



visit
***Buffalo
Niagara***

2024 BUSINESS PLAN

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“WESTERN NEW YORK IS FORTUNATE TO HAVE THE STEAK – LEGITIMATE TOURIST DRAWS, AS WELL AS THE SIZZLE – A SMART VISITOR’S BUREAU. MAY THIS NEVER BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED.”

*-The Buffalo News Editorial Board
October 8, 2023*

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ABOUT VISIT BUFFALO NIAGARA

BRAND POSITIONING STATEMENT

Buffalo Niagara provides authentic and unexpected experiences to inquisitive explorers. The region's revitalized waterfront, restored architecture, thriving arts scene, culinary renaissance, vibrant neighborhoods, outdoor activities and historic charm make it a not-to-be-missed treasure.

ABOUT US

Visit Buffalo Niagara was incorporated on March 4, 1987, and is governed by a Board of Directors responsible for the administration and operation of the organization.

VBN employs a staff of talented tourism professionals dedicated to promoting tourism and accomplishes this by soliciting national, state and regional meeting planners, motor coach tour operators, travel agents and independent consumers. In 2022, \$2.2 billion dollars in traveler spending occurred in Erie County, generating \$132 million in tax revenue. That's \$594 in tax savings per household in Erie County.

VISIT BUFFALO NIAGARA FUNDING

Erie County provides an annual grant to Visit Buffalo Niagara, and this funding comes from visitors themselves when they stay in local hotels. In 2024, \$4.6 million from Erie County is being provided to Visit Buffalo Niagara for all marketing and sales efforts.

MISSION

Transforming our community by inspiring visitors and locals to discover Buffalo and Erie County.

VISION

To be the most surprising destination you will ever visit.

CORE VALUES

We Are Proud

Tireless dedication and love for our community, and its people, is where we find the greatest sense of accomplishment.

We Are Good Neighbors

Here, there is something for everybody - and everyone is welcome. There's a reason they call us the City of Good Neighbors.

We Are Resilient

Through times of uncertainty to momentous achievements, we carry out our mission with unwavering focus.

We Lead the Way

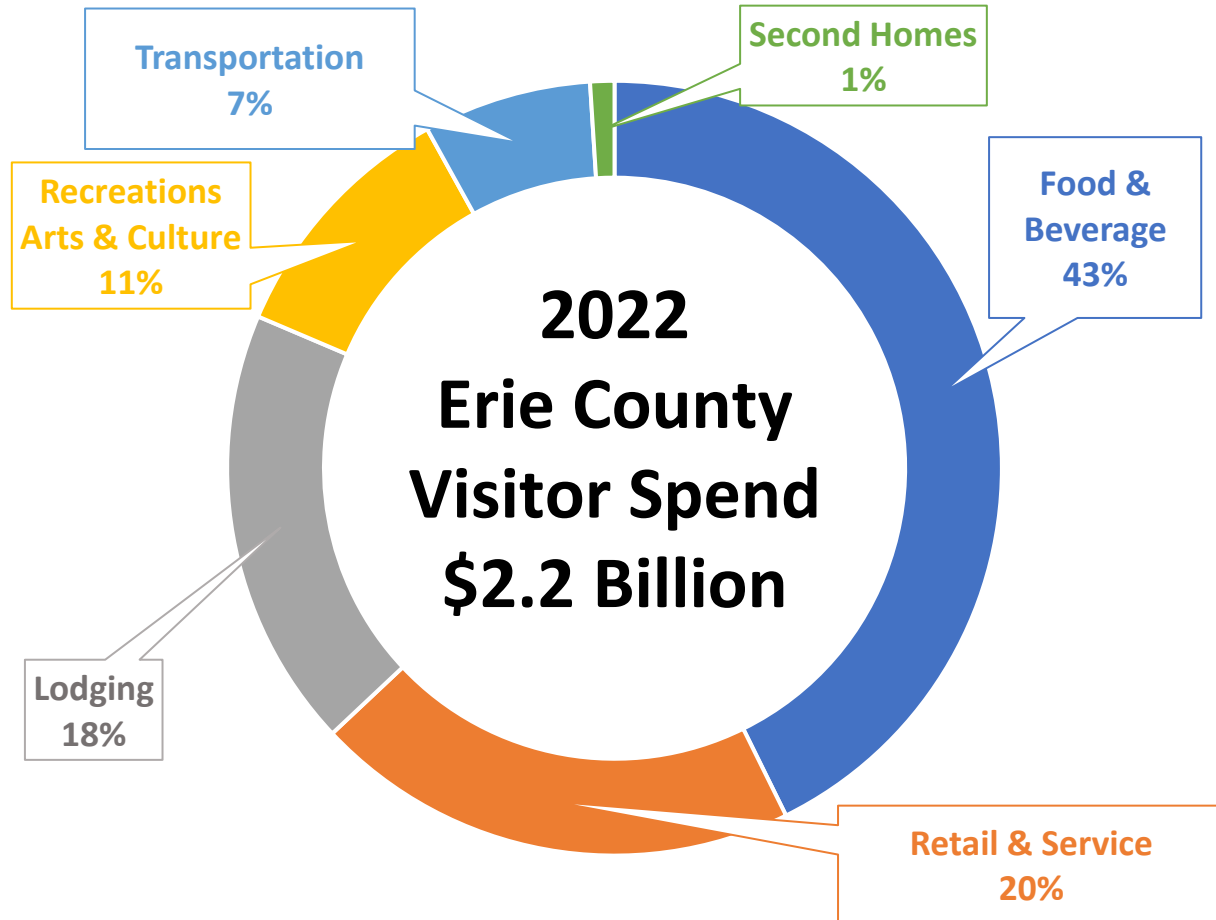
Driven by forward-thinking practices and boundless creativity, we motivate locals to share their stories and inspire visitors to discover something unexpected.

We Are Home

Buffalo is forever our home. And our guests will feel like family when they're here. That is our promise.

ERIE COUNTY VISITOR SPEND & TOURISM EMPLOYMENT

In 2022, visitor spending in Erie County grew by \$3.3 million over 2019, leading the Greater Niagara five-county Region which represents 64% of the regions overall direct tourism spending.



Data Source: Tourism Economics as commissioned annually by Empire State Development

TOURISM - GENERATED TAXES

Tourism in the Greater Niagara Region generated \$366 million in state and local taxes in 2022. Erie County constituted 65.5% of the region's tourism tax base.

Were it not for tourism-generated state and local taxes, the average household in Erie County would have to pay an additional \$594 to maintain the same level of government.

	Local Taxes	State Taxes	Total	Tax Savings per Household
Erie County	\$132,452M	\$107,137M	\$239,589M	\$594

TOURISM - GENERATED EMPLOYMENT & INCOME

Total labor income including indirect and induced impacts in the Greater Niagara Region was the most significant in Erie County at \$1.2M

	Total Employment	Total Labor Income
Erie County	27,399	\$1,167M

VISIT BUFFALO NIAGARA COMMUNITY VITALITY WHEEL

1. VISIT

If you built a place where people want to visit, then you have built a place where people want to live.

2. LIVE

And if you built a place where people want to live, then you have built a place where people want to work.



4. INVEST

And if you built a place where business and residents will invest, then you have built a place where people will want to visit.

3. WORK

And if you built a place where people want to work, then you have built a place where business and residents will invest.

VISIT BUFFALO NIAGARA ORGANIZATIONAL AUDIENCES

TRADE	CONSUMER	STAKEHOLDERS	MEDIA
<p>Convention & Meeting Planners National, state and regional association planners, independent/third party planners with an emphasis on the following sectors: Advanced Manufacturing, Agriculture, Educational, Engineering/Technology, Ethnic/Multicultural, Government, Health/Medical, Hobby/Vocational, Fraternal, LGBTQ+, Military, Religious, Science/Environmental, Technology, Unions, Social</p> <p>Sports Event Planners National, regional, state and local club organizations targeting all potential athletic/sport events, competitions, tournaments.</p> <p>Travel Trade Domestic and international operators, receptive tour operators for group and independent travel</p>	<p>Age: 25-64</p> <p>Drive Markets: Greater Toronto Area, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, New York State and Western New York residents</p> <p>Current Direct Flight Markets: Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas/Ft. Worth, Denver, Detroit, Fort Lauderdale, Fort Meyers, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Nashville, Newark, New York, Orlando, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Raleigh-Durham, Sarasota, Tampa, Washington</p> <p>International: Austria, Australia, China, Japan, England, Germany, Ireland, Scotland, Switzerland</p> <p>Interests: Architecture, arts and culture, heritage and history, culinary, craft beer and spirits, LGBTQ+, year-round outdoor recreation, state, county and city parks, generational travel</p>	<p>Elected officials</p> <p>Board of directors</p> <p>Partner businesses</p> <p>Tourism industry (State, Regional, Local)</p> <p>County chambers of commerce</p> <p>County economic development agencies</p> <p>Civic and community groups</p> <p>Local, state and county agencies</p> <p>Local residents</p> <p>Customers</p>	<p>International, national, and regional lifestyle and travel media</p> <p>Travel related social media influencers</p> <p>Convention trade media</p> <p>Sports trade media</p> <p>Travel trade media</p> <p>Local, state and regional media</p> <p>Sport-specific enthusiast media</p>

VISIT BUFFALO NIAGARA VISITOR PROFILE

OVERNIGHT DOMESTIC VISITOR TO ERIE COUNTY

- 3.2 million person-trips
- Average daily per person expenditure: \$187
- Average # of nights spent in Buffalo: 2.9
- 63% traveled to Buffalo by car
- 34% planned their trip in one month or less
- 52% stayed in a hotel
- 62% of visitors were between the ages of 25-54
- 70% had a college degree or more
- Top 5 States of Origin: NY, PA, OH, FL, NJ
- Top 5 Activities: Shopping, State Parks, Landmark/Historic Sites, Bars/Nightlife, Museums

Daytrip Visitor To Erie County

- 4.4 million person-trips
- Average per-person expenditure: \$59
- Average length of trip: 4.9 hours
- 61% of visitors were between the ages of 25-54
- Top 5 Origin Markets: New York, NY; Rochester, NY; Syracuse, NY; Cleveland, OH; Boston, MA
- Top 5 Activities: Shopping, Casino, Bar/Nightlife, Landmark/Historic Site, Hiking

ERIE COUNTY NEIGHBORHOODS

Buffalo and Erie County are bursting with colorful neighborhoods, each offering its own unique niche. Whether visitors are interested in a small-town feel that's rich in history or an up-and-coming, hot-spot sprinkled with art galleries and live music, Buffalo and Erie County has got it.

CITY, TOWNS & VILLAGES

Buffalo	Kenmore
Clarence	Lancaster
East Amherst	Orchard Park
East Aurora	Springville
Gowanda	Tonawanda
Grand Island	West Seneca
Hamburg	Williamsville

NEIGHBORHOODS

Allentown	Old First Ward
Arts District	Niagara Street
Black Rock	Parkside
Broadway-Fillmore	Kaisertown
Elmwood Village	Larkinville
Fillmore District	Michigan/Jefferson Avenues
Five Points	South Buffalo
Grant Street	University Heights
Hertel Avenue	

Western New York Regional Attractions & Activities

Niagara Falls

State Park and surrounding attractions

Ellicottville

Skiing

Chautauqua County

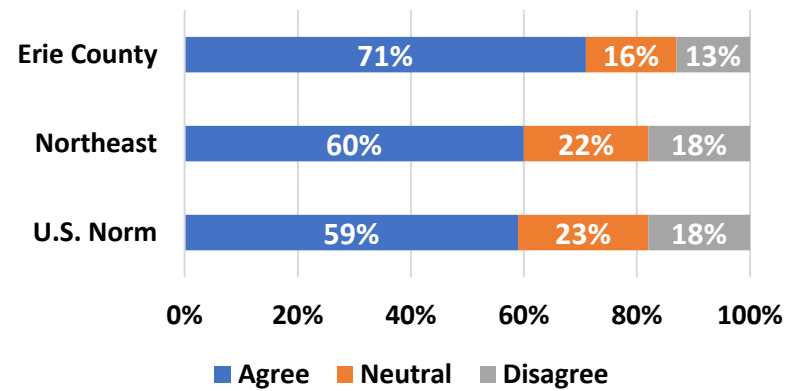
Institute and fishing

Jamestown

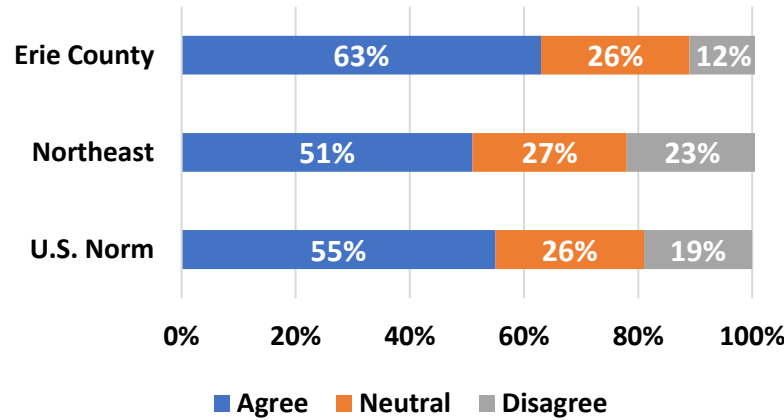
National Comedy Center

ERIE COUNTY TOURISM RESIDENT SENTIMENT

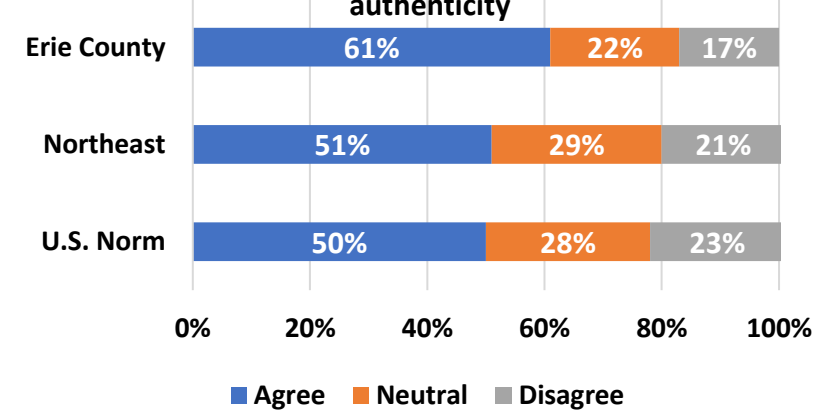
Overall, I think Tourism is good for my local area



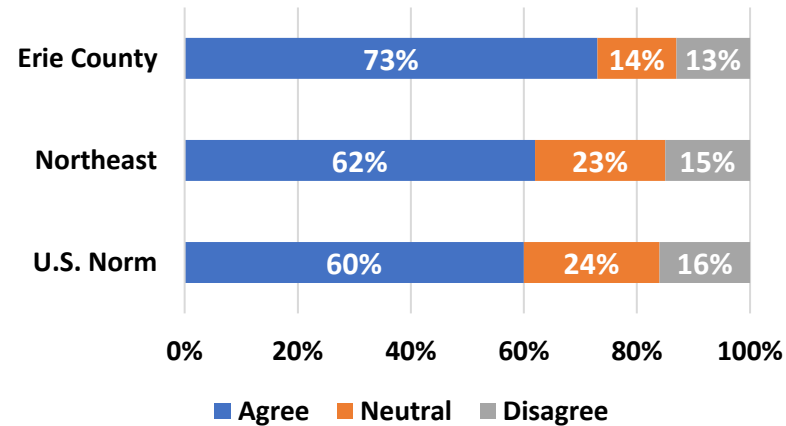
Tourism is important to my local economy



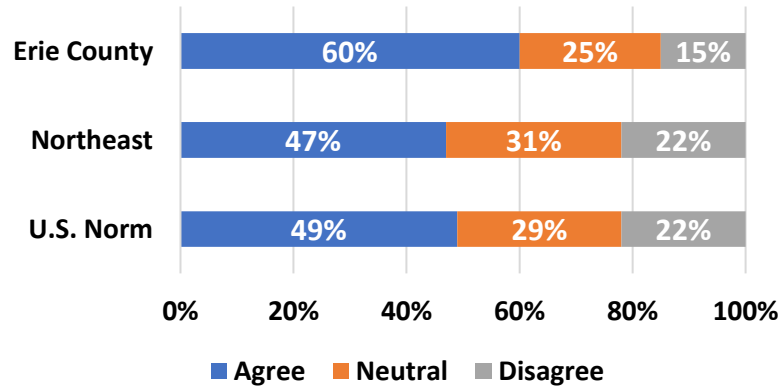
Tourism supports the preservation of local culture and protects the community's authenticity



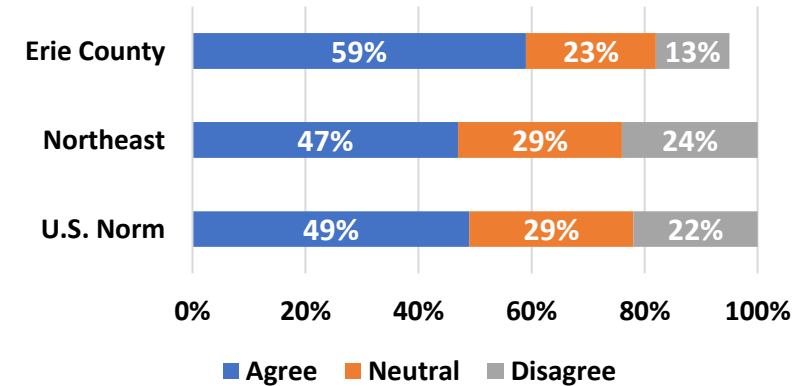
I support tourism growth



I support building new tourism facilities that will attract visitors to this area



I like the way local tourism advertising represents my home



Datta Source: 2022 Buffalo Niagara Resident Sentiment Study by Longwoods International



Visit Buffalo Niagara Social Inclusion Assessment



COMMUNITY TRUST & VITALITY AND VIBRANT ECONOMIC GROWTH

In 2024, Visit Buffalo Niagara will be utilizing the Social Impact Assessment Tool by Destination's International. The SIA is designed for destination organizations to measure progress toward our inclusion goals. Visit Buffalo Niagara will assess our workplace dynamics, operations, and policies, vendor selection, community engagement, accessibility, board governance, and destination stewardship efforts.

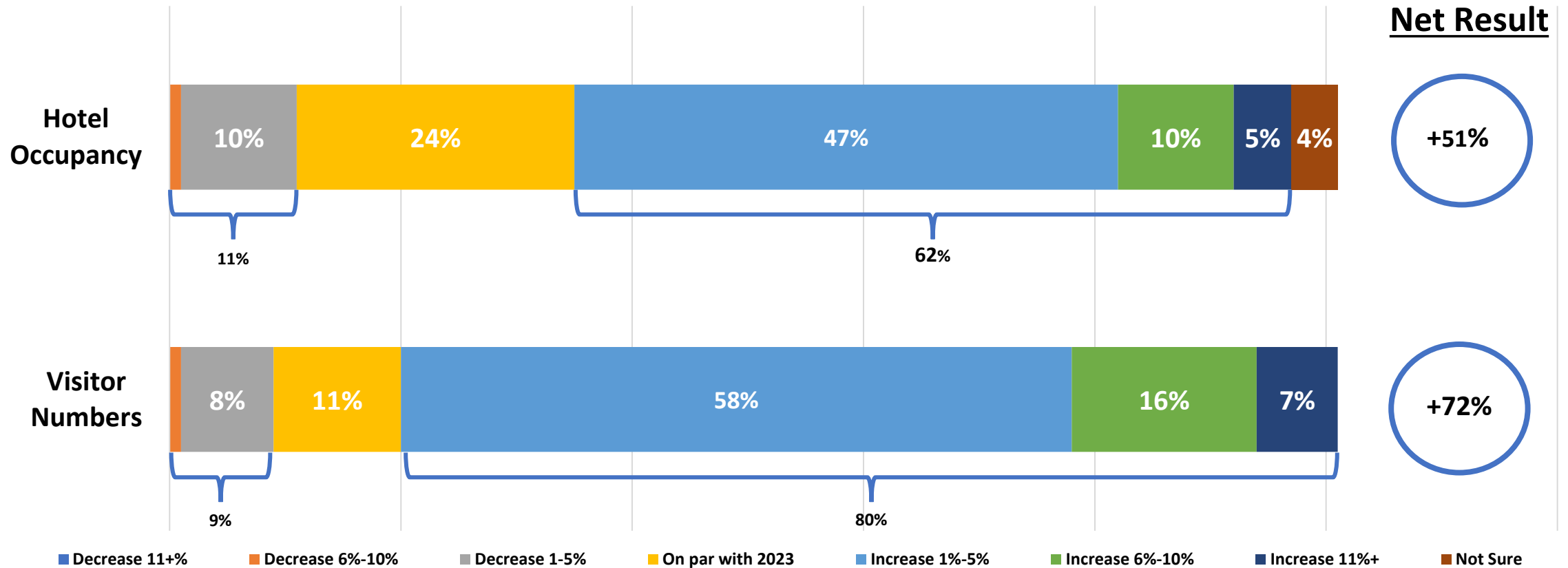
TOURISM ECONOMICS: 2024 KEY TOURISM THEMES

- **Recovery and resilience to continue**
- **High costs (and recession) to limit, but not derail, advanced economy demand**
- **Major events drive destination performance**
- **More authentic travel experience to gain share**

TOURISM ECONOMICS: 2024 RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

Strong expectations that 2024 will be a better year than 2023. Visitor numbers in particular look set to significantly outstrip 2023.

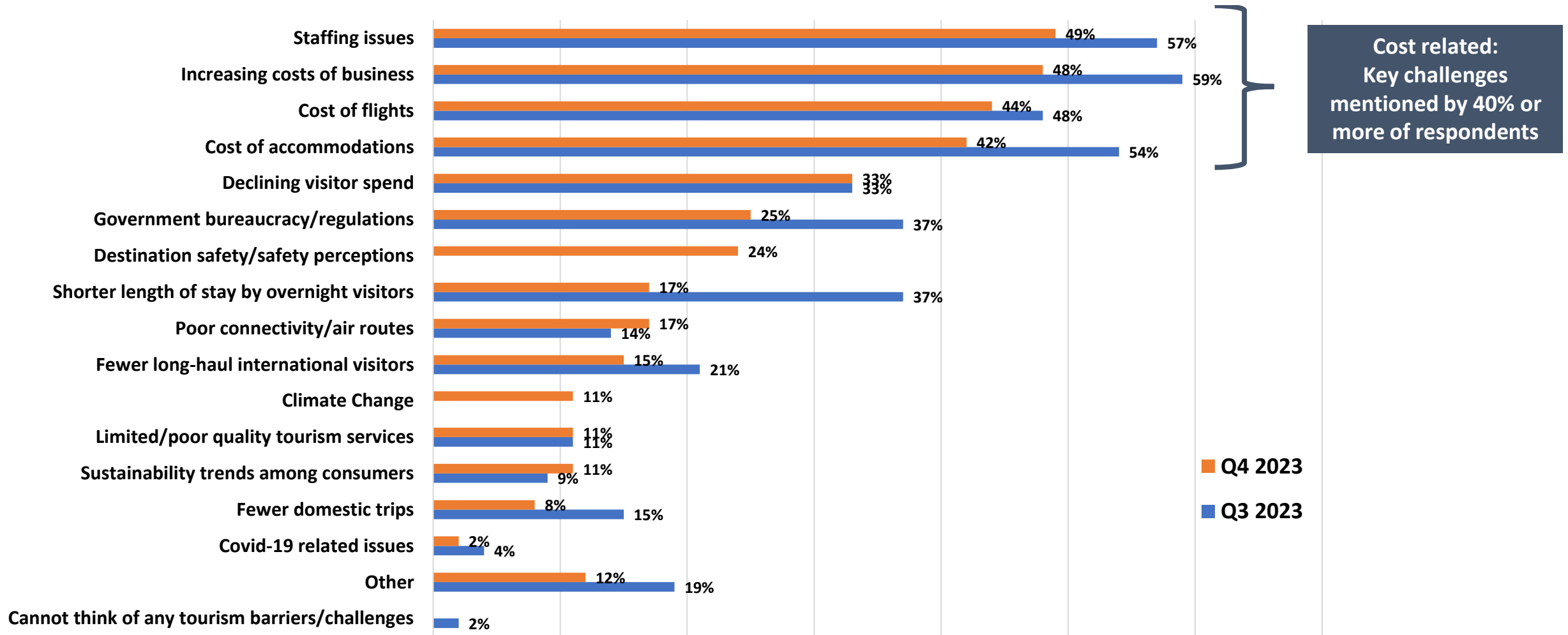
Outlook: Next 12 Months



Data Source: Tourism Economics: December 2023 Report – 2024 key themes: Why Tourism Will Continue To Grow

TOURISM ECONOMICS: HIGH COSTS TO LIMIT DEMAND

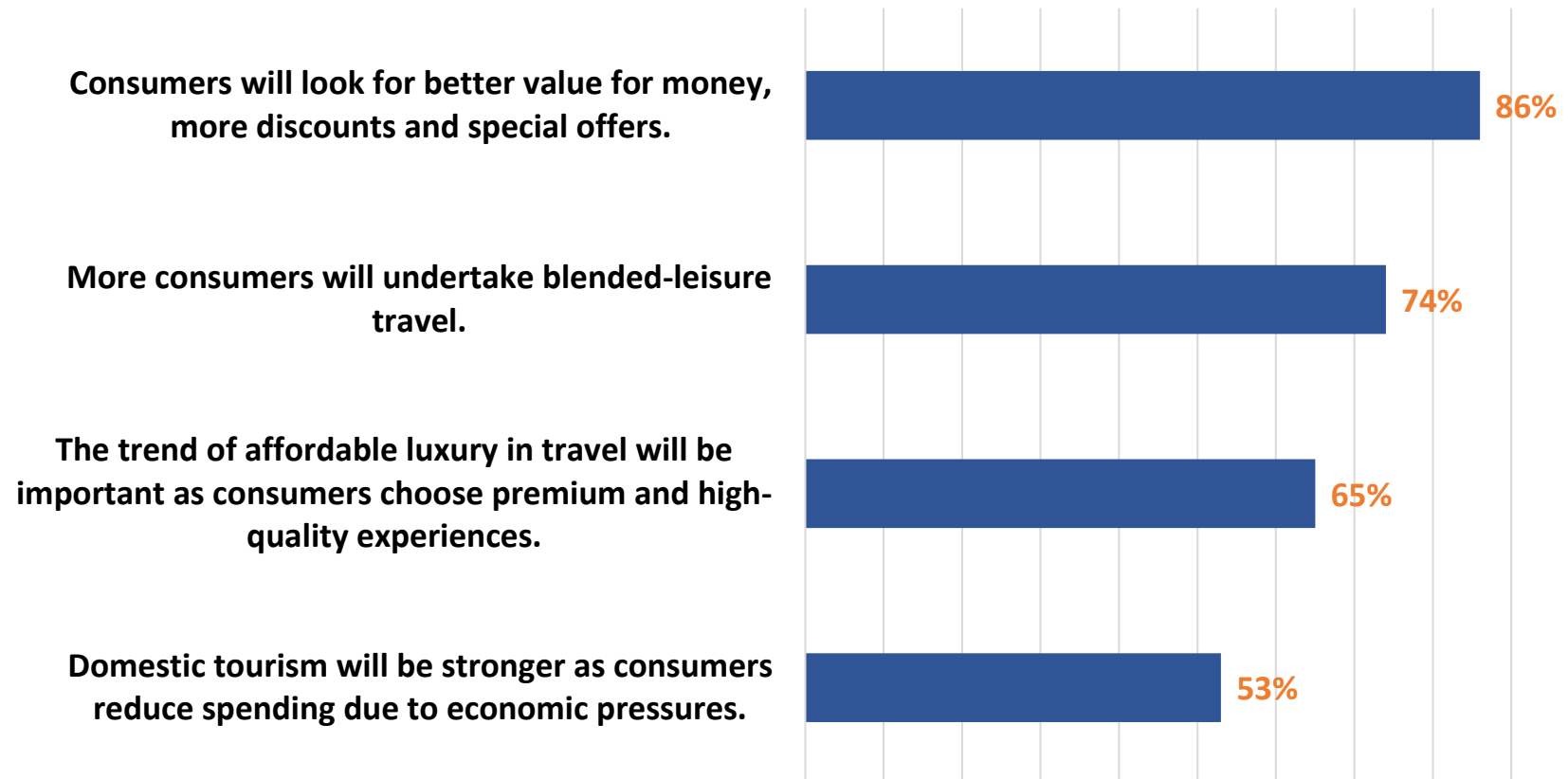
Which, of any, of the following are currently tourism barriers or challenges?



Data Source: Tourism Economics Travel Industry Monitor (TMI)

TOURISM ECONOMICS: VALUE HUNTING WILL DRIVE GROWTH

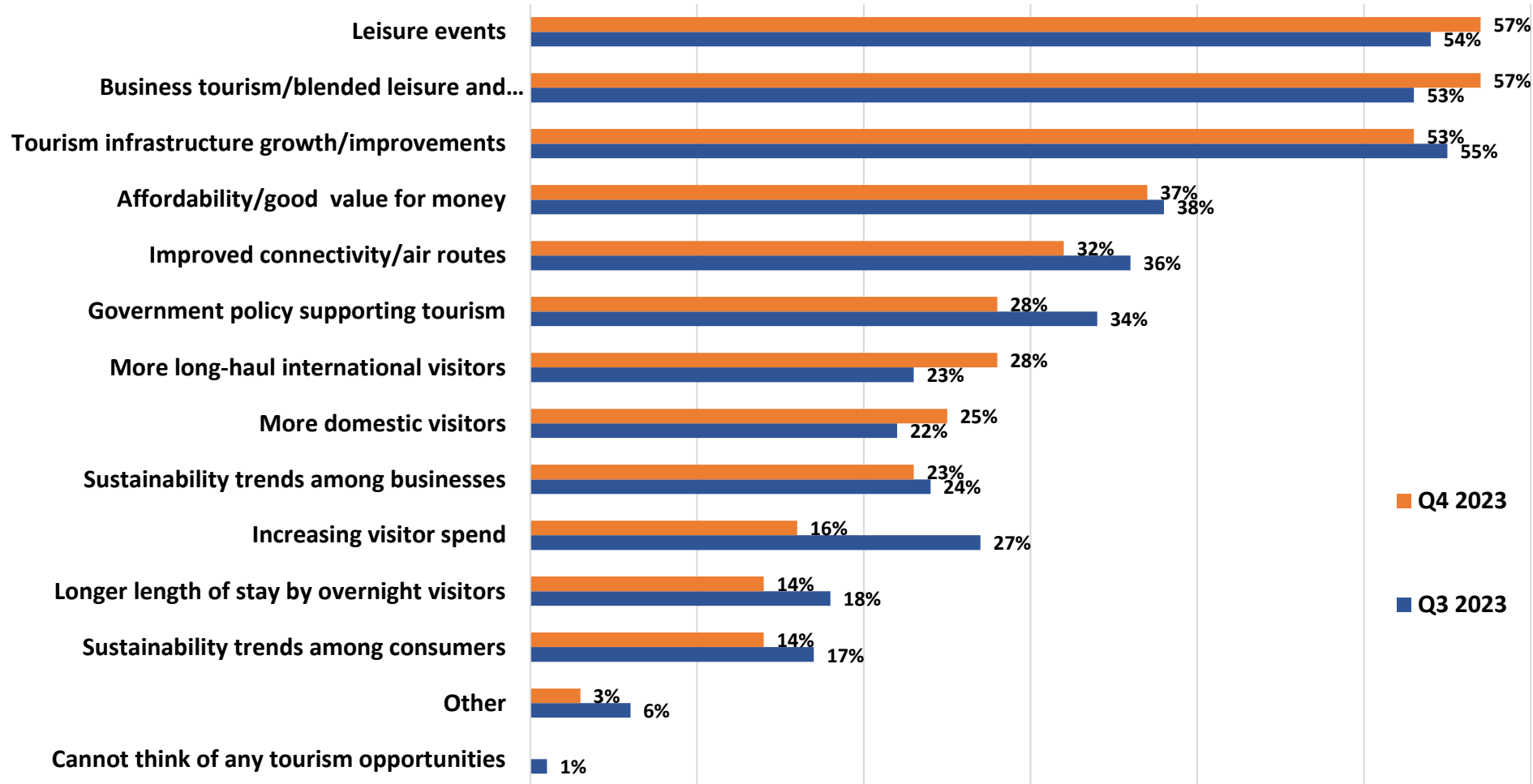
2024 Tourism Trends: % Slightly & Strongly Agree



Data Source: Tourism Economics Travel Industry Monitor (TMI)

TOURISM ECONOMICS: KEY EVENT GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

Q: Which, if any, of the following are opportunities for tourism growth over the next few years?



Major cultural, sporting and music events have rebounded strongly in recent years.

89% of corporate travelers want to include some leisure component to their next trip

Q4 2023
Q3 2023

Data Source: Tourism Economics Travel Industry Monitor (TMI)



TOURISM ECONOMICS: DEMAND SHIFTS

In 2023, experiential activities such as wellness, nature and food tourism increased over

10%

compared with 2019

Travelers are increasingly seeking unique experiences. In March 2023, spending on experiences was up

65%

compared with 2019

50%

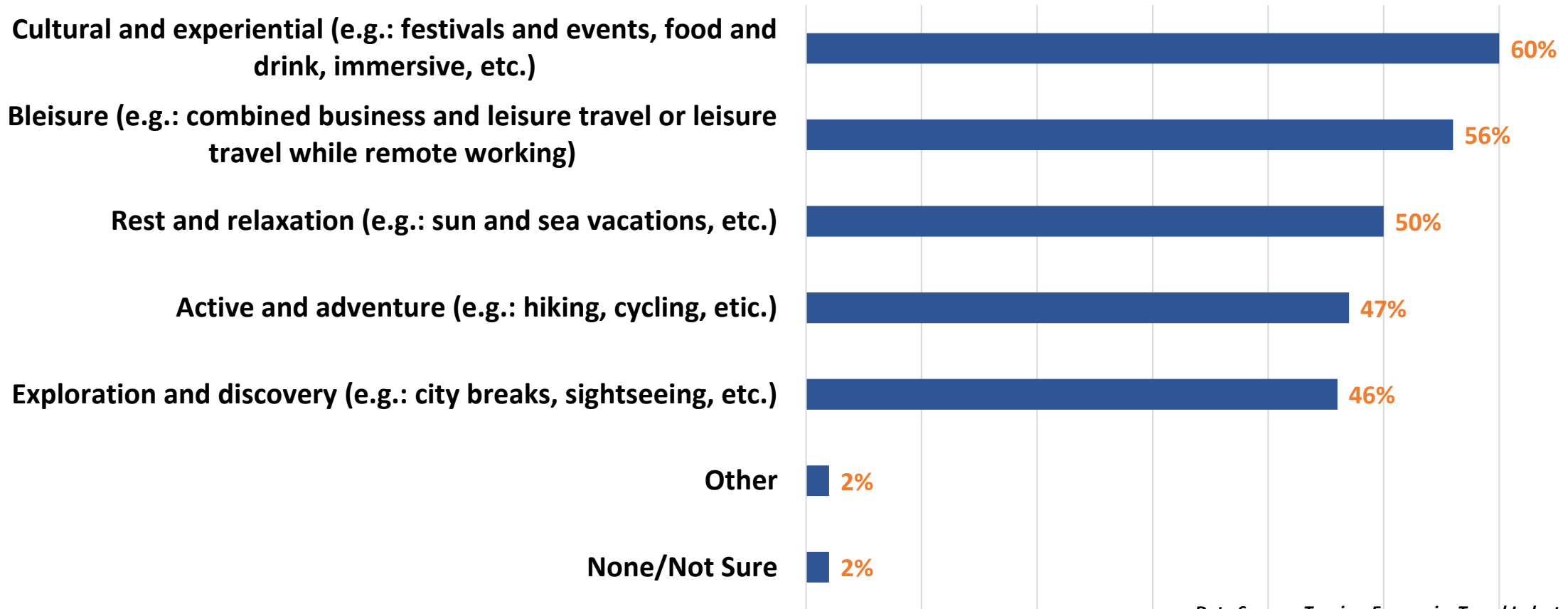
of consumers are more likely to use a travel advisor post-pandemic

Data Source: WTM Global Travel Report produced by Tourism Economics on behalf of WTM

TOURISM ECONOMICS: TYPES OF LEISURE RELATED TRAVEL

Which of the following types of leisure-related travel do you think will perform particularly well in 2024? (select up to 3 options)

Authentic and Experiential Travel To Perform Strongly in 2024



Data Source: Tourism Economics Travel Industry Monitor (TMI)

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

PURPOSE

The Marketing Department is responsible for increasing awareness, interest, and desire for travel experiences in Buffalo and Erie County. The team determines the most effective channels and platforms for our messaging by using data-driven insights into the purchase path for potential visitors. Our goal is to reach the right person with the right message at the right moment to deliver maximum visitation to our partners throughout Erie County.

HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2024

- Issue RFP for advertising/public relations firm(s) to develop a new brand campaign for FY 2025
- April 8 Total Solar Eclipse
- “Hear Here” Music Tourism Initiative
- “Freedom's Footsteps” African American Tourism Initiative
- Arts and Culture Consumer Marketing Campaign

GOAL #1

Drive visitation to the destination year-round with emphasis on shoulder seasons

OBJECTIVES

Execute an integrated destination brand campaign

STRATEGIES

- Develop and promote robust, relevant content that inspires, educates and converts new and repeat travelers
- Adopt a targeted approach for New York residents and growth potential markets that promotes awareness and visitation to the destination
- Identify key need periods and concentrate on driving interest and visitation
- Continue targeting Canadian market

GOAL #2

Increase awareness of and interest in the destination and feature experiences

OBJECTIVES

Position destination as a must see for arts and culture

STRATEGIES

- Create an integrated marketing campaign featuring Buffalo’s diverse arts and culture product
- Launch a media relations influencer initiative positioning Buffalo

Position destination for year-round outdoor recreation

- Create integrated campaign for target audience that features unique experiences
- Host outdoor recreation content creators and influencers
- Redeploy edited versions of video content through social channels

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

GOAL #3

Continue to create impactful destination niche content

OBJECTIVES

Launch “Freedom’s Footsteps” heritage tourism initiative

- Create integrated campaign targeting history and African American heritage visitors in key feeder markets
- Host press trip targeting journalists or contributors to African American publications
- Redevelop African American Heritage Guide with prominent inclusion of Freedom’s Footsteps

Continue development and implementation of “Hear Here” music tourism campaign

- Engage county-wide musicians, venues and organizations
- Create integrated marketing campaign targeting live music enthusiasts
- Host music content creators for fam tours around Buffalo and Erie County’s signature live music events
- Work with sales department to secure National Independent Venue Association annual convention

Enhance Buffalo and Erie County’s image as a food destination through promotion of “Upstate Eats Trail” and “Buffalo Wing Trail”

- Create integrated campaign targeting food lovers
- Host bloggers, content creators and journalists working in the culinary space

STRATEGIES

GOAL #4

Increase consumer engagement (website traffic, clicks, open rate, social media content and engagement, video views, etc.)

OBJECTIVES

Maintain and enhance VisitBuffaloNiagara.com website

- Create robust content in line with the needs of audiences. Optimize for SEO and feature prominently in relevant areas of the site
- Explore technologies to enhance website user experience

Maintain and enhance digital marketing approach

- Ensure video is a priority in content audits and content creation planning, and strategically aligns with planned campaigns and landing pages

Maintain and enhance social media platforms

- Create and curate meaningful, viable content to nurture and grow followers
- Utilize influencer and user-generated content to drive traffic and engagement
- Track analytics and use results to drive leisure content strategy

Produce annual In The BUF visitor guide

- Work with third-party vendor to publish annual visitor guide for timely delivery and distribution
- Evaluate advertising structure and implement sales strategy

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

GOAL #5

Generate favorable content about the destination experiences of Buffalo and Erie County through media outlets that cover consumer travel and travel trade news

OBJECTIVES

Develop annual destination travel story ideas and themes

STRATEGIES

- Provide content and story ideas for editorial coverage in media outlets
- Stay connected with travel media through familiarization tours
- Continue to develop targeted media lists that are aligned with evolving traveler trends, and use these lists to determine the best writers and influencers to bring into the destination
- Generate media coverage by attending and participating in hosted events, desk-side appointments.
- Pitch destination-specific story ideas and promotions
- Attend tourism-related association and media conferences
- Update media pages on website

GOAL #6

Provide Marketing & Communications support for Sales & Services Department

OBJECTIVES

Position destination with advertising and marketing support for meetings, sports and travel trade

STRATEGIES

- Develop new sales branding campaign and implement an omnichannel approach to engage with planners and tour operators
- Enhance the sales efforts through the development of new content, tools, and resources (i.e.: welcome videos, meetings videos, presentation deck templates, etc.)
- Work with Sales Department to create new and personalized story ideas for market specific media outlets
- Prioritize requests from industry specific writers and work with sales department to provide accurate and up-to-date information

Engage meetings, sports and travel industry journalists and publications

SALES AND SERVICES PLAN

PURPOSE

The primary goal of the Visit Buffalo Niagara Sales & Services Department is to promote Buffalo and Erie County as a convention, group tour, and amateur sports competition destination, thus initiating direct economic impact by increasing hotel room night production for area hotel partners and incremental sales for restaurants, cultural attractions, and transportation companies.

HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2024

- Host Select Traveler Conference and demonstrate group traveler opportunities
- 2027 & 2028 NCAA Championships Bid Process
- Convene 11th annual Customer Advisory Council Meeting and include alumni members of previous years
- Focus on convention center need dates to source and connect with planners
- Through Erie County departments and economic development partners, identify regional business/industry strengths, experts, thought leaders and intellectual capital
- Work with local experts and thought leaders to identify and bid on their related association/industry meetings and conventions
- Identify and book amateur sporting events that can be hosted in Erie County
- Facilitate Visit Buffalo Niagara Book Club and create thematic itineraries related to book selections

GOAL #1

Identify, pursue, and confirm meetings/conventions, amateur athletic events, and travel trade business

OBJECTIVES

STRATEGIES

Grow confirmed definite bookings

- Analyze, maintain and monitor a healthy and aggressive pipeline.
- Qualify prospect planners and move qualified prospects through the sales process until conclusion of booked event
- Target marketing and sales efforts to key event planners.
- Monitor and track lost business

Grow future business leads

- Cultivate relationships with planners, sports rights holders and tour operators through direct and indirect sales tactics
- Strengthen partnerships with major third-party sourcing companies to further promote Buffalo as a top convention destination that inspires confidence for meeting planners and convention delegates
- Host targeted site visits and familiarization tours
- Continue to foster relationships with regional business community and economic development partners through participation in local business events as well as VBN hosted event opportunities

SALES AND SERVICES PLAN

GOAL #2

Drive destination awareness and interest among meeting planners, sports rights holders, and tour operators

OBJECTIVES

Heighten Sales Department industry awareness and marketing/communications initiatives

- Update and maintain accuracy of online presence on PlayEasy, MINT, Cvent and other micro sites
- Utilize Digideck software platform to create customized proposals and presentations
- Convene 11th Annual Customer Advisory Council meeting
- Explore sponsorship or hosting opportunities to further destination brand to target audiences
- Facilitate Buffalo Book Club

STRATEGIES

GOAL #3

Provide exemplary services resulting in highly satisfied meeting planners, sports organizers and tour operators

OBJECTIVES

Preserve a high standard of event servicing and related economic impact

Measure meeting/convention planner sports rights holder and tour operator destination and services satisfaction

- Cultivate relationships with planners and events rights holders in the definite stage of transfer from sales to services
- Welcome attendees to the destination and provide information and resources for destination experiences
- Coordinate the use of volunteers with mobile visitor center and information tables for meetings/conventions, sporting events and tours
- Maintain industry partner awareness through communications of meetings/conventions, sporting events and tour dates.

- Leverage involvement with Event Service Professionals Association to provide current and best servicing practices
- Implement a post-event survey to track planner and attendee satisfaction
- Maintain a database of planners that have worked with Visit Buffalo Niagara in the past who would be willing to offer testimonials of their experience working with VBN and holding their events in Buffalo and Erie County

DESTINATION & INDUSTRY RELATIONS PLAN

PURPOSE

The Destination Development and Industry Relations department offers partner businesses resources and targeted exposure to the meetings/sports/travel industry and leisure visitor markets, while also providing visitors with the best Buffalo/Erie County information available. The department is committed to supporting our industry partners with educational events and business intelligence. The team acts as a liaison connecting staff, business and the community with one another. The team also interacts directly with visitors, answering their questions, and providing an insider's perspective on the various businesses and experiences in Erie County. The team coordinates VBN's visitors guide distribution and oversight of volunteers, and visitor centers.

HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2024

- Complete product development of "Freedom's Footsteps" initiative
- Develop and launch Certified Travel Ambassador program
- Prioritize and implement Culture and Heritage Marketing Council's final study recommendations
- Reimagine Tourism Marketing Outlook Forum into a full-day professional development event for industry partners

GOAL #1

Assist industry partners in building relationships with staff and leverage their relationship with Visit Buffalo Niagara to reach visitors and clients

OBJECTIVES

Recruit new and retain exiting industry partners and provide organizational opportunities and services

STRATEGIES

- Identify and offer new ways industry partners can utilize their relationship with VBN to build stronger relationships with one another, visitors, travel writers, meeting planners, sports rights holders and tour operators
- Focus on partner outreach to gain a better understanding of their challenges and needs

GOAL #2

Provide benefits and programming for industry partner base and entice non-partner businesses to explore opportunity to work with VBN

OBJECTIVES

Provide ongoing education, networking and information to industry partners

STRATEGIES

- Reach out to potential new partner businesses that are consistent with and might benefit from the VBN mission
- Educate partners on what VBN offers
- Refine the onboarding process
- Broaden reach of monthly industry nights throughout Erie County
- Collaborate with VBN departments to host quarterly industry meetings
- Redesign weekly In the BUF newsletter

DESTINATION & INDUSTRY RELATIONS PLAN

GOAL #3

Enhance the existing tourism products available to visitors to Erie County, while fostering an environment for the development of new experiences that will drive visitor spending to local businesses.

OBJECTIVES

Engage partners and business participation in event and product development

STRATEGIES

- Plan and execute Fall and Spring Restaurant Weeks in cooperation with NYS Restaurant Association
- Plan and executive annual Theater Month promotion in cooperation with Erie County live theaters and hotels
- Engage partners with the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor for the completion and launch of Freedom's Footsteps product
- Lead VBN's engagement with law enforcement, government officials and partners for 2024 Total Solar Eclipse

GOAL #4

Implement training programs to familiarize staff, industry and community partners about Buffalo and Erie County.

OBJECTIVES

Provide Erie County with destination and visitor focused training and resources

STRATEGIES

- Oversee and launch Certified Travel Ambassador (CTA) program
- Coordinate annual Tourism Marketing Outlook Forum
- Oversee project with U.S. Cultural & Heritage Marketing Council to completion and prioritize implementation

GOAL #5

Welcome visitors and provide resources to support visitors and locals attending events throughout the region

OBJECTIVES

Provide meaningful interactions with visitors and locals

STRATEGIES

- Identify new events/locations for mobile visitor center for year-round exposure
 - Work with Buffalo Convention Center to train front desk staff as a visitor information site
 - Oversee year-long visitor guide distribution program throughout New York State
 - Oversee and respond to telephone, email, and website visitor information requests
-
- Continue to engage existing, while recruiting and training new volunteers for opportunities at welcome tables, mobile visitor center, and other potential opportunities to engage with visitors

Implement volunteer program

GOAL #6

Work with Erie County educational institutions on share opportunities in the tourism/hospitality field.

OBJECTIVES

Participate in secondary and higher education tourism/hospitality programs

STRATEGIES

- Work with Buffalo School of Culinary Arts and Hospitality and Buffalo Convention center for hands-on learning experiences
- Collaborate with and help create career pathways through Erie Community College's Earn To Learn Program

RESEARCH PLAN

PURPOSE

The Research / Data Intelligence Department is responsible for all cloud-based software solutions, technological infrastructure, data analytic and business intelligence used by the Bureau. The department's primary goal is to support the organizational business plan and the business objectives of individual departments through the effective use of data, technology and cloud-based services—providing the resources to support destination management and marketing that attracts more visitors.

HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2024

- Bi-Annual Visitor Profile Study
- Meeting Planner Destination Perception Survey
- Meeting/Convention and Event Attendee Perception Survey

GOAL #1

Produce and curate research organizational and industry reporting and measurement best practices

OBJECTIVES

Measure and assess information for organizational decision-making purposes

STRATEGIES

- Continue to enhance the proactive reporting, measurement and formats of monthly, quarterly, and yearly tourism data acquired through third-party research and economic metrics.
- Oversee organizational CRM system and reporting
- Report the measurements of the data dashboards by reporting and benchmarking system for group sales, group booking pace and interactive analytics for board, staff, tourism industry and stakeholders
- In concert with Destination Development/Industry Relations Department, provide reports and content for industry meetings
- In concert with Destination Development/Industry Relations host annual Marketing Outlook Forum day-long event highlighting industry research and organizational plans for industry partners, stakeholders and government officials

RESEARCH PLAN

WEEKLY HOTEL & SHORT-TERM RENTAL DASHBOARD

Emailed weekly and posted on VBN website

These report summaries cover weekly Erie County hotel and short-term rental performance, three previous week changes and comparisons and year-over

MONTHLY DESTINATION PERFORMANCE REPORT

Emailed monthly and posted on VBN website

These report summaries include monthly Erie County hotel and short-term rental performance, airport and cross border traffic, sales and services, marketing/communications, destination development and convention center KPIs

ERIE COUNTY VISITOR SPEND

Summary of results to be shared Summer/Fall 2024

Completed by Tourism Economics on behalf of Empire State Development, this report determines visitor impacts on Erie County in terms of tourism sector spend, tourism labor income, state and local taxes generated and per-household county resident tax savings

ERIE COUNTY VISITOR PROFILE REPORT

Summary of results to be shared by Q1 2025

Completed by Longwoods International, this report analyzes total domestic visitation to Erie County in 2024 including overnight and day trip visitation and summarizes visitor trip purpose, activities, transportation, booking methods, origin markets, demographic information and more.

MEETING/CONVENTION AND SPORTING EVENT ATTENDEE BEHAVIOR INTERCEPT SURVEY

Summary of results to be shared by Q2 2025

This year-long study, conducted by Young Strategies in 2024 and 2025 will survey convention center and sporting event attendees to better understand attendee demographics, attendee perceptions and ratings on various destination attributes, activities, types of transportation used, and locations visited while in the destination.

MEETING PLANNER DESTINATION PERCEPTION SURVEY

Summary of results to be shared by quarterly basis through 2025

This year-long study, will evaluate the overall convention center, hotels, and destination experience and perceptions of meeting planners who have held a meeting/convention in Buffalo.

ADMINISTRATION PLAN

PURPOSE

The primary goal of the Administration Department is to provide managerial guidance to all Visit Buffalo Niagara departments related to staffing, management, operational efficiencies, organizational strategic planning, education and community-based initiatives that position VBN to be the leader in hospitality and tourism-based economic development for Erie County.

HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2024

- Organizational planning for 2025 budget increase
- Research and execute corporate office move
- Three-year Strategic Plan for 2025-2027
- Complete Destinations International DMAP re-accreditation
- Explore partnerships opportunity with Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation to operate Canalside visitor information center in 2025
- Succession planning for future senior level management positions

GOAL #1

Provide efficient, ethical and professional direction of operational functions for organizational stewardship

OBJECTIVES

STRATEGIES

Maintain excellent organization control and support systems

- Maintain current and accurate organizational financial records
- Achieve a clean third-party financial audit
- Implement an updated expense reporting system
- Manage office facilities, equipment, technology, office supplies and inventory
- Complete Destinations International Destination Marketing Accreditation Program renewal

Ensure a well-trained, motivated, efficient and well-respected professional staff

- Manage employee relations and work with external HR consultant. Manage the recruiting and hiring process as needed
- Ensure the employee policies and procedures are updated continuously to reflect recent laws and legislation. Communicate all changes to staff in an efficient manner
- Provide staff professional development

Improve awareness of inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility and sustainability awareness in organization's workplace and departmental scope of work

- Complete Destinations International Social Inclusion Assessment
- Work with national and local partners along with staff to ensure that VBN is implementing and following Social Inclusion best practices internally and externally

ADMINISTRATION PLAN

GOAL #2

Inspire confidence and respect for Erie County tourism through external stewardship

OBJECTIVES

Stakeholder score Visit Buffalo Niagara 80% or higher in leadership, expertise and trust

Represent and advocate on behalf of Erie County tourism industry at national, state and local levels

STRATEGIES

- Achieve industry and county alignment
 - Provide transparent reporting
 - Communicate openly
 - Serve destination stakeholders
-
- Maintain membership and participate in U.S. Travel Association, New York State Hospitality & Travel Association, and Buffalo Niagara Partnership legislative activities
 - Advocate for tourism/hospitality workforce challenges and opportunities

GOAL #3

Reimagine and plan the destination's organizational present and future

OBJECTIVES

Implement strategies focused on destination opportunities and engagement through implementation of the Tourism Master Plan and Strategic Plan utilizing DestinationNEXT standards

STRATEGIES

- Prioritize destination experience, organizational function and relevance using the VBN Ten-Year Master Plan as a guide
- Complete final year of three-year strategic plan while developing strategic plan for 2025-2027
- Complete the revised DestinationNEXT assessment
- Assess destination tourism needs

GOAL #4

Elevate organization community profile and engagement

OBJECTIVES

Work with state and local economic development allies to ensure that Visit Buffalo Niagara has a voice and input on tourism-related projects and plans

Board of directors' engagement

STRATEGIES

- Insure that VBN has a seat at the table and continues to expand the network of advocates and collaborators
 - Serve and engage in initiative-taking partnerships and advocacy role with economic development allies
 - Utilize stakeholder relations for input on implementing Destination Master Plan and Strategic Plan
-
- Ensure board members are prepared and engaged in organizational operations and governance
 - Utilize board member community and professional relations to further VBN mission

MEASURING RESULTS/KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

DESTINATION KPIS

These are quantifiable industry standards

KPIs	2019 (benchmark)	2020	2021	2022	2023
Visitor Spend	\$1.8B	\$994M	\$1.7B	\$2.2B	TBD – July 2024
State/Local Taxes Generated	\$228,102M	\$156,919M	\$209,139M	\$239,599M	TBD – July 2024
Tourism Employment	32,395	21,911	24,311	27,399	TBD – July 2024
Per-Household Tax Relief	\$596	\$403	\$532	\$594	TBD – July 2024
Hotel Occupancy	61.7%	32.8%	52.1%	59.9%	62.1%
Hotel Average Daily Rate	\$106.92	\$87.41	\$107.60	\$124.31	\$133.51
Hotel RevPAR	\$65.97	\$28.67	\$56.10	\$74.43	\$83.18
Hotel Revenue	\$266,269,853	\$111,334,592	\$221,384,220	\$309,591,826	\$309,591,826
Short-Term Rental Occupancy	-	-	-	42.0%	37.9%
Short-Term Rental ADR	-	-	-	\$168.00	\$171.00
Short Term Rental RevPAR	-	-	-	\$71.00	\$54.00
Short Term Rental Revenue	-	-	-	\$35,210,930	\$39,303,61
BUF Airport Traffic	4,967,860	-	2,925,792	4,048,306	4,671,785
Cross Border Traffic	5,232,229	-	1,038,828	2,920,924	4,133,704

Data Sources: ESD/Tourism Economics, STR, Key Data, NFTA, Bridge Authority

MEASURING RESULTS/KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Departmental KPIs

These are the quantifiable or qualifiable metrics used to measure the effectiveness of each Visit Buffalo Niagara departmental tactics:

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS	SALES & SERVICES MEETINGS/CONVENTIONS, SPORTING EVENTS, TRAVEL TRADE	INDUSTRY RELATIONS	RESEARCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Website Traffic (sessions and engagement)• Website Page Views• Social Media Engagement• Video Views• Media Placements• Media Impressions• Media Touchpoints• Media Visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Qualified Leads Generated• Lead Room Nights• Lead Attendance• Lead Economic Impact• Definite Bookings• Definite Room Nights• Definite Attendance• Definite Economic Impact• Groups Serviced• Lost Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visitor Guide distribution• Mobile Visitor Center Events• Mobile Visitor Center Volunteer Opportunities• Industry Meeting Events• Certified Travel Ambassador Training Sessions• Certified Travel Ambassador Graduates• Certified Travel Ambassador Industry Events• In the BUF newsletter distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weekly and Monthly Hotel and Short-Term Rental Summaries• NYS / Greater Niagara Region Visitor Impact Report• Annual Tourism Marketing Summit• Visitor Profile Study• Zartico Destination Performance Report• CRM updates and enhancements