Mon National Forest Area Resident Survey

(Preliminary results)

Morgan Martin

Jinyang Deng

Doug Arbogast

8.10.2022

West Virginia University

Purpose and Structure of this Survey

Purpose

To triangulate data from multiple sources in order to examine:

- How public land can impact local communities
- What role recreation in public land plays in enhancing the quality of life for local residents and attracting visitors to the region

All in efforts to influence regional branding, marketing and asset development for the MFT region.

Structure

- Online survey created within Qualtrics and send out to prospective participants residing within the 8 WV counties that make up the Mon National Forest region.
- Data was analyzed using SPSS 28, and results presented are mostly descriptive in nature

About the survey

Administered via Social Media and Email

Social Media

- Start Date: January 10, 2022
- End date Date: May 26, 2022
- Participants: 543 responses (out of 959 total attempts)

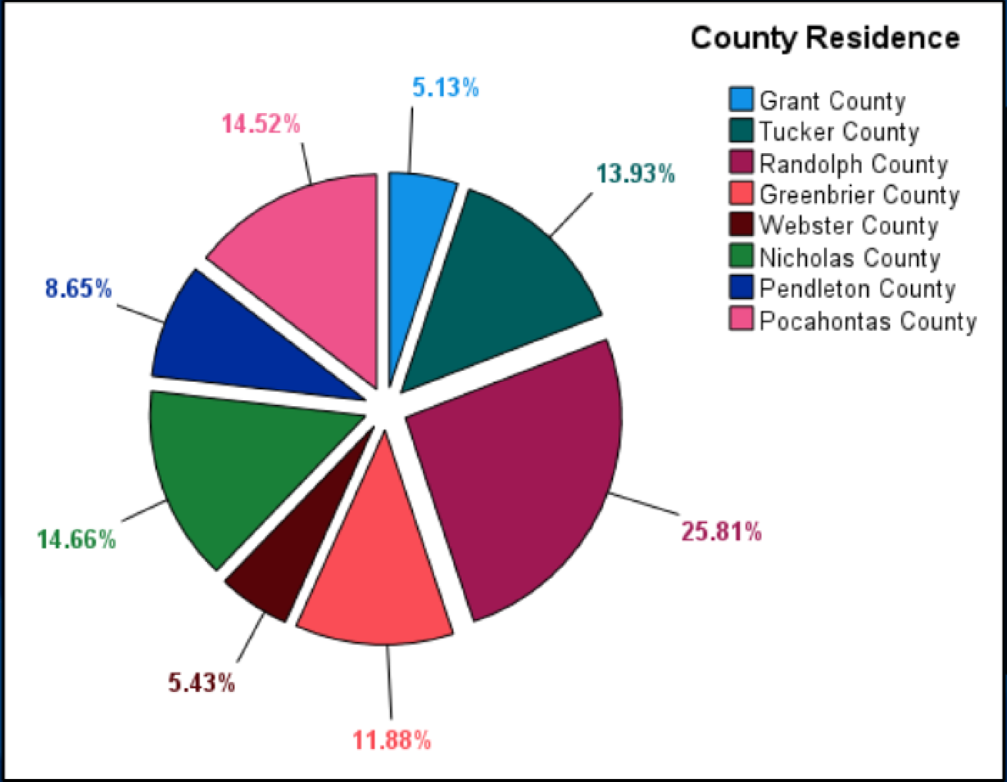
Email

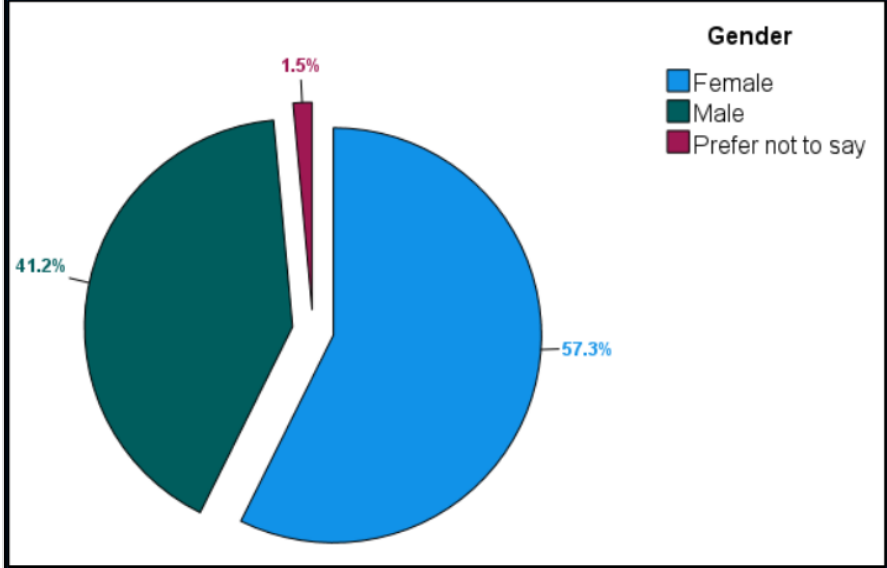
- Start Date: March 9, 2022
- End date Date: May 26, 2022
- Participants: 139 responses (out of 186 total attempts)

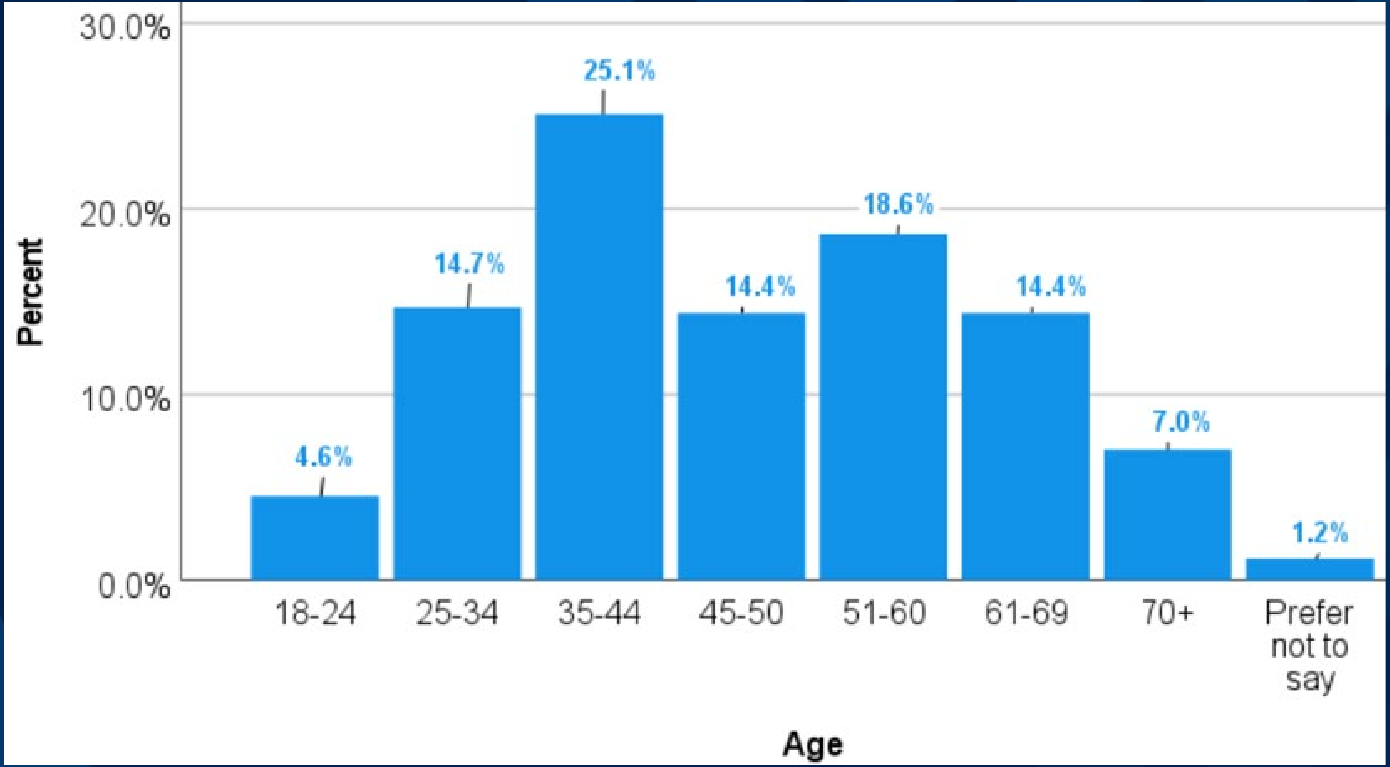
Combined valid sample size of **682 respondents** (out of 1145 total attempts)

West Virginia University

Section 1: Background Information

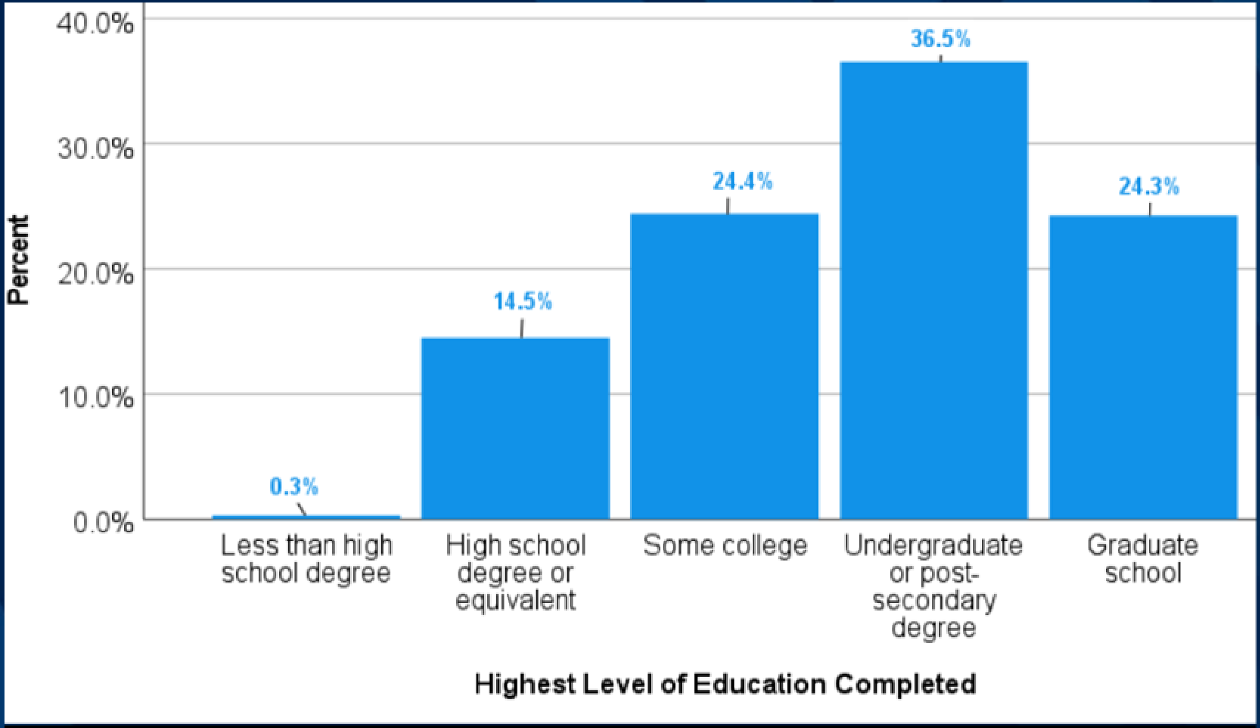






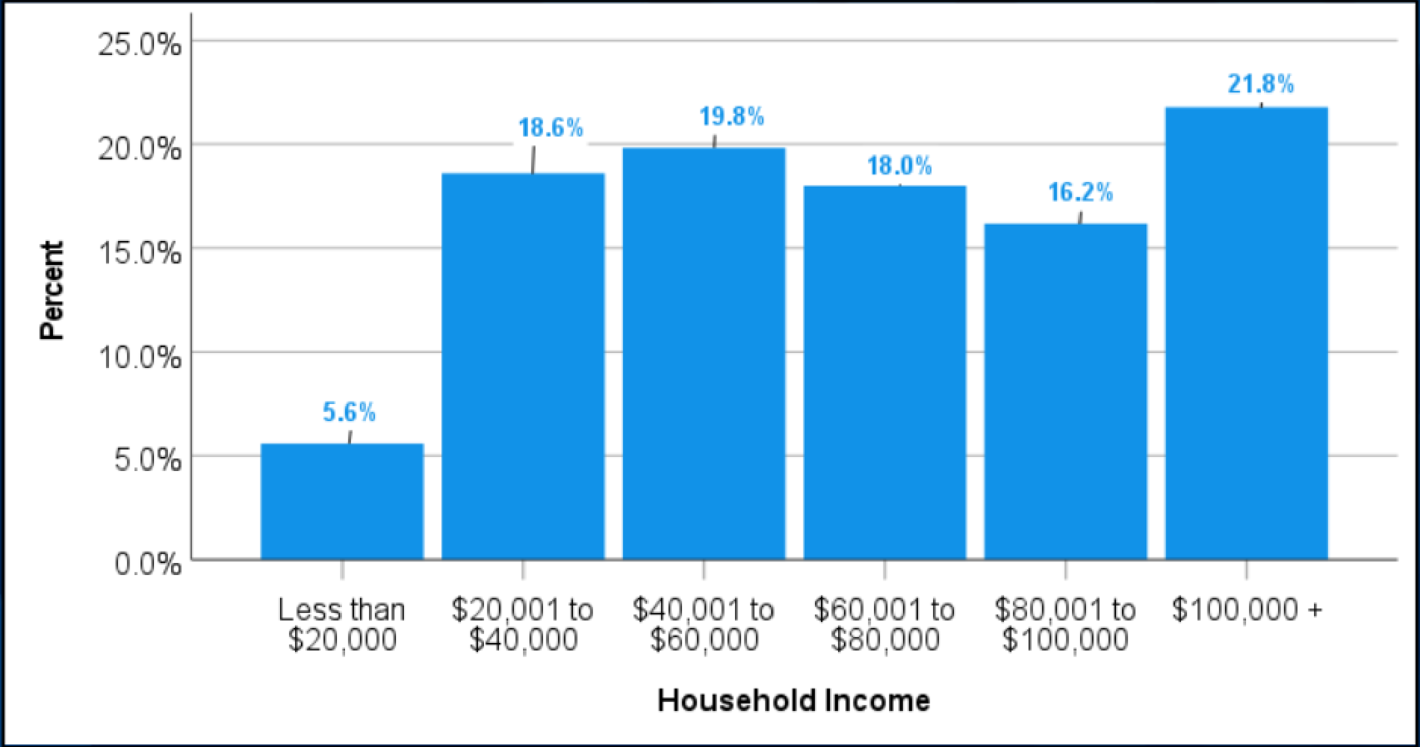
Majority of respondents between the ages of **25 - 60** years of age

72.8%



Majority had received at least some college level education

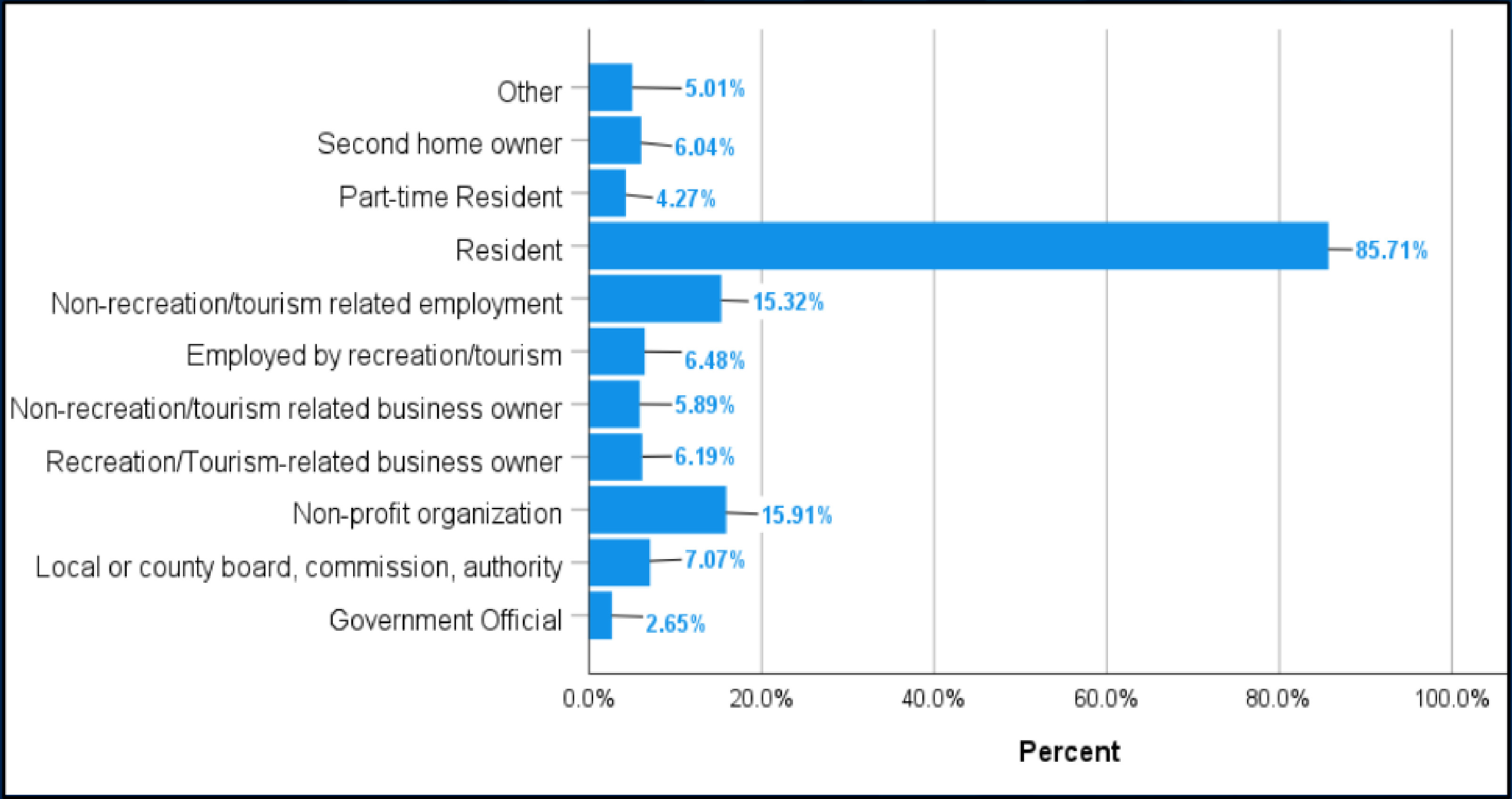
85.2%



A large portion of respondents reported an income of **$80,001 or more**

38.0%

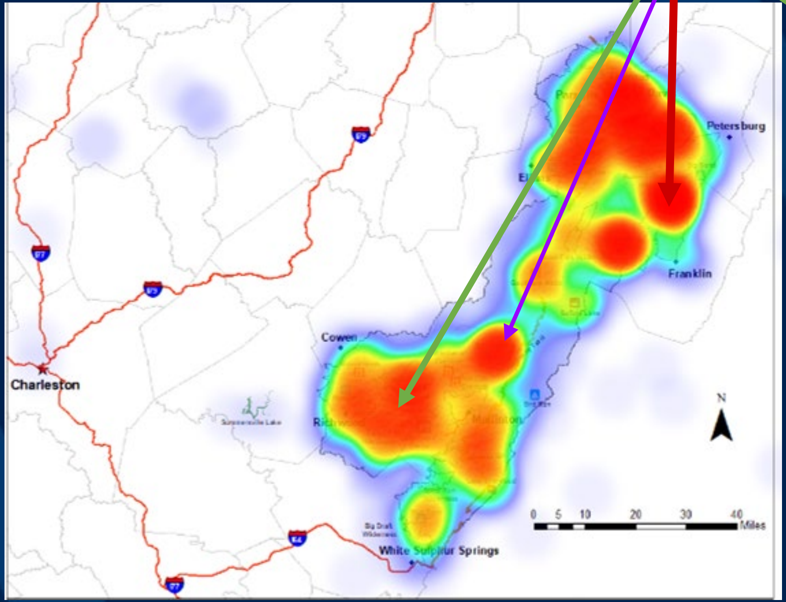
WestVirginiaUniversity

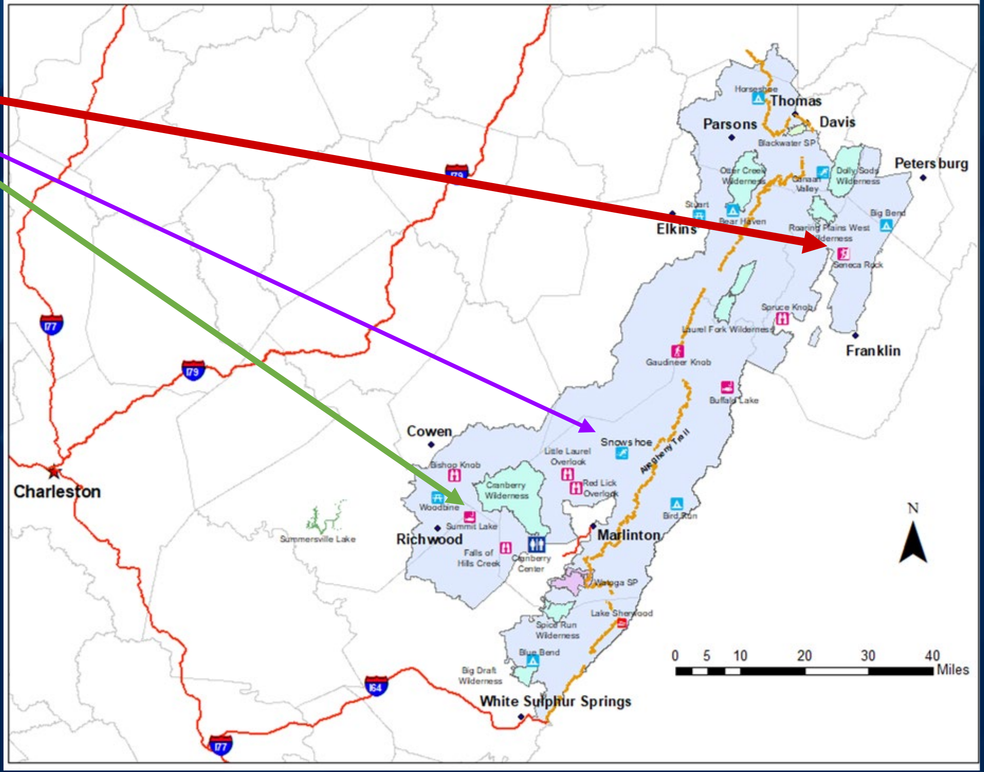


WestVirginiaUniversity

Section 2: Trip Characteristics

Most Visited

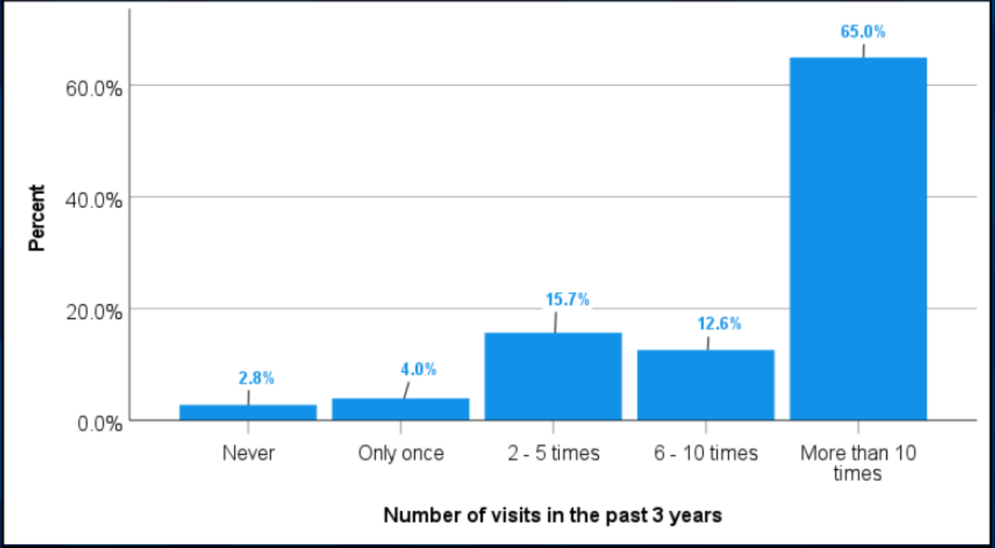




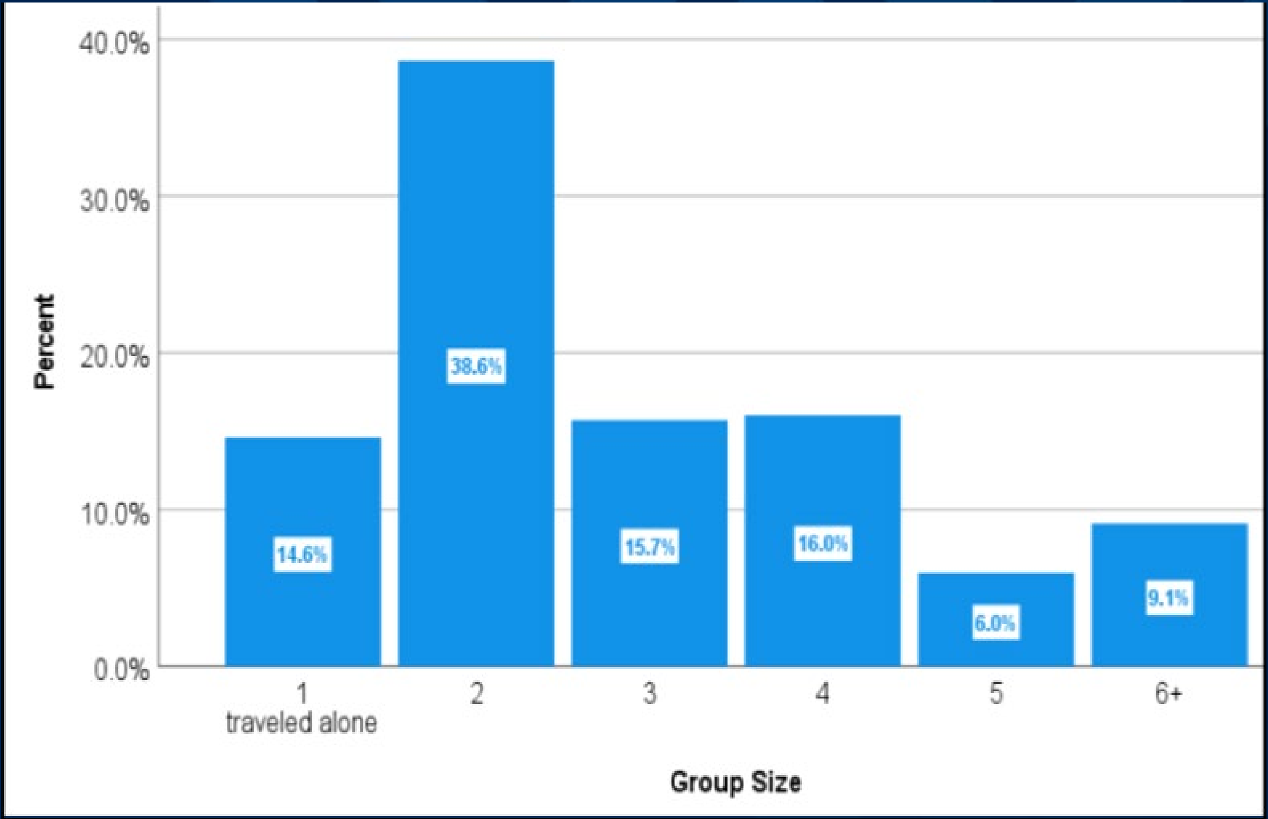
Majority of respondents reported that in the past three years, they had visited the forest area more than 10 times **(65.0%)**

In the last year, **44.2%** of respondents reported visiting the forest area more than 10 times

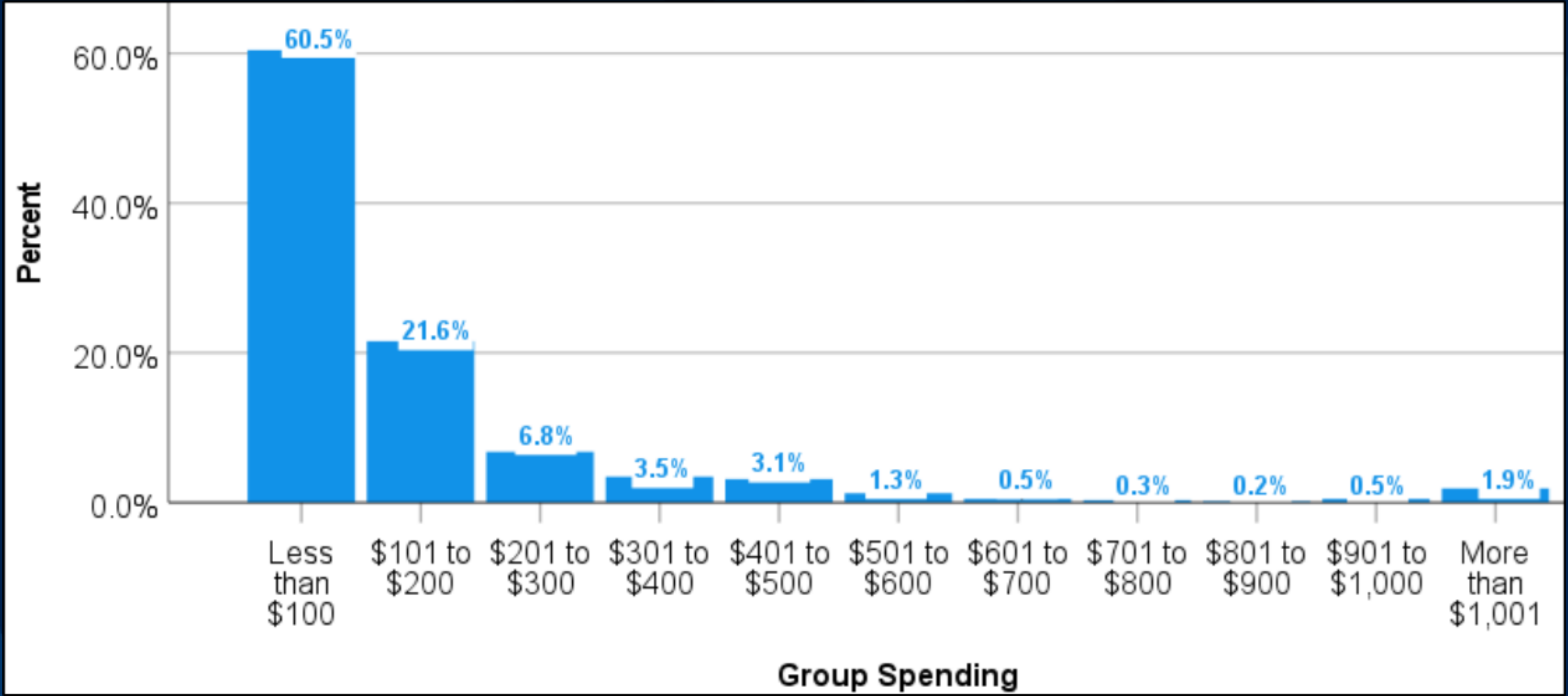
Differences in visits from the past 3 years to the past 12 months suggests that some respondents visited the forest area less frequently during the COVID-19 pandemic.

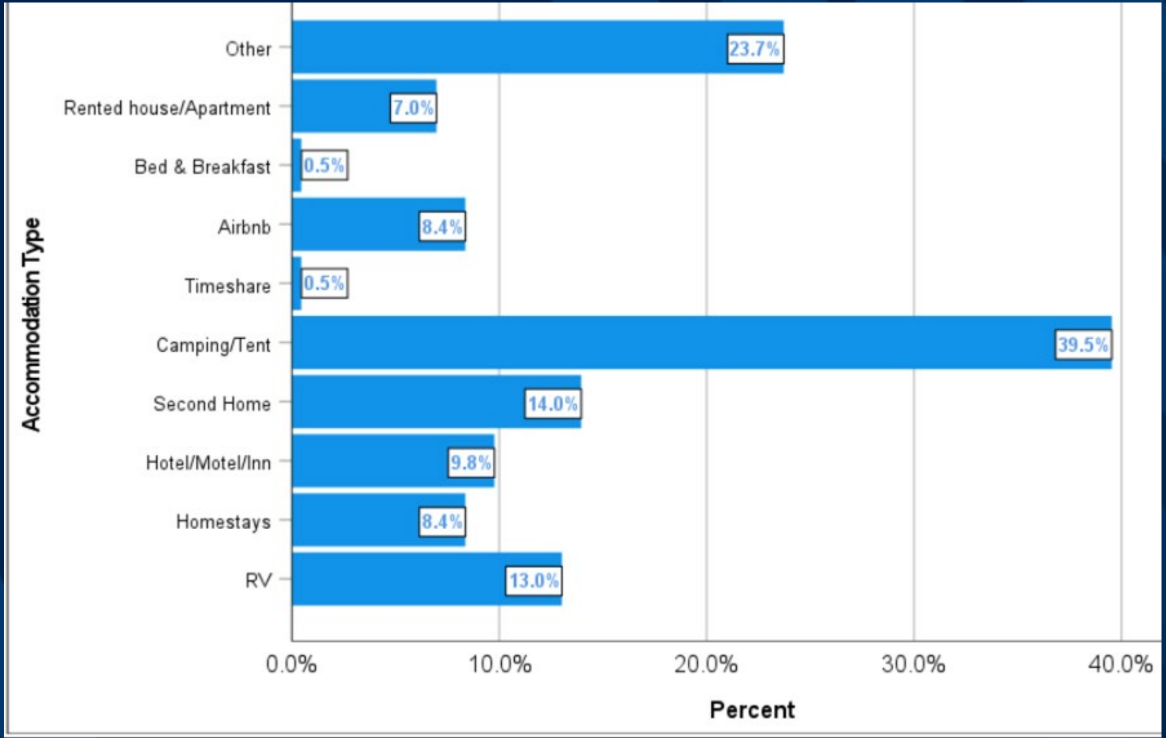


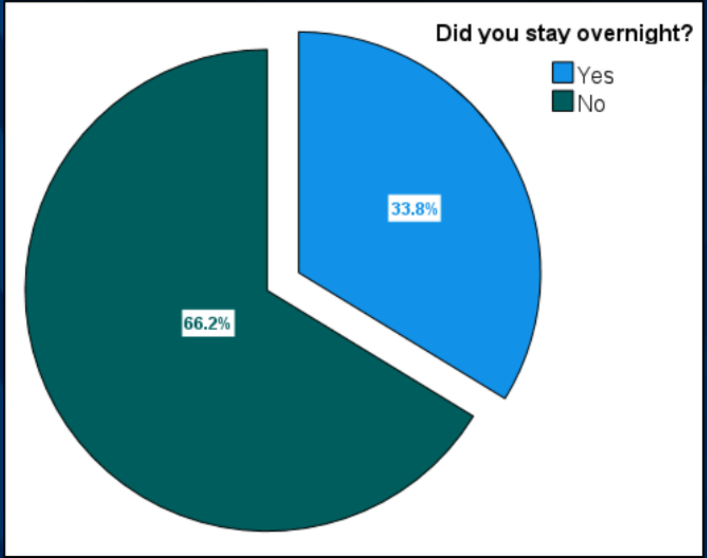
WestVirginiaUniversity



West Virginia University


Percent
60.0%
40.0%
20.0%
0.0%
60.5%
21.6%
6.8%
3.5%
3.1%
1.3%
0.5%
0.3%
0.2%
0.5%
1.9%
Less than $100
$101 to $200
$201 to $300
$301 to $400
$401 to $500
$501 to $600
$601 to $700
$701 to $800
$801 to $900
$901 to $1,000
More than $1,001
Group Spending

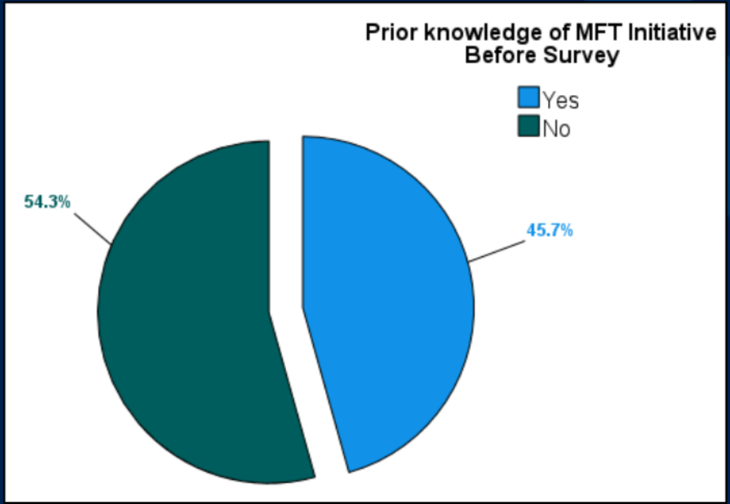


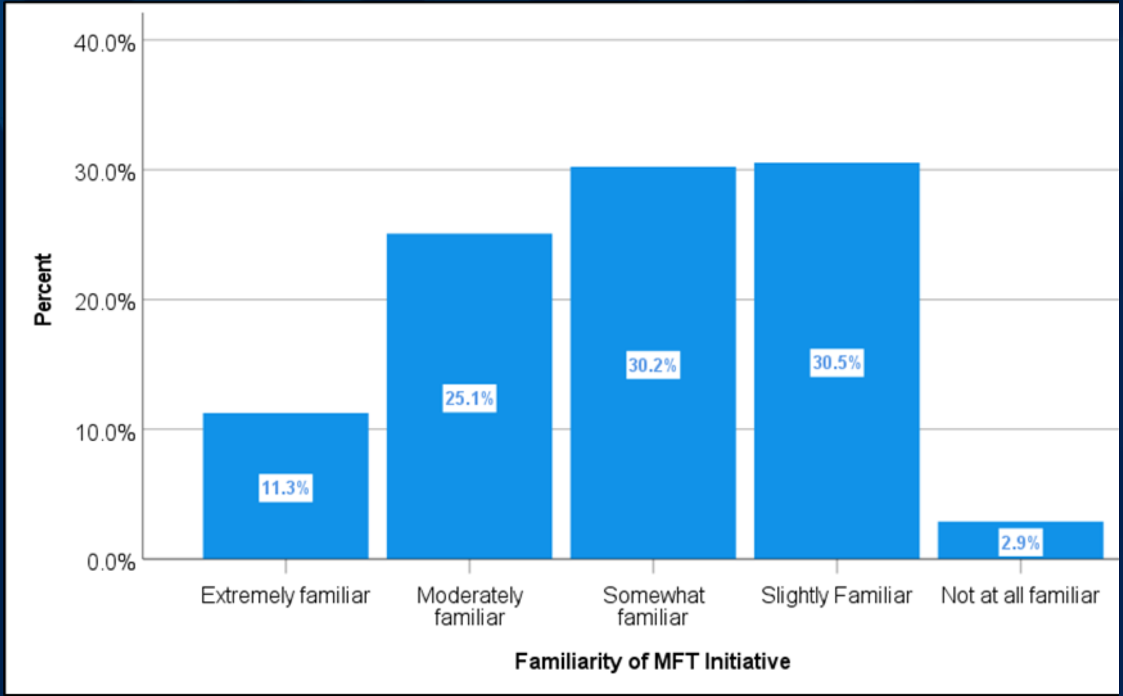


"Other" Types of Accommodations as reported by Respondents

Number	Accommodation Type	Count	Percent
1	Primary Home	31	62%
2	Cabin	7	14%
3	With Family	3	6%
4	With Friends	2	4%
5	Tentrr	1	2%
6	State Park / Resort	5	10%
7	Camp Caesar	1	2%
	Total	**50**	**100%**

Section 3: Perceptions of Regional Collaboration and Marketing



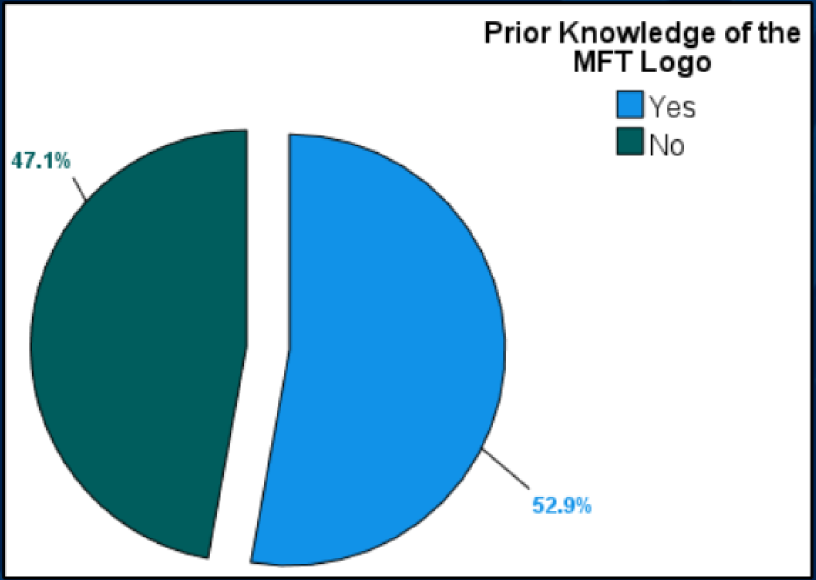


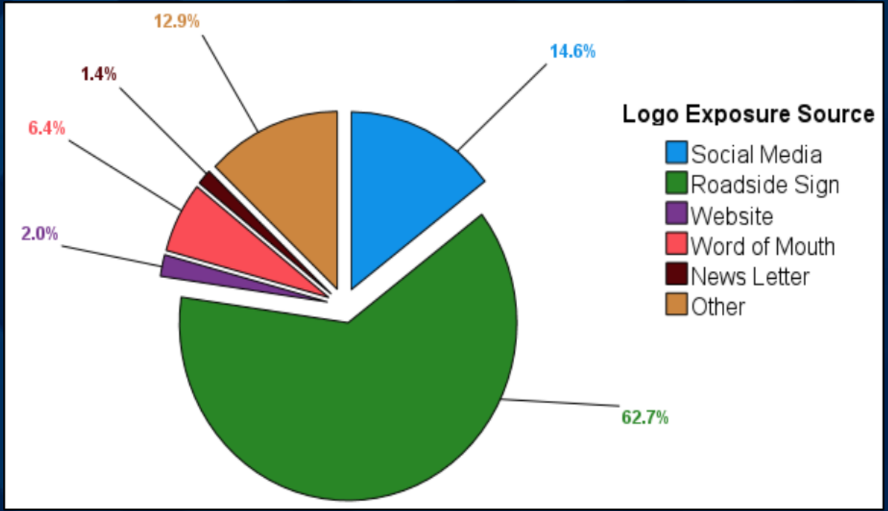
WestVirginiaUniversity

A large majority **(over 80%)** of respondents either mildly agreed (MA) or strongly agreed (SA) on items: **1, 3, 4, 6, 7,** and **8**

	Strongly Disagree (SD) (%)	Mildly Disagree (MD) (%)	Neutral (%)	Mildly Agree (MA) (%)	Strongly Agree (SA) (%)	SD+MD (%)	SA+MA (%)
1. Regional Collaboration and marketing play an important role in the success of recreation economy.	4.7	2.8	11.7	34.8	46.0	**7.5**	**80.8**
2. There is a lack in regional collaboration and marketing in the area.	3.8	9.1	30.8	40.0	16.3	**12.9**	**56.3**
3. Regional collaboration and marketing can enhance tourism product portfolio.	3.8	1.6	7.0	34.0	53.5	**5.4**	**87.5**
4. Regional collaboration and marketing can leverage on each county's unique tourism product.	3.2	1.6	6.7	36.7	51.8	**4.8**	**88.4**
5. Regional collaboration and marketing can reduce costs and increase efficiency.	4.3	4.5	26.5	32.1	32.6	**8.8**	**64.7**
6. Counties in the Monongahela National Forest area can achieve more by working together.	2.2	1.9	6.7	23.3	65.8	**4.1**	**89.1**
7. Counties in the Monongahela National Forest area share commonalities in heritage tourism resources.	2.3	4.8	10.1	37.2	45.5	**7.2**	**82.7**
8. Counties in the Monongahela National Forest area share commonalities in nature-based tourism resources.	2.9	4.1	7.8	37.0	48.2	**7.0**	**85.2**
9. Counties in the Monongahela National Forest area have similar tourism products and services.	4.0	12.2	14.4	48.2	21.3	**16.1**	**69.5**
10. Counties in the Monongahela National Forest area have the same target market.	3.7	16.3	20.5	41.6	17.9	**19.9**	**59.5**

Section 4: Perceptions of Branding for Recreation Economy





"Other" Sources of Logo Exposure as Reported by Respondents

Number	Logo Exposure "other"	Count	Percent
1	Sticker/ Souvenir	3	9%
2	Newspaper	10	29%
3	Town or Stakeholder Meeting	14	41%
4	Association / Club Group	1	3%
5	Business Front	3	9%
6	At Work	3	9%
	Total	34	100%

	Strongly Disagree (SD) (%)	Mildly Disagree (MD) (%)	Neutral (%)	Mildly Agree (MA) (%)	Strongly Agree (SD) (%)	SD+MD (%)	SA+MA (%)
1. This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses.	5.9	11.6	22.3	41.8	18.5	**17.4**	**60.3**
2. I find this brand interesting in a sensory way.	7.2	12.8	24.0	40.0	16.0	**19.9**	**56.0**
3. This brand does not appeal to my senses.	24.2	28.3	23.2	16.1	8.2	**52.5**	**24.3**
4. This brand includes feelings and sentiments.	9.2	17.2	41.1	27.1	5.4	**26.4**	**32.6**
5. I do not have strong emotions for this brand.	9.4	15.4	39.3	22.9	13.0	**24.8**	**35.9**
6. This brand is an emotional brand.	11.7	21.7	49.7	14.2	2.6	**33.4**	**16.9**
7. I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand.	16.7	23.6	38.7	18.2	2.8	**40.3**	**21.0**
8. This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.	19.1	20.2	38.3	18.8	3.7	**39.3**	**22.4**
9. This brand does not make me think.	11.1	18.5	34.0	23.8	12.6	**29.6**	**36.4**

Perceptions of the logo measured by nine items (three of which were worded negatively) in regard to **sense**, **feel**, and **thought** experience:

- Items measuring **sense** experience ranked highest
- Items measuring **feelings** and **thinking** ranked lower in comparison

West Virginia University

Section 5: Perceptions of Attitudes toward Recreation/Tourism

- Some items measuring high in agreement and positive in attitude: **9, 2,** and **7**

- Items reflecting possible concerns: 8, and **1,** and **12**

This suggests that while there is support for long term planning for tourism success and for the promotion of recreation/tourism in the area, there are concerns and hesitations held by the respondents for their area of residence.

	Strongly Disagree (SD) (%)	Mildly Disagree (MD) (%)	Neutral (%)	Mildly Agree (MA) (%)	Strongly Agree (SA) (%)	SD+MD (%)	SA+MA (%)
1. An increase in tourism will increase the cost of living in the Monongahela National Forest area.	8.7	21.8	16.9	35.6	17.0	**30.5**	**52.6**
2. Tourism development will provide more economic opportunities for the area.	4.1	4.7	3.5	38.6	49.1	**8.8**	**87.7**
3. Tourism development will only produce low-paying service jobs.	13.0	32.3	19.9	25.8	8.9	**45.3**	**34.8**
4. I support taxes for tourism development in the area.	14.4	14.4	20.5	33.3	17.4	**28.7**	**50.7**
5. Tourism development will help to protect natural/heritage resources in the area.	10.0	13.9	14.8	38.7	22.6	**23.9**	**61.3**
6. Tourism will improve the wellbeing of communities in the area.	7.5	8.4	15.5	40.6	28.0	**15.8**	**68.6**
7. The area should invest in tourism development.	6.3	4.1	12.6	37.4	39.6	**10.4**	**77.0**
8. An increase in tourism will lead to crowding of outdoor recreation, historic, and cultural sites/attractions.	4.4	15.4	17.4	39.6	23.2	**19.8**	**62.8**
9. Long-term planning and managed growth are important to control any negative impacts of tourism.	2.2	1.3	6.5	28.4	61.6	**3.5**	**90.0**
10. The area should do more to promote its tourism assets to visitors.	5.9	6.0	13.5	37.5	37.1	**11.9**	**74.6**
11. The area should discourage more intensive development of facilities, services, and attractions for tourists.	25.4	28.2	21.7	14.7	10.1	**53.5**	**24.8**
12. An increase in tourism will lead to unacceptable amounts of traffic, crime, and pollution.	19.5	28.3	19.1	21.3	11.9	**47.8**	**33.1**

West Virginia University

Section 6: Perceptions of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats about Recreation/Tourism

	Strongly Disagree (SD) (%)	Mildly Disagree (MD) (%)	Neutral (%)	Mildly Agree (MA) (%)	Strongly Agree (SA) (%)	SD+MD (%)	SA+MA (%)
1. The area is rich in natural/heritage tourism resources.	1.5	2.5	6.1	25.5	64.4	**4.0**	**89.9**
2. Local people in the area are friendly.	0.7	3.8	7.1	37.4	50.9	**4.6**	**88.3**
3. Politicians and decision makers support recreation economy in the area.	7.0	20.9	33.8	29.2	9.1	**27.9**	**38.3**
4. The area provides opportunities for lots of outdoor recreation activities.	1.0	2.8	3.4	21.2	71.5	**3.9**	**92.7**
5. The area allows visitors to experience rural authenticity.	1.5	3.3	9.0	37.1	49.1	**4.7**	**86.2**
6. The area is limited in accommodation options.	3.1	8.7	13.0	40.4	34.9	**11.8**	**75.3**
7. The area is limited in dining options	2.7	10.5	9.7	39.5	37.7	**13.1**	**77.2**
8. The area is limited in human capacity for tourism marketing and development.	4.7	16.8	26.0	35.7	16.8	**21.5**	**52.5**
9. The area is distant from markets.	5.3	14.6	16.5	41.3	22.4	**19.9**	**63.7**
10. The area lacks cell phone service.	2.4	5.3	8.9	37.3	46.2	**7.7**	**83.4**
11. The area lacks investment.	2.9	6.9	18.5	39.3	32.4	**9.9**	**71.6**
12. People's desire to visit natural areas will increase after the Covid-19 pandemic.	2.4	6.5	17.0	31.4	42.8	**8.9**	**74.1**
13. There is an increasing market for experiencing rural authenticity.	2.2	2.1	18.7	37.1	39.9	**4.3**	**77.0**
14. There is an increasing retiree market seeking quiet, rural, low cost of living.	1.3	2.7	17.7	38.3	40.1	**4.0**	**78.4**
15. There are increasing interests among decision makers in developing recreation economy.	2.6	6.9	34.1	40.7	15.6	**9.6**	**56.3**
16. Trails are becoming increasingly popular across the area.	1.0	2.1	16.5	42.8	37.6	**3.1**	**80.4**
17. There is a negative impact of shale gas extraction on recreation and tourism in the area.	18.1	15.4	30.7	14.0	21.9	**33.5**	**35.8**
18. Employment opportunities are limited.	2.4	8.0	11.0	40.8	37.8	**10.3**	**78.6**
19. People tend to have a poor image of the state.	1.5	6.5	10.9	38.8	42.3	**8.0**	**81.1**
20. Increase of gas price may reduce people's desire to travel.	3.1	9.1	9.4	41.0	37.4	**12.2**	**78.4**
21. People may be reluctant to travel because of Covid-19.	14.1	26.0	21.0	28.9	10.0	**40.1**	**38.9**

Strengths:

- The items that were identified as strengths reflected the natural elements, cultural/heritage authenticity, and perceived popularity of the recreation resources and opportunities present

Weaknesses:

- Deficiencies in infrastructure and investment, which could be related to the belief that there is a perceived poor image of the state of West Virginia

Section 7: Perceptions of the Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on Recreation and Tourism

WestVirginiaUniversity.

	Strongly Disagree (SD) (%)	Mildly Disagree (MD) (%)	Neutral (%)	Mildly Agree (MA) (%)	Strongly Agree (SA) (%)	SD+MD (%)	SA+MA (%)
1. Covid-19 reduces the possibility of travelling with groups.	13.3	21.6	18.3	37.0	9.8	**34.9**	**46.8**
2. I prefer to avoid traveling to urban areas due to COVID-19 pandemic.	21.7	14.2	17.6	26.7	19.8	**35.9**	**46.5**
3. Number of daily COVID-19 cases is a key factor that affects my intention to travel to the Monongahela National Forest.	45.9	19.2	21.0	9.2	4.7	**65.1**	**13.9**
4. There is a low likelihood of contracting COVID-19 when travelling to the Monongahela National Forest area.	4.4	5.1	15.5	28.2	46.8	**9.5**	**74.9**
5. The Monongahela National Forest will become more popular for city dwellers post the COVID-19 pandemic.	3.1	5.0	20.4	40.9	30.6	**8.1**	**71.6**
6. People may choose to stay in Airbnb over hotels/motels while traveling to the forest area during the pandemic.	2.5	5.9	29.8	38.1	23.8	**8.4**	**61.9**
7. Camping has become more popular across the U.S. due to the pandemic. This popularity may fade away post the pandemic.	7.9	18.3	25.4	33.6	14.8	**26.2**	**48.4**
8. People's travel preferences and behaviors have been changed due to the pandemic.	1.3	1.9	9.4	49.6	37.8	**3.2**	**87.4**
9. Tourism in the forest area was hit hard by the pandemic.	15.1	23.9	30.5	18.3	12.2	**39.0**	**30.5**
10. New forms of tourism may emerge in the forest area due to the pandemic.	2.1	4.4	28.2	46.0	19.4	**6.5**	**65.4**
11. Recreation economy/tourism industry in the forest area will never come back to the pre-pandemic level.	36.2	34.8	22.9	4.7	1.5	**71.0**	**6.2**
12. Recreation/tourism in the forest area will end up being more resilient and sustainable post the pandemic.	2.5	4.0	28.9	42.1	22.6	**6.5**	**64.7**
13. People will care about safety and hygiene while travelling more than they used to due to the pandemic.	4.8	9.4	20.5	47.9	17.3	**14.2**	**65.2**
14. COVID-19 increases the possibility of travelling alone or with family.	5.1	8.1	33.9	39.0	13.9	**13.2**	**52.9**
15. Number of COVID-19 cases in the forest area may increase with influx of tourists.	11.1	16.0	27.9	32.3	12.8	**27.1**	**45.0**

- The top scoring measures in agreement were items **8, 4,** and item **5.**
- Interestingly, item **11** had the lowest percentage of respondents in agreement, similar with the respondents' responses on item **3** and item **9** *(which similar amount of respondents agree, disagree, or feel neutral, alluding to uncertainty)*.
- This stands to suggest that there is uncertainty in regard to the impacts that COVID-19 on recreation and tourism in the area, and potential optimism on the effects of the pandemic being impermanent.

Conclusions

- Respondents’ attitudes on the recreation economy in the area were generally supportive of recreation and tourism, with nearly 90% of respondents in agreement that tourism development will provide more economic opportunities for the area and that long-term planning and managed growth are important to control any negative impacts of tourism.

- Strengths of the area were identified as nature-based, with nearly 90% of respondents agreeing that the area is rich in natural/heritage tourism resources and that the area provides opportunities for lots of outdoor recreation activities.
- Weaknesses include lacking infrastructure (cell phone service, accommodations, and dining options) with nearly 80% of respondents agreeing that these areas are lacking for the region.

- in terms of perceived impacts of COVID-19 on the area’s recreation and tourism, it seemed that respondents were cautiously optimistic or uncertain about the impacts and recovery of the recreation economy in the area

Thank you!