

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority

Destination Research

Prepared for:
Jackson County TDA



NORTH CAROLINA MOUNTAIN TOWNS OF CASHIERS,
CHEROKEE, DILLSBORO AND SYLVA

Study Conducted: November 2018 – March, 2019
Research Report Submitted – March, 2019

Research Conducted by:
Young Strategies, Inc.
Charlotte, NC



"If you build a place people want to visit,
you build a place where people want to live.

"If you build a place where people want to live,
you'll build a place where people want to work.

"If you build a place where people want to work,
you'll build a place where business has to be.

"And if you build a place where business has to be,
you'll build a place where people have to visit."

—Maura Gast, Irving, TX, CVB and DMAI Chair, July 2009.

Unique? Inspirational?





Jackson County, NC Travel Market Research

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE:

Young Strategies will provide a visitor profile study for Jackson County TDA that:

- Identifies the current visitor segmented markets, visitor geo/socio-demographic profile and spending levels
- Identifies seasonal visitation patterns
- Identifies the attractors/motivators that drive visitation to Jackson County and cities within the County
- Identifies target/growth markets, visitor segments and strategies with the optimal ROI
- Develops a model to calculate annual visitor volume
- Develops a solid, reliable annual economic impact model
- Engagement of staff, Board, community and travel industry leaders
- Identify gaps and opportunities for growth and development
- A shared vision and plan for growth
- Clearly defined goals and objectives

SURVEY RESPONSES:

- 2,358 were visitors of Jackson County in the last 3 years
- 505 were Jackson County residents
- 483 had not visited Jackson County in the last 3 years
- 267 were part-time residents of Jackson County
- 161 were visitors from a neighboring county
- 9 were residents of Cherokee



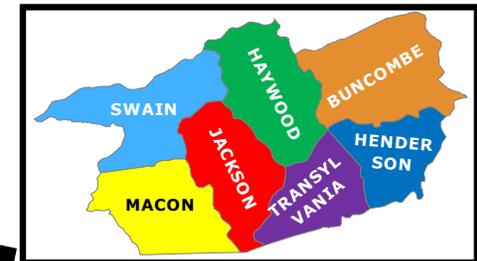
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2012 vs. 2017 Travel Related Tax Relief for Jackson County, NC

State/Local Taxes/Fees Attributed to Tourism	2017 Visitor Spending (in millions)	Rank Order	2017 State/Local Taxes Attributed to Tourism	# of Households	Tax Relief per household
● Jackson (Sylva)	\$195.44	26 th	\$19,940,000	16,218	\$462.46
● Buncombe (Asheville)	\$1,142.19	4 th	\$98,670,000	105,407	\$365.82
● Henderson (Hendersonville)	\$294.64	14 th	\$26,140,000	47,804	\$225.02
● Swain (Bryson City)	\$205.58	24 th	\$17,430,000	5,464	\$1,161.74
● Haywood (Waynesville)	\$182.27	28 th	\$16,990,000	26,288	\$272.79
● Macon (Franklin)	\$170.12	31 st	\$21,350,000	15,513	\$602.87
● Transylvania (Brevard)	\$99.85	43 rd	\$8,510,000	14,125	\$246.95

	2012	2017
Total Visitor Spending	\$156,050,000	\$195,440,000
Ranking in state visitor spending (100 counties)	(26 th)	(26 th)
State and Local Taxes Attributed to Tourism	\$15,660,000	\$19,940,000
Direct Travel & Tourism Employment (jobs)	1,570	1,850
Jackson County - # of Households	N/a	16,218
TAX RELIEF PER HOUSEHOLD	\$383.94	\$462.46



In 2017, more than \$1.9 billion of state and local tax revenues was generated by travel and tourism activities. Without those taxes, each household in North Carolina would have had to pay \$508 in additional taxes to maintain current service levels.

State of North Carolina – Tax Relief = \$507.70 per household

Jackson County

Lodging Market Analysis



Summary & Observations:

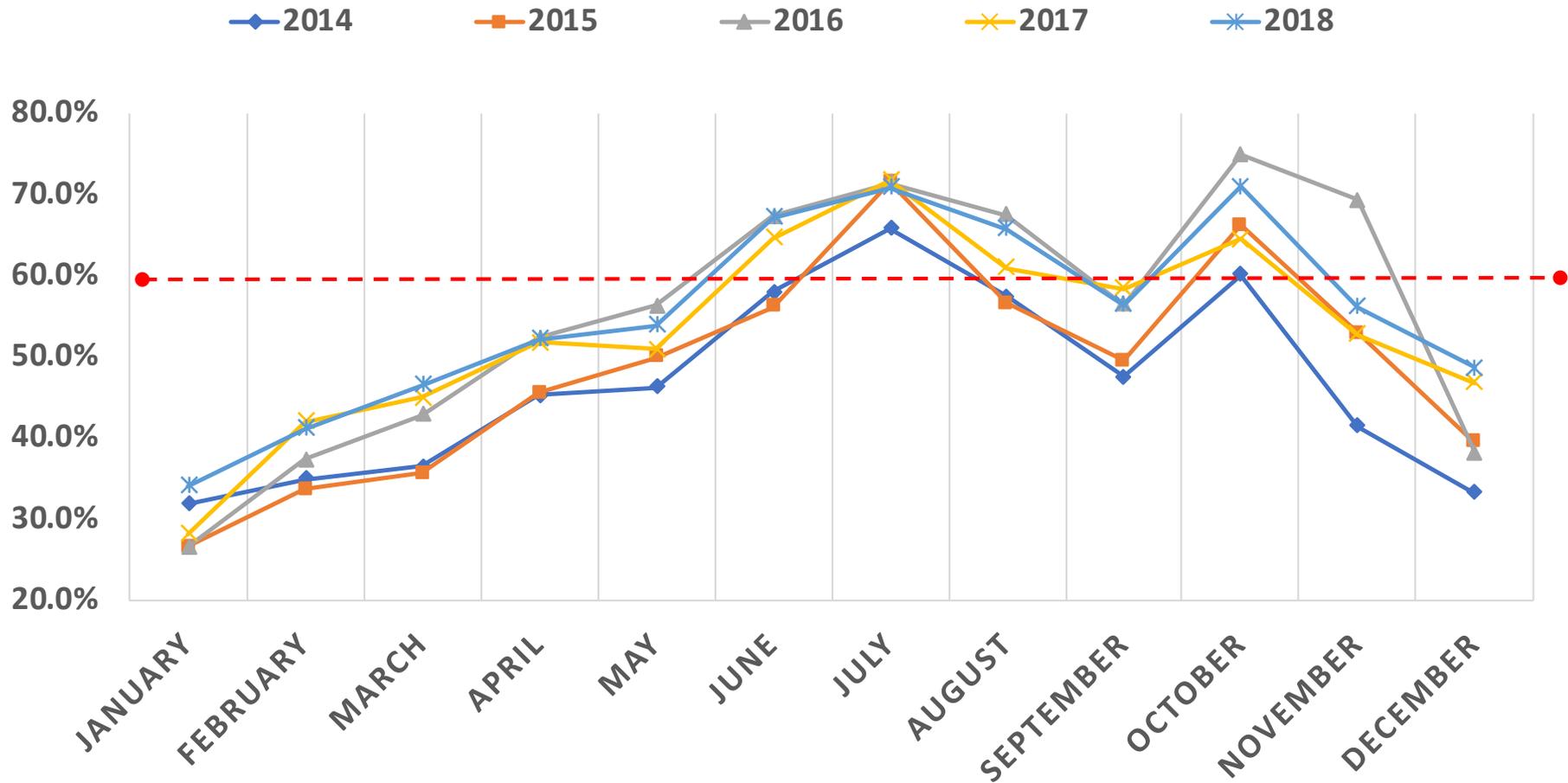
- Jackson County, NC currently has **17 hotel/motel lodging properties with approximately 769 rooms**. (This number fluctuates regularly as lodging properties add and delete rooms from their inventory). . **A total of ten Jackson County properties participated in the YSI survey which provided an overall response rate of 83.0%.**
- **Recent hotel development in 2014 saw the opening of two new chain-affiliated properties in Jackson County. A total of 133 hotel rooms were added resulting in an 17% increase in total room inventory.** Slightly more than 40% of the county's room inventory is fairly new having been developed between 2002 – 2014, while one property opened in the 1991 and the remaining 50% of the room inventory was developed prior to 1986.

Jackson County Inventory Inventory – Age / Room Count	Open Date	Rooms
1989 – Prior = 11 Properties	51.2%	394
1990 - 1999 = 1 Properties	6.5%	50
2000 - 2009 = 3 Properties	25.0%	192
2010 - Present = 2 Properties	17.3%	133
Comfort Inn Sylva	Jan-14	77
Microtel Inn & Suites	May-14	56
17 TOTAL Hotel/Motel Properties	Rooms =	769

Jackson County Other Lodging	Units
Bed & Breakfast Inns	7 properties, 67 Rooms
Locally Managed Vacation Rentals	356 units
AirBnb / HomeAway Cashiers area	139 units
AirBnb / Home Away Sylva area	95 units
Campgrounds / RV Parks	6
Timeshare Units	2 management companies
	Units 23



MONTHLY OCCUPANCY TREND

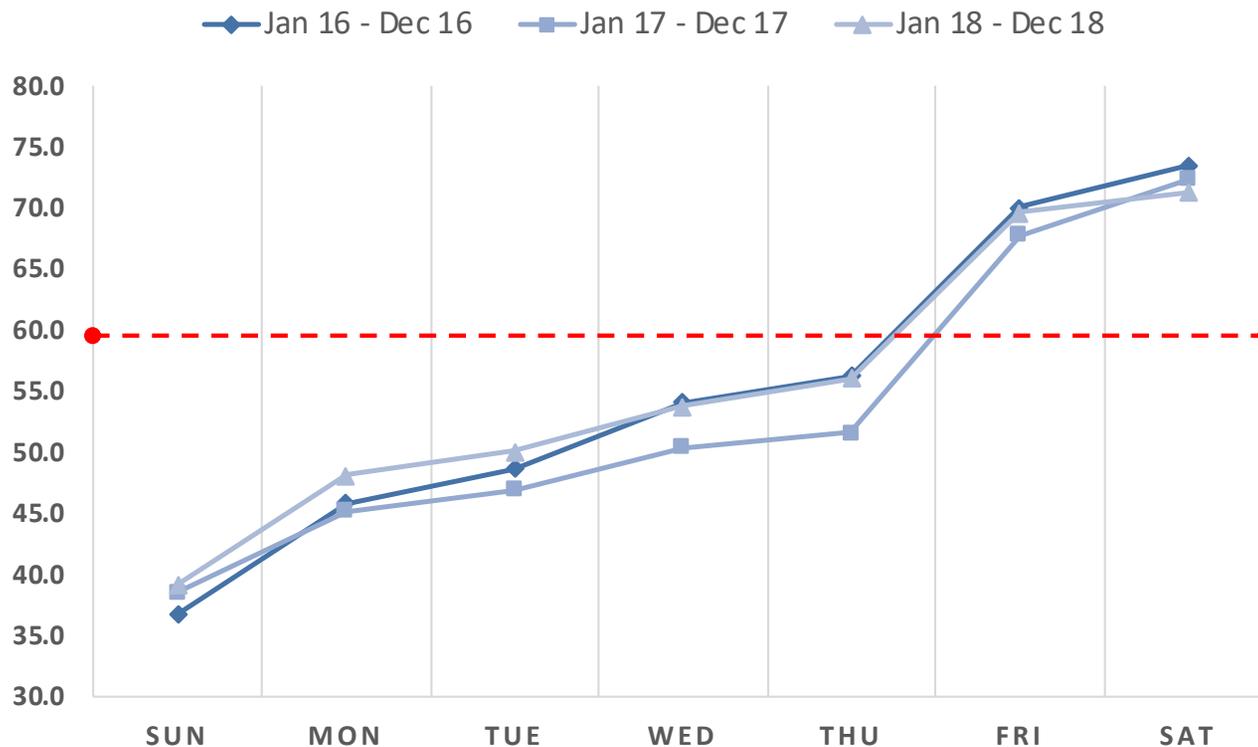


Daily Occupancy %'s	# of days	% of YR
Days reported at 60% - 69%	58	15.9%
Days reported at 70% - 79%	34	9.3%
Days reported at 80% - 89%	37	10.2%
Days reported at 90% - 100%	21	5.8%

Hotel Annual Occupancy = 55.5%
Total # of Days 60% or higher occupancy
150 nights = 41.1% of the year

Three Year Occupancy (%)							
	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Jan 16 - Dec 16	36.7	45.9	48.7	54.1	56.2	70.0	73.5
Jan 17 - Dec 17	38.6	45.1	46.9	50.4	51.6	67.7	72.3
Jan 18 - Dec 18	39.2	48.1	50.1	53.8	56.1	69.7	71.3
Total 3 Yr	38.2	46.4	48.6	52.8	54.6	69.1	72.4

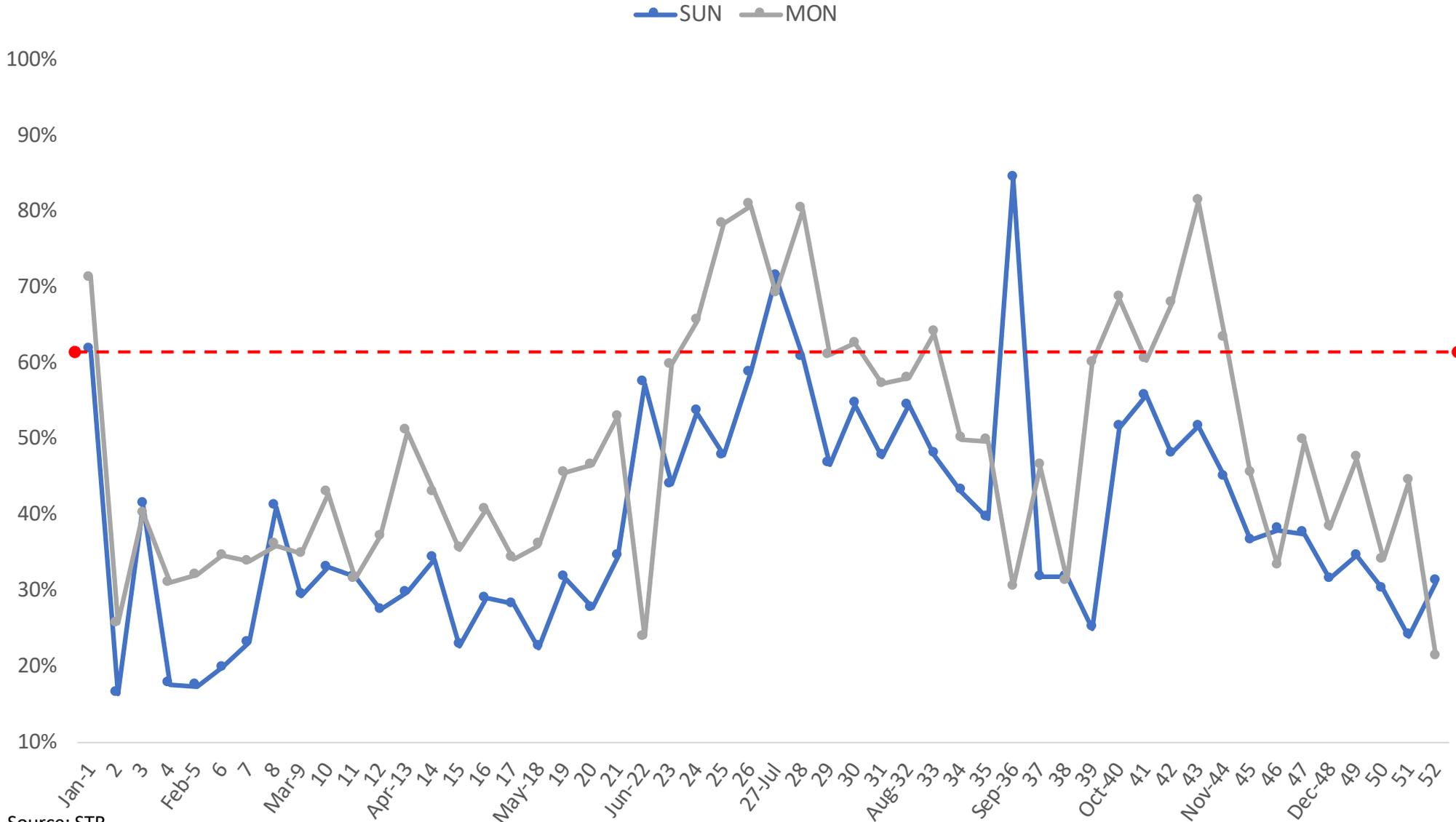
3-YR TREND- DAY OF WEEK OCC.



Observations:

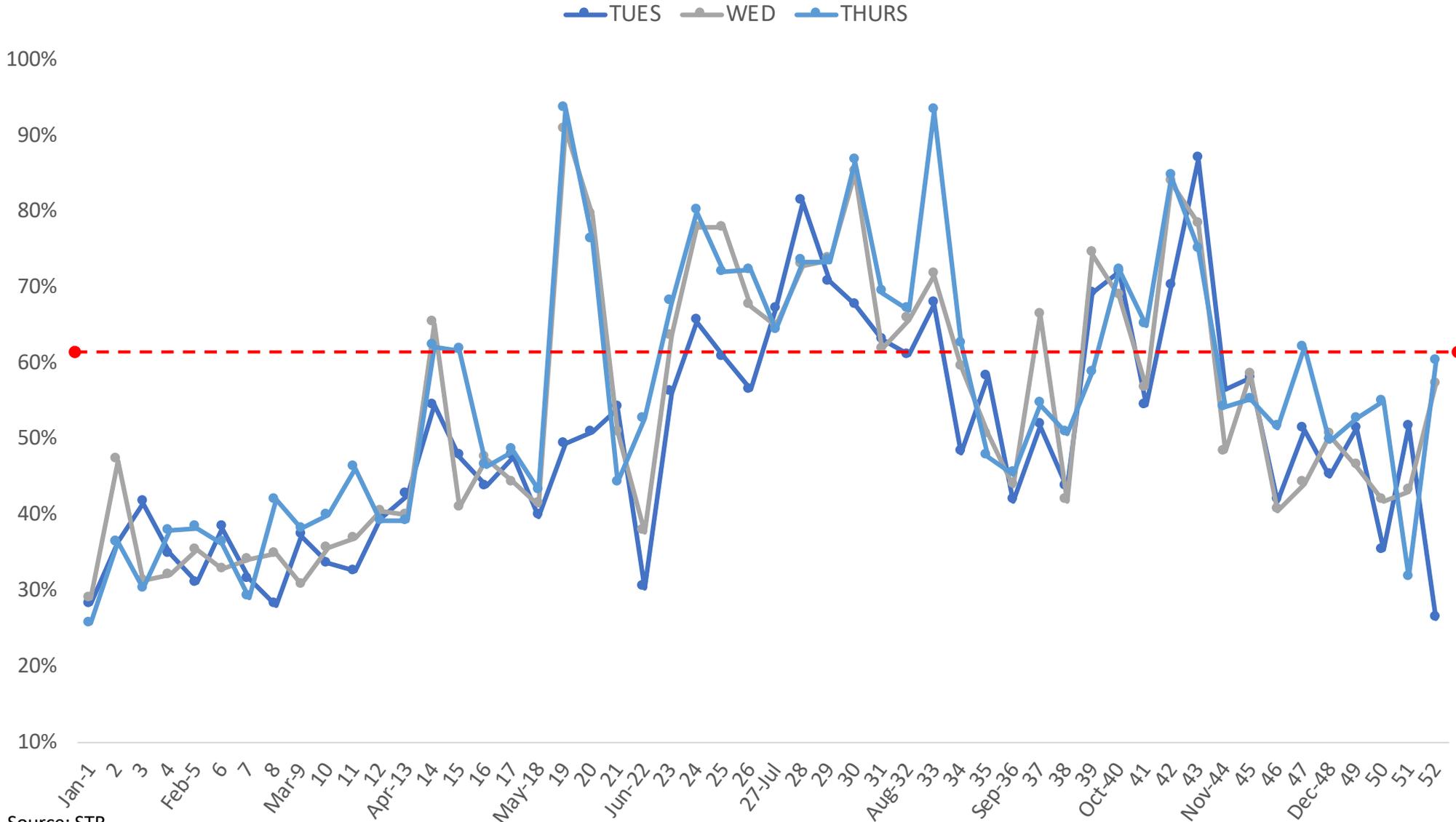
- Data shows weekends (Friday and Saturday) run highest occupancy in the 70% – 71% range over the previous 12-months.
- This data is very reflective of the market segmentation data collected in the YSI survey, whereas room demand was reported by Jackson County hoteliers as follows: leisure transient and university-related, SMERF and casino account for two-thirds (66.6%) of room nights sold primarily on the weekends while business transient, skilled workers and group-conference/meetings and associations account for 27.9% of mid-week occupancy.
- Increasing supply in the market is absorbed in peak demand periods while occupancy drops primarily in the harder to sell nights, Sunday, Monday and Wednesday.
- More rooms must be sold for a healthy lodging industry to thrive and a long-term marketing strategy must be developed to sell more rooms in both the weekdays and off-peak months of travel

Sunday - Monday Occupancy Trend January - December, 2018



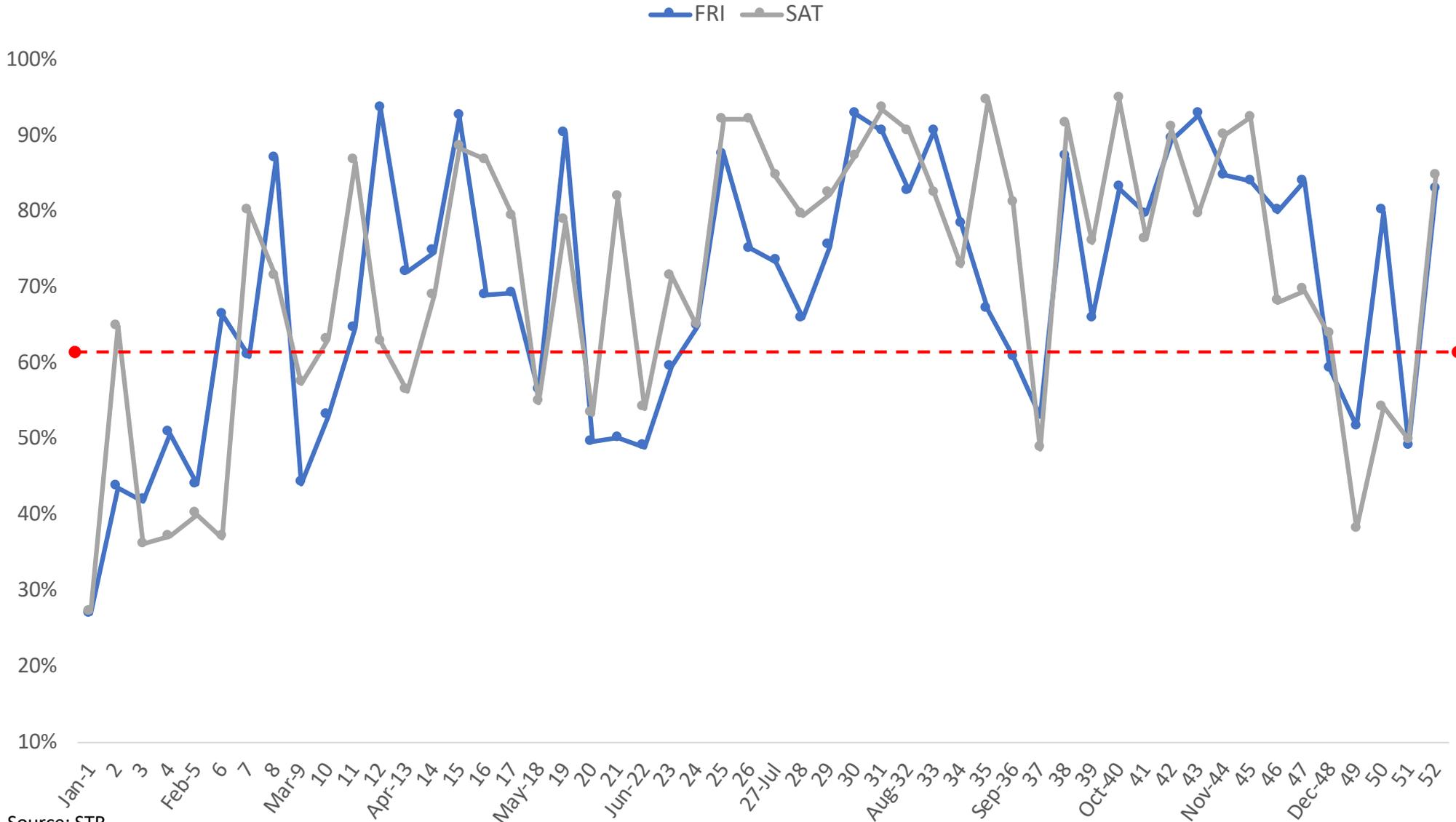
Source: STR

Midweek (Tuesday - Thursday) Occupancy Trend January - December, 2018



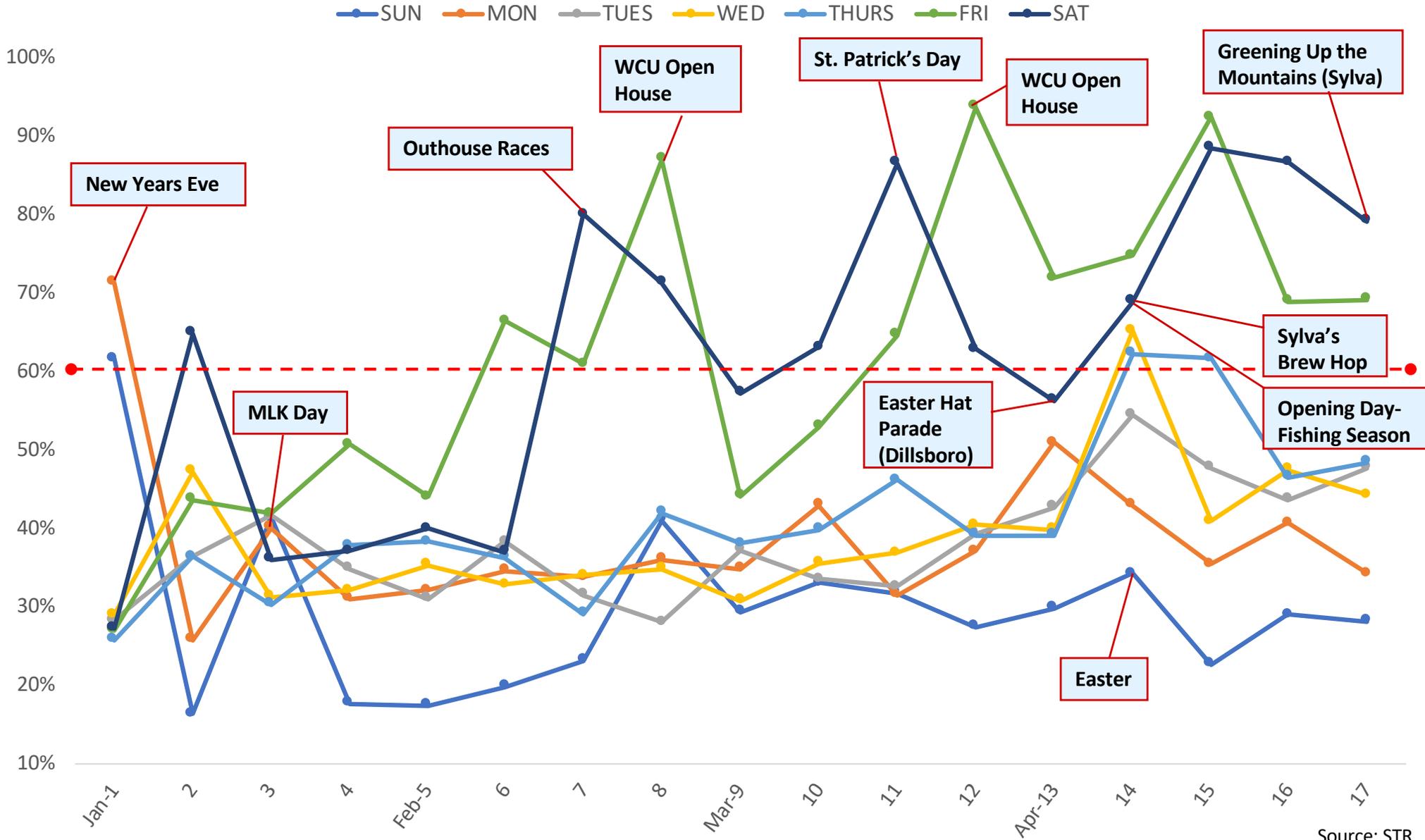
Source: STR

Weekend (Friday - Saturday) Occupancy Trend January - December 2018

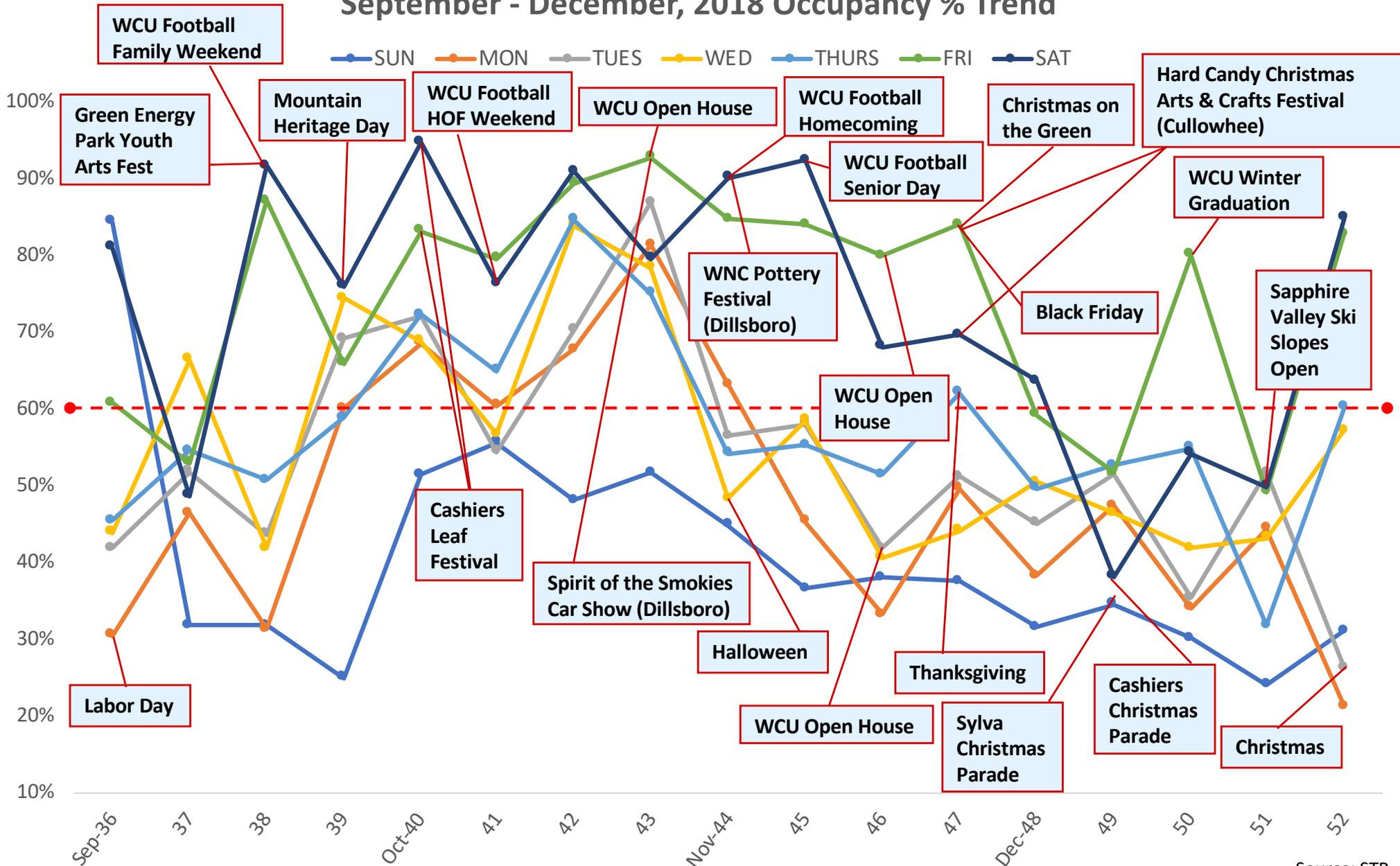


Source: STR

January - April, 2018 Occupancy % Trend



September - December, 2018 Occupancy % Trend



Jackson County Market Segmentation – YSI Hotel Survey

The YSI survey of Jackson County hoteliers revealed the market segments that are driving overnight visitation within the destination. Corporate and group business are tracked closely by rate codes, while leisure segment data is often collected by the management team at the individual properties. Rank order is shown in table below. **A total of ten properties participated in the YSI survey, thus providing an overall response rate of 83.6%.**

2018	Jackson County, NC Market Segmentation
46.2%	Group / Conference / Meeting
18.4%	University related
12.4%	SMERF
4.2%	Casino / Cherokee related events
3.6%	Team Sports / events – (rodeos, tournaments, etc.)
3.2%	Conferences / Meetings
2.5%	Association
1.9%	Group Tour / Motorcoach
31.6%	Leisure Transient
22.2%	Business Transient
15.3%	Skilled workers – (commercial, construction, laborers, etc.)
6.9%	Individual business travelers – (white collar)



Source: YSI survey of Jackson County lodging properties

Observations:

- This data confirms Jackson County is heavily reliant on the leisure related group segments (university-related, SMERF and casino/Cherokee and leisure transient (31.6%) adding up to 66% of total occupancy.
- Business transient is second highest transient segment driving 22% of room nights in Jackson County with skilled workers (15.3%) and individual business travelers (6.9%). Business transient is typically in the range of 30% -45%.
- STR data supported these findings with Friday and Saturday nights running highest occupancy in Jackson County lodging over the previous 12 months.

Jackson County

Visitor Profile Research



Methodology

An online survey instrument was prepared by the Young Strategies research team and approved by Jackson County TDA staff.

Recipients were invited to take a visitor survey and be entered into a chance to win one of two \$250 VISA gift cards.

The survey was deployed through web-links, email invitations and Facebook invitations provided to 24 Jackson County TDA industry partners. The following partners deployed a unique link to the survey and generated the number of survey responses as indicated following their names: JCTDA – 1027; JCTDA Facebook – 722; High Hampton – 569; Laurelwood Inn – 509; Smoky Mountain Getaway – 265; Sapphire Valley Resort – 158; Jackson County Library Sylva – 136; Sylva Newspaper – 106; Cashiers Area Chamber – 75; Cashiers Albert Carlton Library – 41; Bear Lake Reserve – 38; Smoky Mountain News-Newspaper – 35; Cashiers Newspaper – 33; JC Parks and Rec Cull – 21; The Village Green – 11; Jackson County Chamber – 8; Canyon Kitchen – 7; Blue Green Resorts – 6; Dillsboro Chocolate Factory – 6; WRGC Radio – 4; Plateau Daily News – 2; JC Parks and Rec Cashiers – 2; Innovation Brewing – 1; Cashiers Village Inn – 1.

A total of 3,783 surveys were received. Of these,

- **2,358 were visitors of Jackson County in the last 3 years**
- **505 were Jackson County residents**
- **483 had not visited Jackson County in the last 3 years**
- **267 were part-time residents of Jackson County**
- **161 were visitors from a neighboring county**
- **9 were residents of Cherokee**



Overall Survey Respondent Demographics

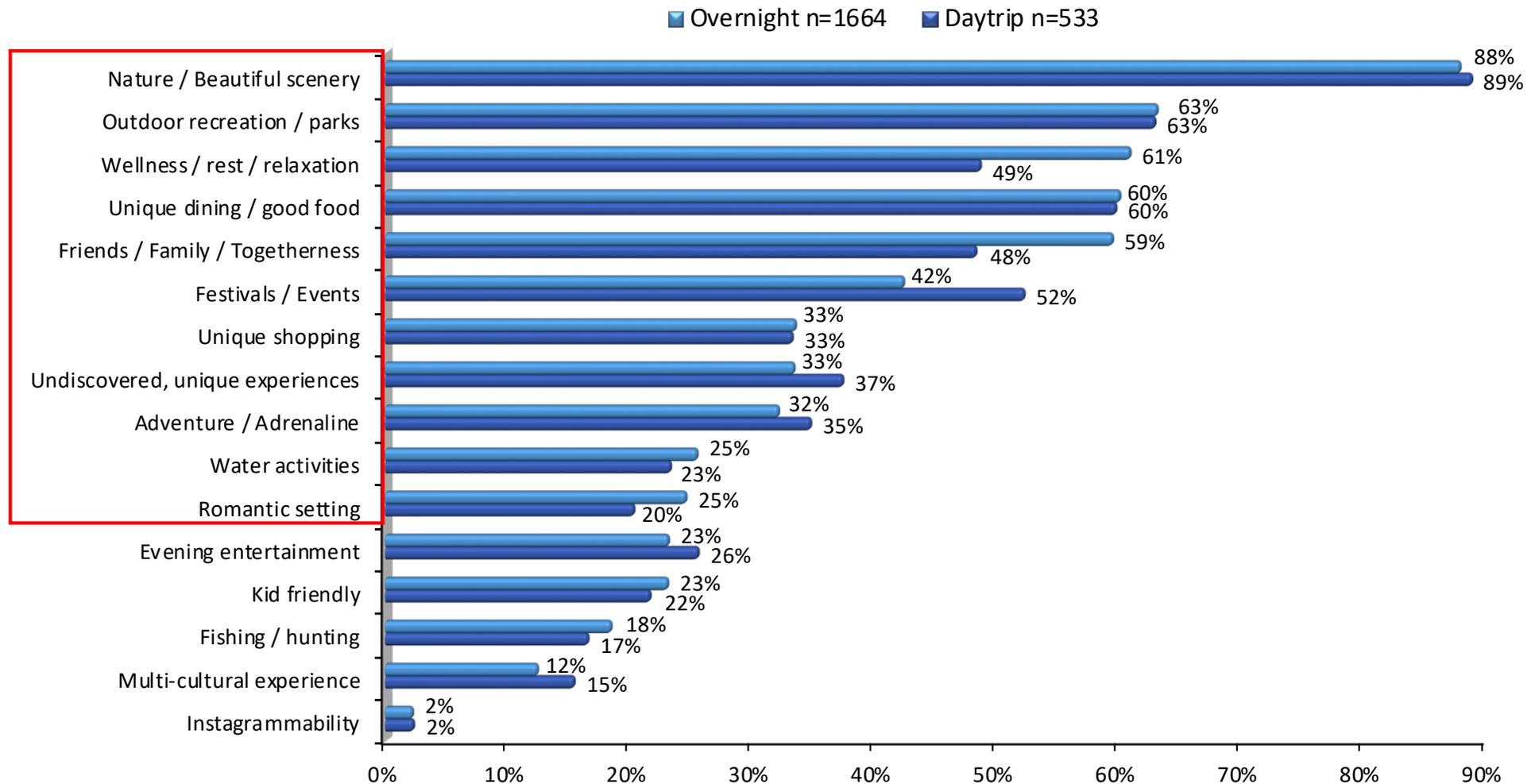
Respondent Demographics	Overnight n=1,369	Daytrip n=468
<p>Generational Group Average Age:</p> <p>Overnight – 58 years old Daytrip – 57.6 years old</p>	<p>Teens – 0.1% Twenties – 2.4% Thirties – 8.0% Forties – 14.5% Fifties – 26.2%</p> <p>Sixties – 29.8% Seventies – 16.4% Eighties – 2.4% Nineties – 0.1%</p>	<p>Teens – 0.0% Twenties – 2.4% Thirties – 7.3% Forties – 13.5%</p> <p>Fifties – 28.1% Sixties – 32.4% Seventies – 13.9% Eighties – 2.4%</p>
<p>Gender</p> <p>Female Male Prefer not to answer Other</p>	<p>57.6% 40.3% 1.6% 0.4%</p>	<p>57.5% 40.8% 1.3% 0.4%</p>
<p>Occupation</p>	<p>Retired – 20.8% Healthcare industry – 11.4% Education – 10.8% Professional/technical – 8.3%</p>	<p>Retired – 25.2% Education – 10.2% Healthcare Industry – 8.7% Self-employed – 7.4%</p>
<p>Level of Education</p> <p>College Degree Graduate School Some College</p>	<p>41.4% 28.4% 19.6%</p>	<p>39.9% 20.0% 25.9%</p>
<p>Ethnicity</p> <p>White/Caucasian Prefer not to answer American Indian or Alaskan Native Hispanic or Latino Black or African American Asian or Pacific Islander</p>	<p>92.9% 4.3% 1.8% 1.3% 1.0% 0.3%</p>	<p>92.5% 5.2% 2.2% 1.3% 1.1% 0.4%</p>

Important Attributes of a Destination

Please tell us which of the following are important when selecting a getaway / vacation destination.

Observations:

- Both daytrip and overnight visitors report natural/beautiful scenery followed by outdoor recreation/parks as the most important attributes when selecting a getaway / vacation destination. This data is positive news for Jackson County as they are a scenic destination filled with a multitude of outdoor recreational activities and parks.



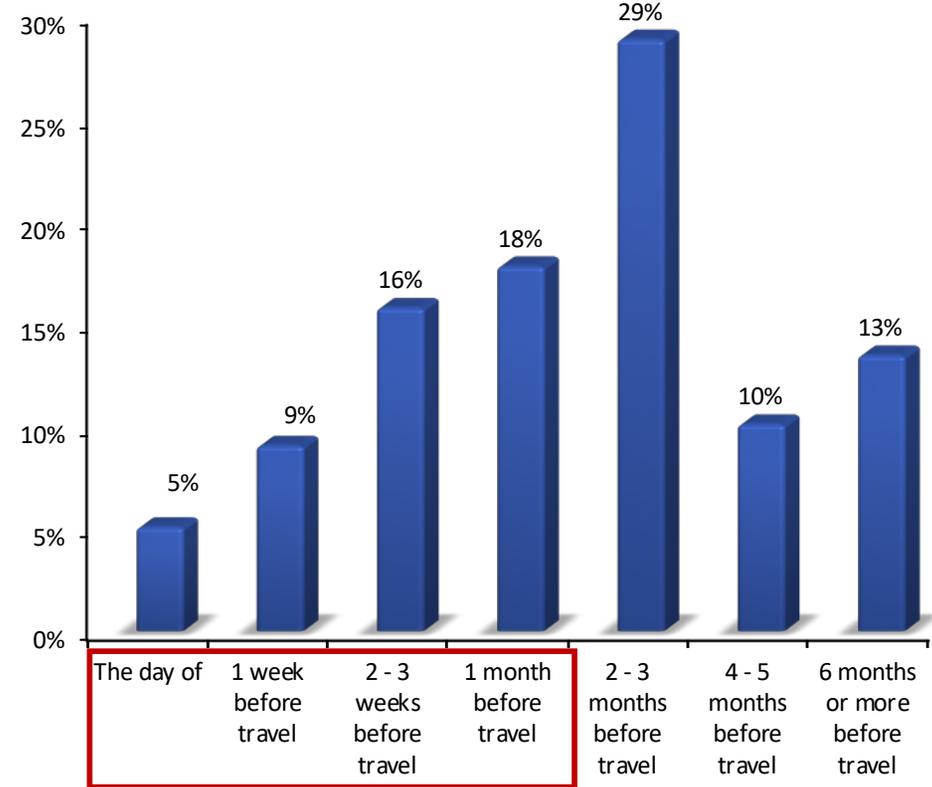
Overnight - Travel Planning Characteristics

How far in advance did you book your accommodations for your most recent visit to Jackson County??

Overnight n=1,637

Observations:

- Nearly half of overnight respondents (48%) indicate they are booking their accommodations within a month of travel, which is a typical trend in many markets across the country. This data indicates Jackson County TDA needs to respond swiftly to visitor information inquiries since potential visitors are highly likely to book quickly.
- The highest response by a single category was 2-3 months before travel at 29%.

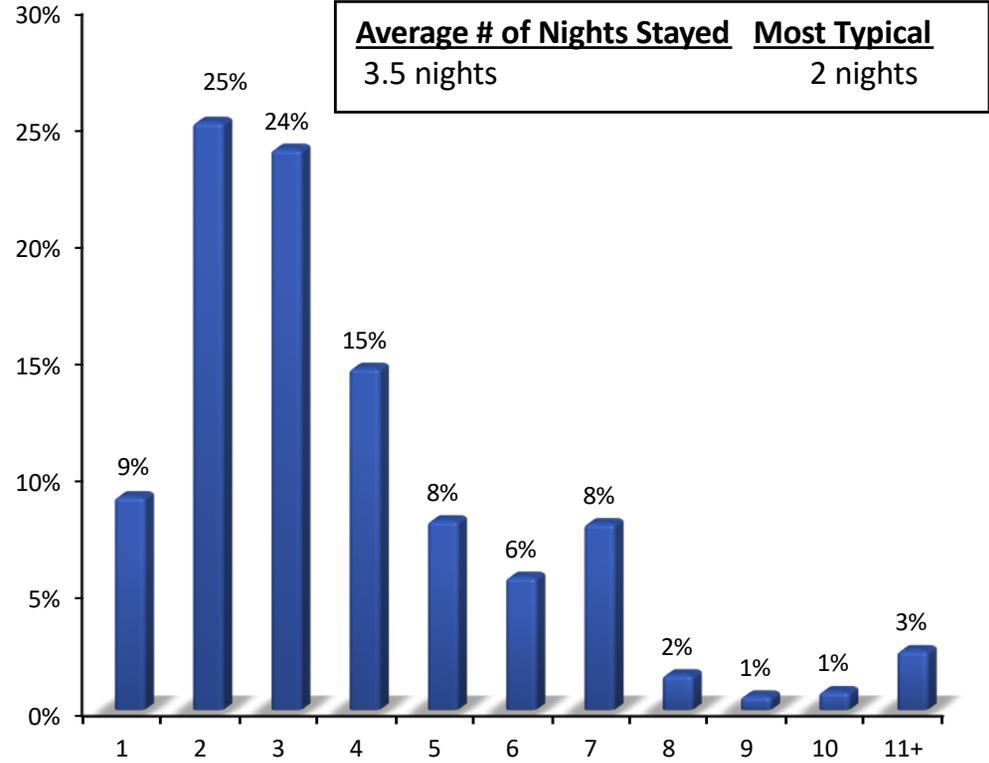


How many nights did you stay in Jackson County on your most recent visit?

Overnight n=1,656

Observations:

- Travelers to Jackson County are typically staying 1-3 nights which is positive data as too many one night stays indicates the need for more activities.
- The number of two (25%) and three (24%) night stays for overnight visitors suggests enough activities to keep travelers occupied and interested in the destination.



Overnight Visitor Activities While in Jackson County

Check all activities you or a member of your travel party participated in as part of your visit Jackson County. n=1,466

Observations:

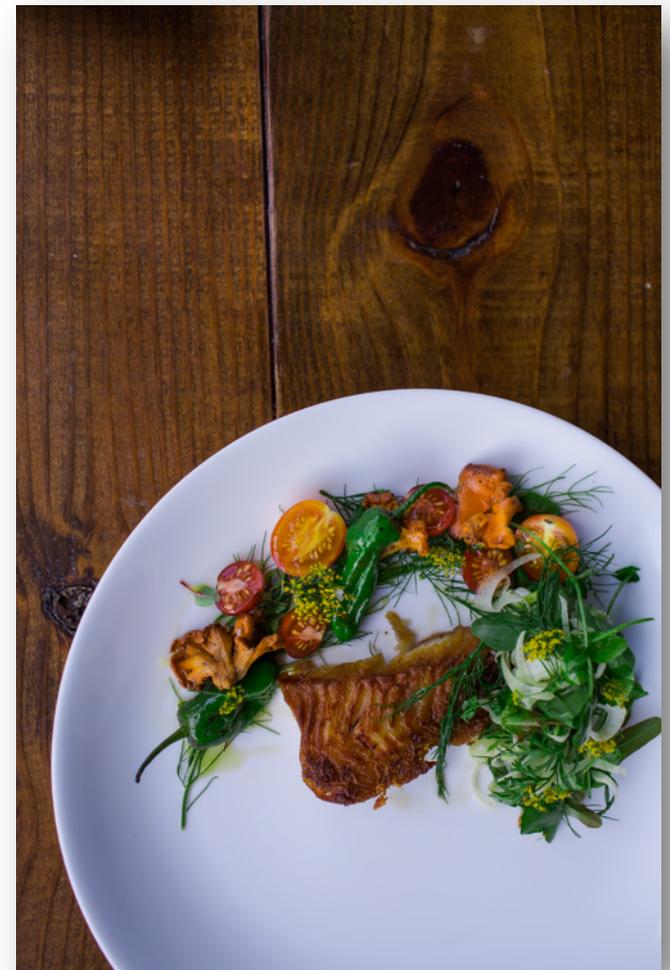
- Overnight visitors come to Jackson County to immerse themselves in the local experience by partaking in local, unique dining, driving/sightseeing, shopping, waterfalls and hiking.

Top 5 Activities by OVERNIGHT Visitors

1. Dining - unique, local (non-chain) - 68.4%
2. Driving / sightseeing - 64.9%
3. Shopping - 53.6%
4. Waterfalls - 48.8%
5. Hiking - 48.2%

Other activities participated in by overnight visitors:

Activities	%	Activities	%
Sleep late / take a nap	33.4%	Other	7.3%
Antique shopping	29.7%	Fishing - Lake fishing	6.9%
Craft Breweries	23.4%	Spa / Wellness	6.8%
Water recreation	18.6%	Solar Eclipse 2017	5.2%
Dining- fine / luxury	17.3%	Did nothing	5.1%
Visit other friends & relatives	16.9%	Bike Trails	4.0%
Festival / event	15.4%	Wedding	3.7%
Golfing	13.9%	Reunion	3.1%
Museum visit	11.6%	Sports event / tournament	2.5%
Gaming / casino	10.4%	Film location sightseeing (Three Billboards)	2.1%
Fishing - Fly fishing	8.5%	Business / meeting / conference / training	2.1%
Concert / live performance	8.3%	Group Tour	1.0%
Family reunion	7.6%	Hunting	0.5%
Camping	7.4%		



Daytrip Visitor Activities While in Jackson County

Check all activities you or a member of your travel party participated in as part of your visit to Jackson County. n=502

Observations:

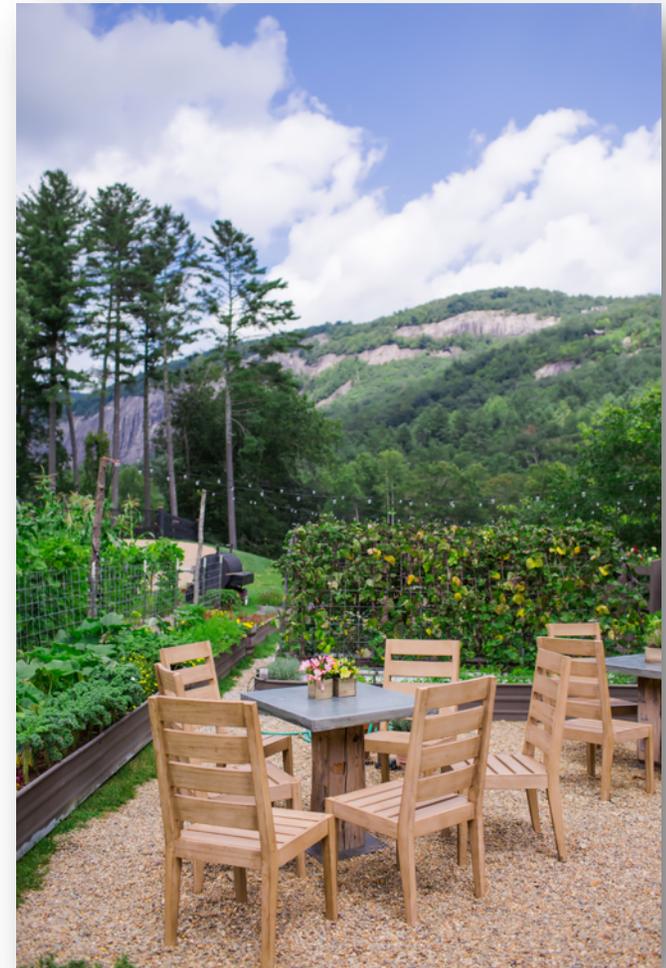
- Like overnight visitors, daytrippers come to Jackson County to immerse themselves in the local experience by enjoying local, unique dining, driving/sightseeing, shopping, waterfalls and hiking which should be at the core of future marketing messages.
- It is important to mention that while shopping is the second most popular activity reported by visitors, it does not necessarily translate to high spending on shopping. Many people shop for something to do, without making a purchase.

Top 5 Activities by DAYTRIP Visitors

1. Dining - unique, local (non-chain) - 58.4%
2. Driving / sightseeing - 58.4%
3. Shopping - 44.2%
4. Waterfalls - 39.6%
5. Hiking - 32.3%

Other activities participated in by daytrip visitors

Activities	%	Activities	%
Antique shopping	26.9%	Family reunion	4.0%
Craft Breweries	24.9%	Sleep late / take a nap	3.8%
Festival / event	19.7%	Fishing - Lake fishing	3.6%
Visit other friends & relatives	9.6%	Did nothing	3.4%
Concert / live performance	9.0%	Film location sightseeing (Three Billboards)	3.0%
Water recreation	8.8%	Sports event / tournament	2.8%
Other	7.8%	Golfing	2.6%
Museum visit	7.4%	Business / meeting / conference / training	2.6%
Gaming / casino	7.4%	Group Tour	1.2%
Camping	7.0%	Wedding	1.0%
Fishing - Fly fishing	6.8%	Reunion	1.0%
Dining- fine / luxury	6.4%	Spa / Wellness	0.8%
Solar Eclipse 2017	5.6%	Hunting	0.6%
Bike Trails	5.4%		



Visited While in Jackson County

Please check ALL attractions that you visited while in Jackson County.

	Overnight n=1,374	Daytrip n=489
Blue Ridge Parkway	56.3%	64.8%
Great Smoky Mountain National Park	47.0%	62.4%
Biltmore	28.0%	35.2%
State Parks (Gorges State Park)	23.7%	25.4%
Nantahala Outdoor Center	22.9%	31.1%
Great Smoky Mountains Railroad	17.8%	23.7%
Harrah's Cherokee Casino	16.3%	23.9%
DID NOT VISIT ANY ATTRACTIONS	14.9%	8.2%
Museum of the Cherokee Indian	13.7%	19.8%
Gem mining and activities	11.2%	9.4%
Oconaluftee Indian Village	10.3%	17.0%
USFS Land (Whiteside Mountain, Panthertown Valley, etc.)	10.3%	14.1%
Sapphire Valley Ski Resort	9.8%	7.8%
Jackson County Ale Trail (breweries)	7.1%	9.6%
Unto These Hills - outdoor drama	5.9%	12.3%
Brevard Music Center	5.1%	6.1%
Barbers Orchard	4.7%	11.7%
NC Arboretum	4.6%	9.8%
Judaculla Rock	4.5%	8.6%
Shadow of the Bear	4.0%	8.4%
Pinnacle Park	2.0%	2.7%
Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts	2.0%	5.3%
John C. Campbell Folk School	2.0%	5.1%
Tsali, Fire Mountain, & Dupont Cycling	1.9%	4.3%
American Museum of the House Cat	1.7%	1.6%
Fire Mountain Bike Trails	1.3%	2.9%
Military History Museum	0.7%	2.3%

Following is a list of major events in or near Jackson County.

	Overnight n=1122	Daytrip n=409
DID NOT ATTEND AN EVENT	76.0%	62.1%
Cashiers Leaf Festival	5.8%	10.5%
July 4 Celebration, Cashiers & Sylva	5.8%	6.4%
Groovin' on the Green, Cashiers	4.6%	7.1%
Concerts on the Creek, Bridge Park, Sylva	3.8%	6.6%
Lights and Luminaries, Dillsboro	3.8%	11.3%
WNC Pottery Festival, Dillsboro	3.6%	5.6%
Mountain Heritage Day, Cullowhee	3.3%	10.5%
Cashiers Designer Showhouse	2.9%	2.0%
Summertime Arts and Craft Show, Dillsboro	2.9%	4.7%
Sylva's Brew Hop	2.8%	4.2%
July 4 Celebration, Lake Glenville	2.1%	0.5%
Greening Up the Mountains, Sylva	2.0%	5.9%
Cashiers Plein Air Festival	1.7%	2.9%
Village Green Joy Garden Tour	1.3%	0.5%
Tour de Cashiers	1.3%	2.0%
Pots on the Green, Cashiers	1.1%	1.5%
The Great Balsam Bike Relay	0.1%	0.5%

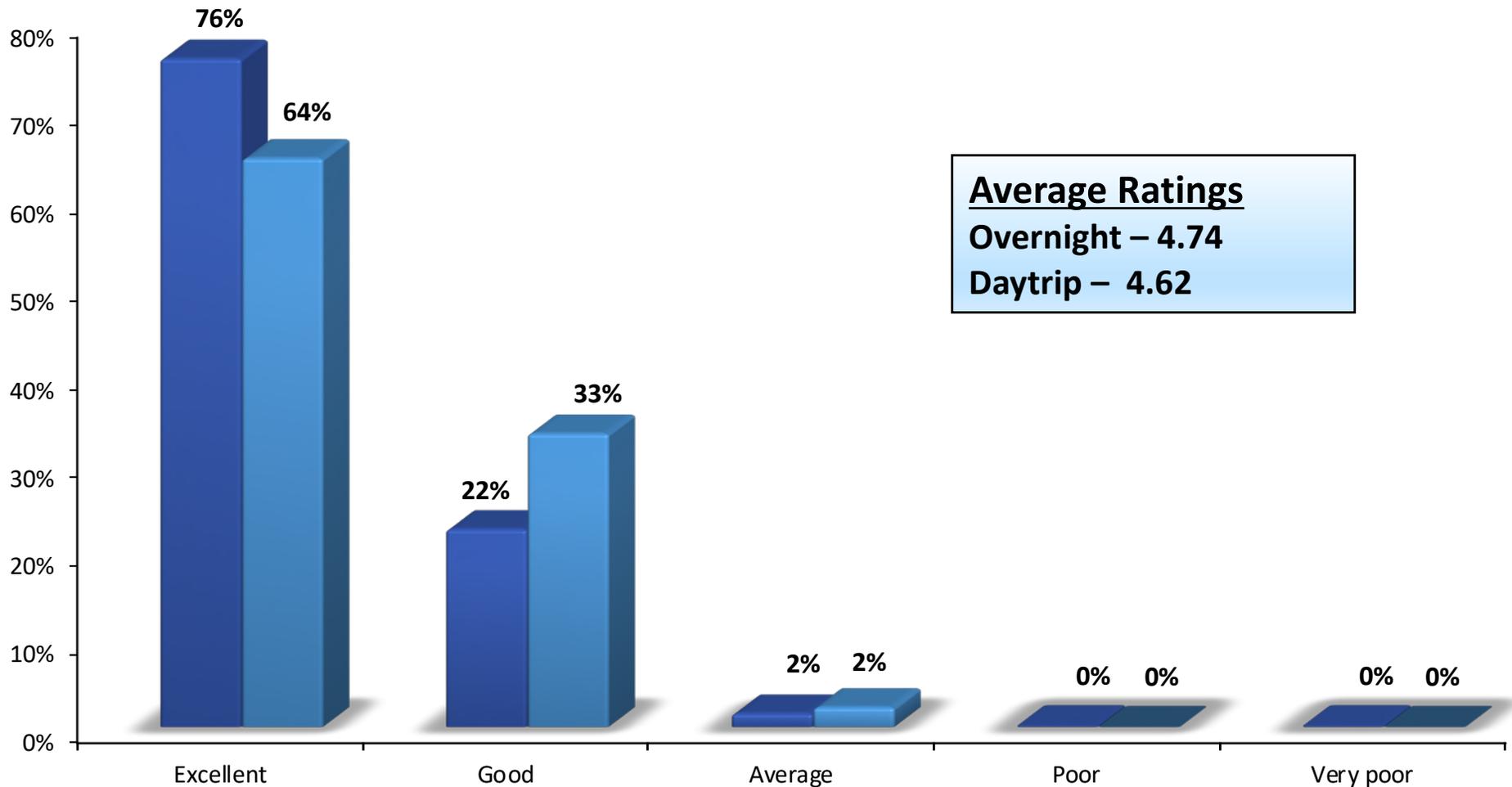
*Top five attractions and major events from each segment are bolded and highlighted in blue.

Visitor Satisfaction

Overall, how would you rate your experience visiting Jackson County using the satisfaction scale provided below?

Observations:

- Overall trip satisfaction for visitors to Jackson County is high; Overnight (4.74) and Daytrip (4.62) on a 5.0 scale.



Travel PARTY Spending (Total Trip)

Observations:

- Overall spending per travel party: overnight = \$1,082.27; daytrip = \$201.60
- Jackson County makes more than 5 times as much money per party on overnight visitors compared to daytrip visitors. Therefore, the prime focus of marketing efforts for Jackson County should be their overnight segment.
- Promotion of the destination to overnight visitors will result in a healthy number of day trippers as a natural by-product.

Spending Category	Overnight n=1,669	Daytrip n=533
Average total # in Travel Party	3.5	2.9
Average Length of Stay	3.5 nights	0 nights
Lodging (% of reporting)	\$586.04 (67.3%)	\$0.00 (0.0%)
Dining / Food (% of reporting)	\$312.98 (73.5%)	\$72.82 (79.2%)
Shopping (% of reporting)	\$225.89 (57.4%)	\$98.11 (53.1%)
Attractions and Events (% of reporting)	\$201.73 (38.9%)	\$87.73 (27.6%)
Local Transportation (% of reporting)	\$86.31 (34.3%)	\$47.13 (29.6%)
Casino / Gaming (% of reporting)	\$314.70 (9.2%)	\$153.64 (6.2%)
Average Total Spending Per Travel Party (% of reporting)	\$1,082.27* (83.9%)	\$201.60* (82.7%)

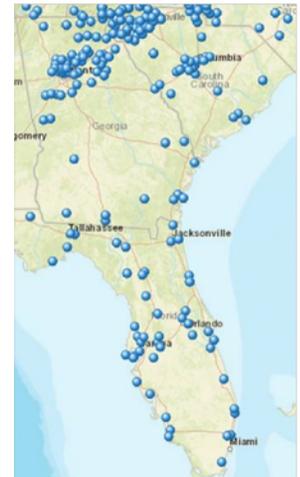
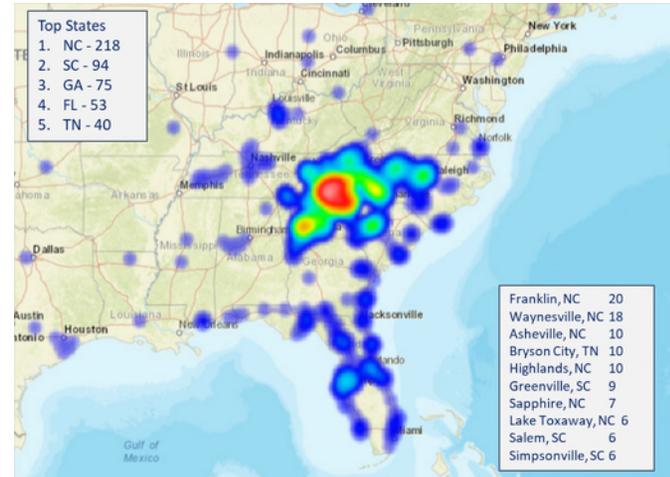
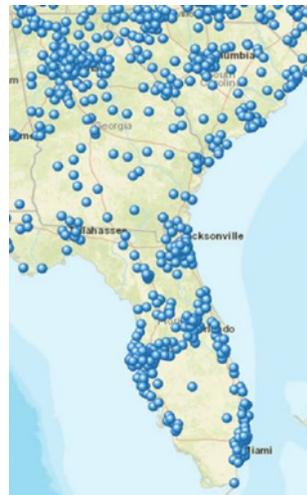
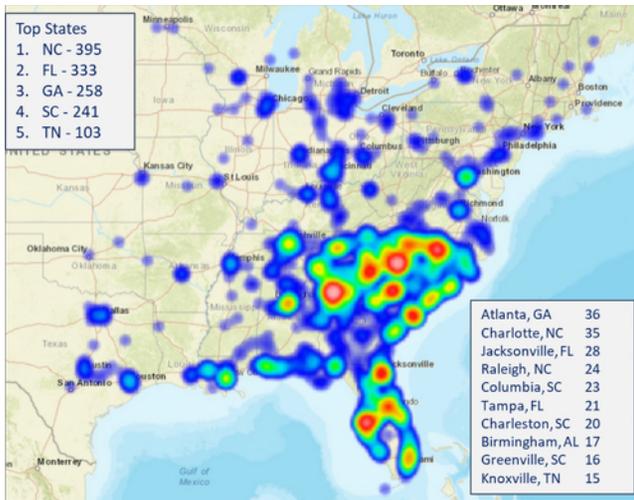
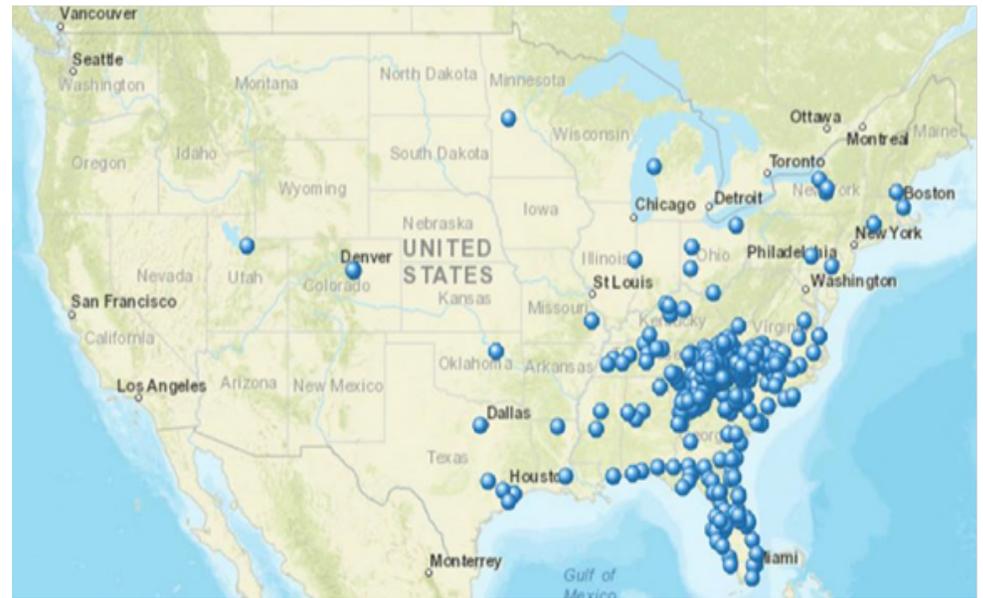
*Note: The spending categories will not add up to the average spending reported in the table on this page. The categories in the table are averaged individually. Whereas the overall total is a weighted average that takes into account the fact many travel parties did not report spending in all of the categories.

Point of Origin

Visitors Point of Origin – OVERNIGHT



Visitors Point of Origin – DAYTRIP



Jackson County

Part-time Resident Survey Respondents

Summary & Observations:

- **267 respondents identified as Jackson County part-time residents** in the survey.
- **The highest response of part-time residents reported staying in Jackson County 4-6 months (29%) and weekends throughout the year (21%).**
- **Two-thirds of respondents reported coming to Jackson County between 1 to 15 years; the largest category being 1-5 years (33%).**
- **Part-time residents** reported staying in Jackson County typically between **June and October**
- **92% of part-time respondents reported owning a house or condo**
- **Cashiers and Sapphire** were reported as the **top 2 cities/communities** that respondents **own property or typically rent.**
- **Top 5 Activities: Unique local dining, waterfalls, driving/site-seeing, hiking and shopping.**
- **Top 5 Attractions: Blue Ridge Parkway, Biltmore, Great Smoky Mountain National Park, State Parks, USFS Land.**
- **Overall trip satisfaction** for part-time residents of Jackson County **rated highly at 4.76 on a 5.0 scale. 99% said they would recommend Jackson County to others as well as consider a future visit.**
- **Highest rated amenities** were variety of **outdoor experiences, lodging value and unique, local dining.**
- **Cultural events, themed experience and outdoor ice skating in winter months** rated as the **most appealing activities/experiences** to be offered in Jackson County.



Jackson County

Resident Survey Respondents

Summary & Observations:

- **505 respondents identified as Jackson County residents** in the survey.
- **Resident survey respondents have lived in Jackson County for a wide range of years; the highest responses being 1-5 years (24%) and 11-20 years (22%) followed by 31+ years (19%).**
- **Resident respondents reported Jackson County as an active outdoors destination, a great place for families, and a weekend getaway destination.**
- Residents rated their satisfaction with **outdoor recreational activities, unique local dining and local events / festivals as the highest rated** Jackson County experiences. **Evening entertainment and unique shopping** are recognized as having the **lowest appeal** among residents.
- **Beautiful, friendly, mountains, peaceful and quaint** are the words used most often by resident respondents to describe Jackson County.
- **Cultural events, themed experiences and a waterpark along the Tuckasegee River** rated as the **most appealing activities/experiences** to be offered in Jackson County.



DESTINATION NEXT

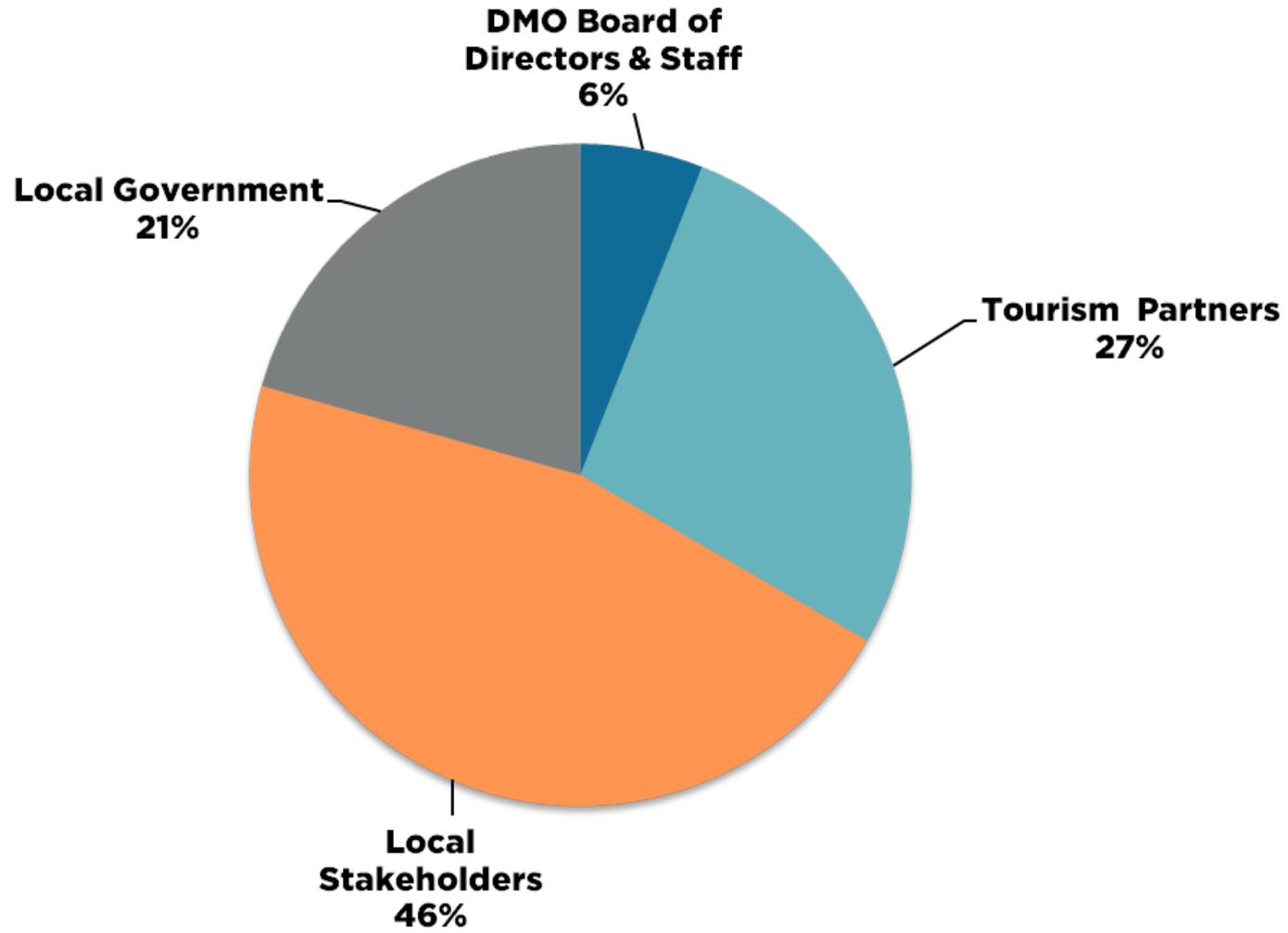
Multi-User Online Diagnostic
Tool Results:

Jackson County, NC

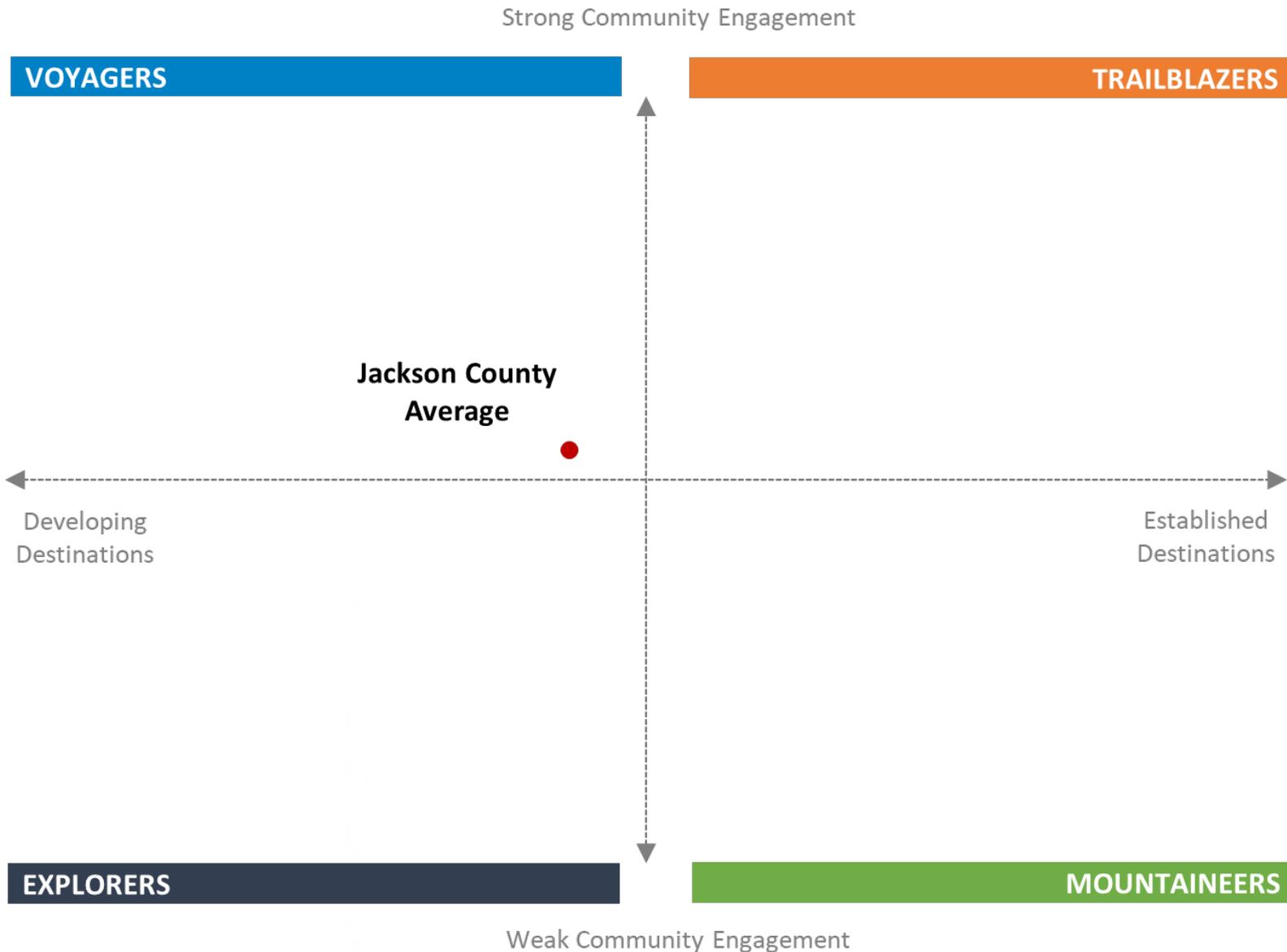
March 04, 2019



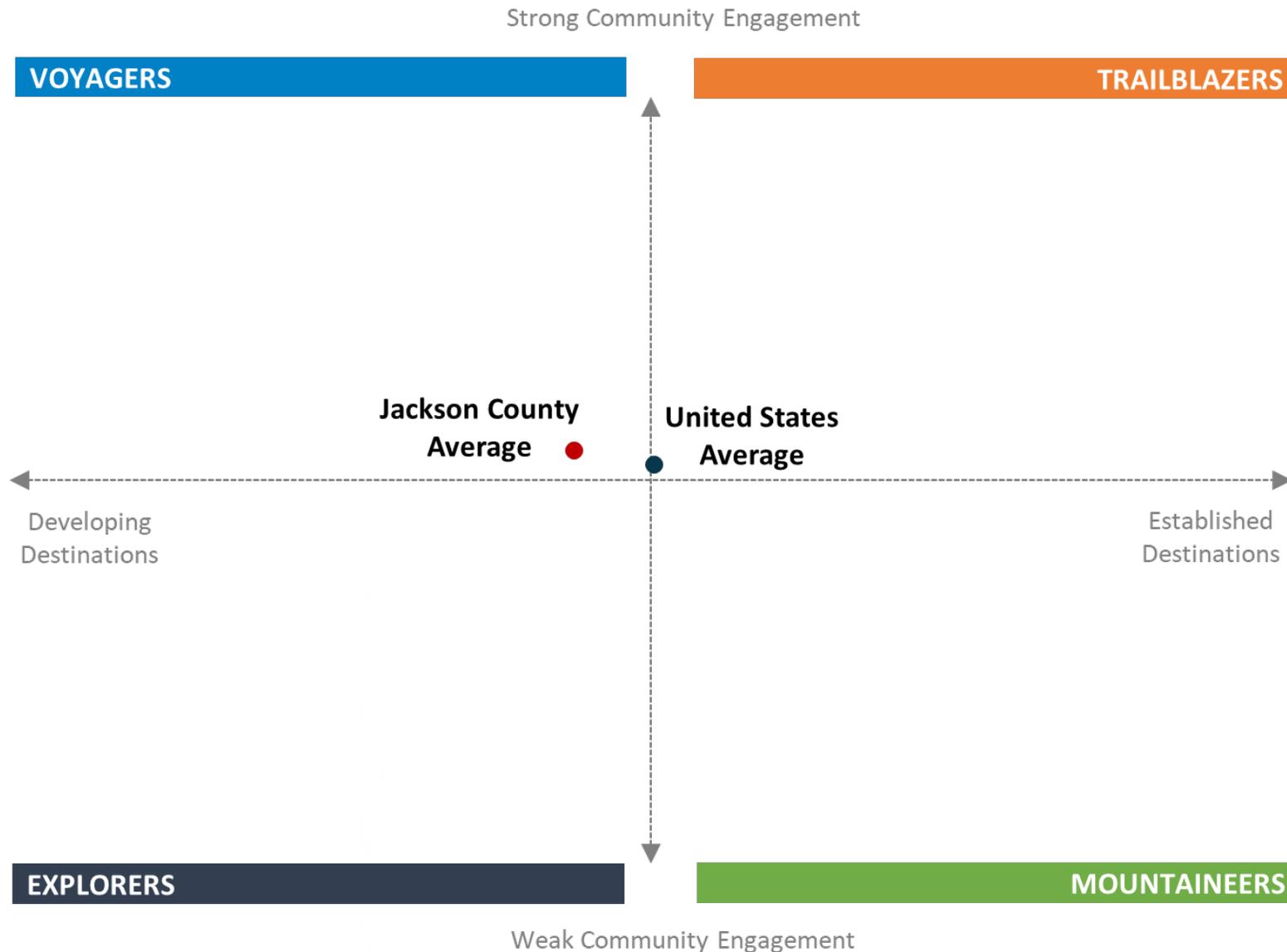
150 Participants



Jackson County, NC Overall Assessment – Industry



Jackson County, NC Overall Assessment - United States



Voyagers

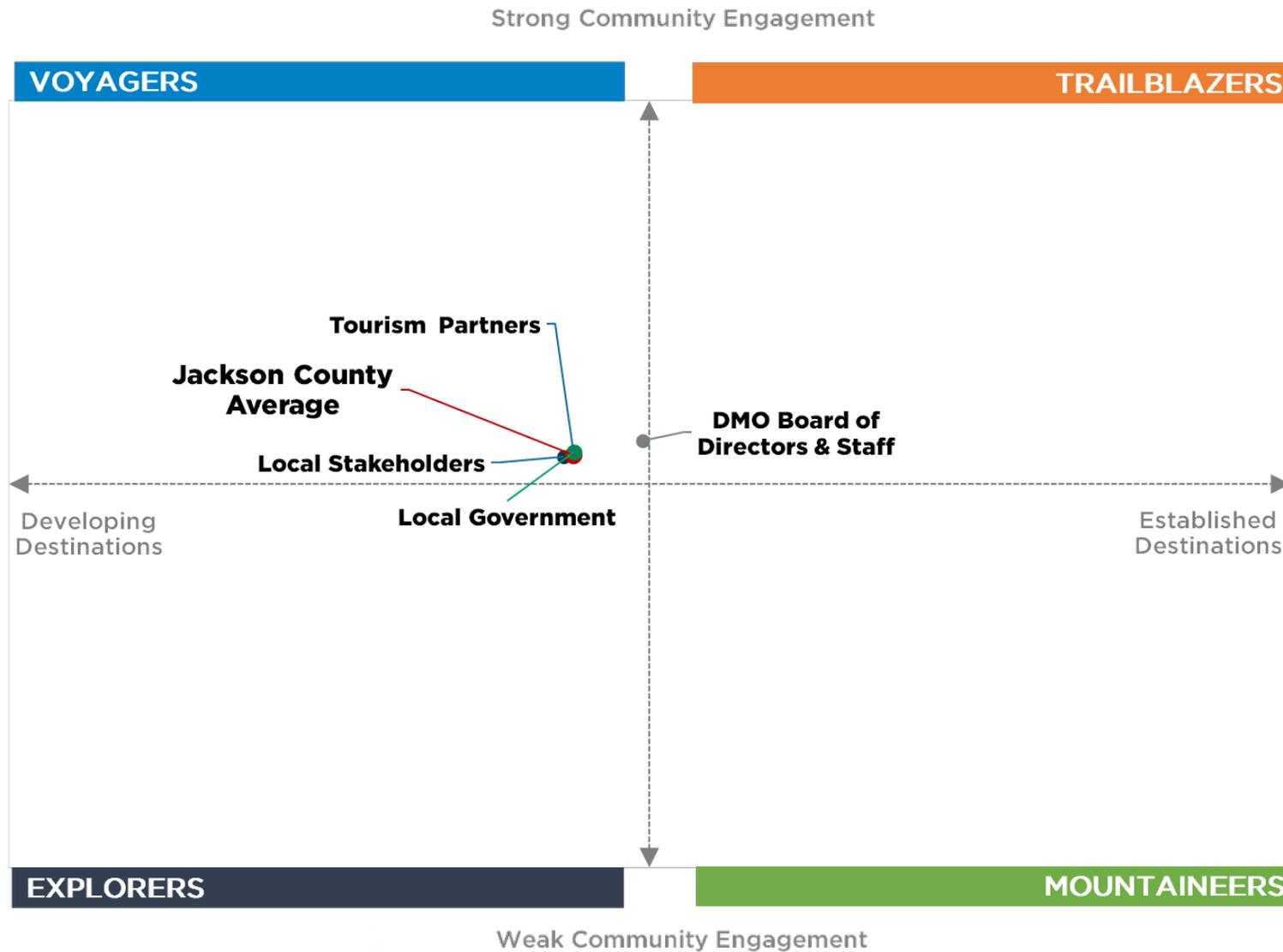
These DMO's and destinations have a tourism vision and a community mandate to get it done.

Key Strategic Challenges

- **Maintaining momentum over time required to implement strategy**
- **Making prioritized choices for focused action; avoiding the temptation to be all things to all people**
- **Establishing destination marketplace credibility; delivering on brand promises for target market segments**



Jackson County, NC Overall Assessment - Stakeholder Group



Destination Strength Variables



Destination Performance



Brand



Accommodation



Attractions and Entertainment



Conventions & Meeting Facilities



Air Access



Events



Sporting and Recreation Facilities



Communication & Internet Infrastructure



Mobility and Access

Destination Strength Rankings – Jackson County, NC



	Relative Importance	Perceived Performance
 <p>Accommodation</p>	1 st	6 th
 <p>Destination Performance</p>	2 nd	5 th
 <p>Attractions & Entertainment</p>	3 rd	1 st
 <p>Communication & Internet Infrastructure</p>	4 th	10 th

Community Support & Engagement Variables



**Effective DMO
Governance Model**



**Membership Strength
& Support**



Industry Support



**Local Community
Support**



**Policy and
Regulatory Environment**



Workforce



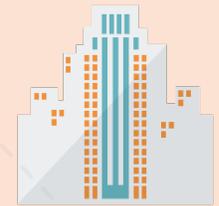
Hospitality Culture



Regional Cooperation



**Funding Support &
Certainty**



Economic Development

Community Support & Engagement – Jackson County, NC



	Relative Importance	Perceived Performance
 <p>Workforce</p>	1 st	10 th
 <p>Hospitality Culture</p>	2 nd	7 th
 <p>Funding Support & Certainty</p>	3 rd	9 th
 <p>Partnership Strength & Support</p>	4 th	1 st

In your opinion, what one thing could Jackson County do to become a better destination?

Mobility and Accessibility (25%)

- Improve roadways and cut down on blight in major transportation corridors
- Improve public transportation- especially at night. Uber or Lyft needed
- Wayfinding Signage in Cashiers - Road analysis of Crossroads in Cashiers
- I think an improvement to our road system both in the northern and southern parts of our county is needed to provide safer travel and to better connect these two parts of the county
- Offer better public transportation options, such as Uber, trolley routes, etc.
- Improving road congestion
- Better transportation

Dining/ Restaurant Options (15%)

- More dining and shopping options
- More diverse restaurant options, better shopping options
- More restaurants (pancake place).
- More Restaurants
- Reduce or eliminate TWSA impact fees for restaurants . Attract more restaurants
- Improved dining options
- Better restaurants. More mid to upper level restaurants as opposed to fast food options
- Add good restaurants
- More breakfast options/restaurants
- Recruit and establish more high end restaurants

Internet & Communication (15%)

- Expanded Wi-Fi, and development of a County maintained river park at the old dam site in Dillsboro
- Robust, widespread broadband coverage
- Internet access and quality
- Have fiber broadband County wide
- Better Wi-Fi access and speed
- Rural internet access and telecommunications capacity
- Provide adequate cell & internet service
- Broadband Internet county-wide
- Have more broadband capacity for homes, schools, and businesses
- Most of my clients comment about the sad lack of internet/cell service

Jackson County Tourism Development Authority 2022 Strategic Plan

Prepared for:

- Jackson County TDA



NORTH CAROLINA MOUNTAIN TOWNS OF CASHIERS,
CHEROKEE, DILLSBORO AND SYLVA



Study Conducted: November 2018 – March, 2019

Research Report Submitted: March, 2019

Plan developed: May, 2019

Research Conducted by:

Young Strategies, Inc.

Charlotte, NC

Organization & Board Structure

STRATEGIC VISION AND DIRECTION

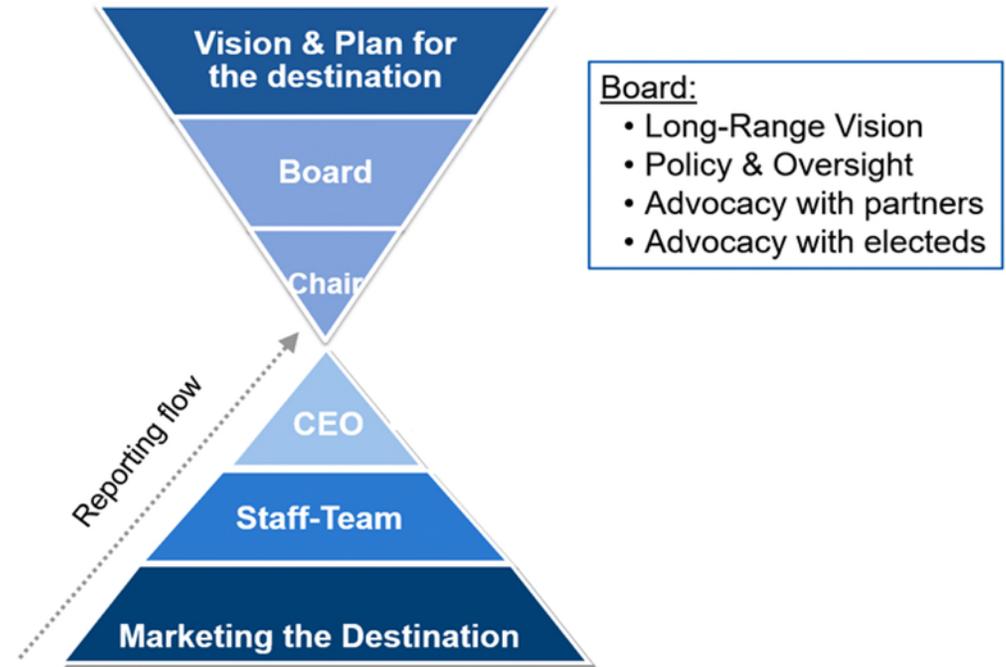
The Jackson County Tourism Development Authority (JCTDA) promotes Jackson County, North Carolina as the premier mountain destination in the North Carolina mountains. The JCTDA operates as a department of Jackson County Government with oversight provided by the Jackson County TDA Board (JCTDA). The JCTDA Board is appointed by and has representation from the Jackson County Commissioners. The Executive Director manages the work of the organization and reports to the Board Chair and the Board of Directors.

Travel promotion is a unique approach to economic development because it has a dedicated funding source from traveler-paid lodging taxes and a measurable return on investment. JCTDA is committed to a program of work guided by smart, research-based strategy.

Vision: To be the premier mountain destination providing an active lifestyle, spectacular natural assets and a friendly community for citizens and visitors alike.

Mission: To promote the growth of year-round tourism opportunities that benefit the Jackson County economy. Our efforts put people to work, grow jobs, build community, and make our towns a vibrant place to live, play and work.

JACKSON COUNTY TDA STRUCTURE



The Jackson County TDA Board will be engaged in two primary functions: **A) Providing proper oversight** related to the ROI of the staff's research-based marketing of the destination; **B) Provide leadership** and encourage elected officials and other economic development groups to fulfill the vision for Jackson County as a destination. The Board is comprised of representatives of travel industry businesses. The Board accomplishes its work through Committees (Executive/Finance, Audit) and Advisory Committees (Marketing, Governance, Destination Experience, etc.).

Strategic Direction

Travel to Jackson County is currently driven by leisure demand for scenic mountain beauty, Cherokee, and major WNC regional attractions. Western Carolina University and group travel are also drivers of visitation. The Jackson County TDA will drive growth in visitation and visitor spending by promoting an active-lifestyle destination and focusing on longer weekend stays, weekdays, shoulder and off-seasons. A combination of leisure and group promotion will drive maximum ROI.

Destination Marketing – Expand and promote the “play-on” brand to an active-Outdoors Mountain Brand

- 1. Maintain and support the highest skilled and most dynamic sales and marketing team.** JCTDA will meet the highest standards of accreditation and performance (research driven ROI) with measurable results as a research-based DMO driven by a team of professionals.
- 2. Promote and expand the active-lifestyle brand based on the market research.** Jackson County requires a brand that sets it apart as unique from other mountain destinations while capturing the active outdoors vacation/getaway experience. The brand will serve as a foundation for all marketing, sales and public relations as well as future destination development.
- 3. Maintain/expand a comprehensive research/ tracking program to guide all decisions**– Track KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) for all programs with ROI reported at all Jackson County TDA Board meetings. Provides annual reports to County Commission.
- 4. All plans, marketing, activities, events must be on-brand** – deliver on the active mountain lifestyle experience.

Destination Management – Enhance the Active Outdoors Lifestyle – a mountain destination unlike any other

- 5. Connect Jackson County visitors with memorable experiences.** Jackson County is large and visitors must be able to find activities to engage in them. Implement county-wide directional signage and way-finding systems. Improved cellular and Wi-Fi service provides visitor with connectivity. Support traffic planning efforts to diminish traffic jams during peak periods.
- 6. Support improved and expanded access to traveler experiences,** with emphasis on year-round outdoor experiences. Expand & improved parking at trail heads and waterfalls. Improved trail quality and safety. Create new trails. Support outfitters to equip visitors for biking, kayaking, canoeing, fishing
- 7. Encourage and support unique mountain dining, shopping and entertainment that set Jackson County apart from other mountain destinations.**