 in new visitor spending in Spokane.
- **Additional days spent in Spokane generated by the Web site:** A second way the SRCVB promotional Web site can generate economic value for Spokane is by convincing visitors to extend their stays in Spokane. The research conducted shows that for every 1,000 visitors to the Web site, 15 new visitor days were generated for Spokane County. Assuming that these visitors spent \$216.50 per day while in Spokane, this would result in an additional \$3,331 in incremental visitor spending in Spokane.
- **Total Estimated Economic Impact:** The two components discussed above (spending on incremental trips and additional days in-market) comprise the program's economic impact as defined in this study. It is estimated that for every 1,000 unique visitors to the Web site, \$31,600 in economic impact will be generated for Spokane County. Alternatively, every unique visitor to the Web site would lead to an additional \$31.60 in incremental visitor spending in Spokane.

The table on the next page details the steps used in these calculations.

**Spokane Web site ROI Calculation Sheet**  
**(Steps in Calculation of Web site Economic Impact Metrics)**

Line #		
A	Hypothetical Web site traffic (unique visitors)	1,000
B	Potential visitors (i.e., non-professional segment)*	83.6%
C	Potential visitor lives outside Spokane area (50 mile radius)	93.0%
D	Planned visit was in study period (January 1, 2010 - December 31, 2010)	94.9%
E	Total potential visitors from outside Spokane area (A * B * C * D)	738
F	Percent planning a leisure trip	81.1%
G	Potential leisure visitors from outside Spokane (E * F)	598
H	Visited Spokane after intercept survey	83.6%
I	Web site visitors visiting Spokane for leisure after intercept survey (G * H)	500
J	Percent planning business or convention trip	14.5%
K	Potential business/convention visitors from outside Spokane area (E * J)	107
L	Visited Spokane after intercept survey for business or conference	83.6%
M	Web site visitors visiting for business/conference after intercept survey (K * L)	89
	<b>Economic impact of incremental trips (i.e., trips influenced by Web site)</b>	
N	Potential leisure visitors who had not made up mind to visit prior to Web site visit	37.6%
O	Percent visiting Spokane after visit to Web site	62.4%
P	Persons potentially converted to a visit by the Web site (G * N * O)	140
Q	Percent influenced to visit Spokane by Web site	64.8%
R	Percent of trips where Web site had substantial importance**	46.3%
S	Trips to Spokane substantially influenced by Web site (P * Q * R)	42
T	Average length of stay in Spokane	3.10
U	Total visitor days in Spokane on influenced trips (S * T)	131
V	Average reported spending on incremental trips per-day in Spokane	\$216.50
W	<b>Economic impact of incremental trips (U * V)</b>	<b>\$28,270</b>
	<b>Economic impact of trips lengthened as a result of Web site program</b>	
X	Potential lengthened/shortened trips (I * 1-Q) + M	139
Y	Percent lengthening trip due to Web site	9.7%
Z	Trips to Spokane "lengthened" by Web site (X * Y)	14
AA	Percent shortening trip due to Web site	1.5%
BB	Trips to Spokane "shortened" by Web site ((X-M) * AA)	1
CC	Net increase in number of lengthen trips resulting from Web site (Z - BB)	13
DD	Average number of days trip was lengthened	1.2
EE	Total number of incremental visitor days spent in Spokane (CC * DD)	15
FF	Average spending per-day in Spokane	\$216.50
GG	<b>Economic impact of trips lengthened as a result of Web site (EE * FF)</b>	<b>\$3,331</b>
HH	<b>TOTAL PROGRAM ECONOMIC IMPACT (W + GG)</b>	<b>\$31,600</b>

\* Professional segments Include meeting planners, travel trade, media and others using the Web site for non-travel planning purposes.

\*\* Respondent says the Web site was "Very important," or "Important" to their decision to visit Spokane .