

Tourism has its good and bad attributes. Places that have a lot of tourism (e.g. Asheville, Myrtle Beach, Charleston) have higher cost of living associated with it. But tourism also brings dollars into the local economy and creates jobs. We get a lot of tourism business here in the Upstate already...and our cost of living (currently) is reasonable. I'd like to keep it that way....

Judy Hodges

Kelly Services of Upstate South Carolina

I think steadily and thoughtfully growing the

tourism visits to the Upstate makes a nice “additional income stream,” although I'd never want to be as dependent on tourism dollars as some other parts of the state. Diversifying income streams is always a good thing, though!

Probably the best-promoted/developed “tourism” aspect of the Upstate right now is downtown Greenville...But what I'd love to see is some promotion and branding around some of our Upstate history (there is, after all, some of that up here, e.g., Cherokee, traders, settlers, old mills, etc., it's just a different type) and around some of our Upstate outdoors activities. I don't think either of those has been sufficiently identified, branded and promoted.

I'm thinking, in particular, of an illustrated map of historic destinations in the Upstate that people could visit. Charleston has done a ton of that—simply identifying, then cobbling together into one package and promoting series of historic sites and events. The same thing could be done with our outdoor adventure opportunities and locations.

Sarah Hey

Social Media & Brand Identity Consultant

Almost everyone living in the Upstate

knows someone who has decided to relocate here because they loved the community so much.

The Upstate has an amazing surprise factor. Tourism brings money to the area and gives visitors lots to those unexpected surprises to share with their friends back home. That, in turn, leads to new residents. New residents bring skills and jobs that in turn lubricate the wheels of our local and regional economy. If we encourage and love our visitors, and treat them well, then we will collectively prosper. So get out there and promote your favorite Upstate secrets!

Gil Gerretsen

Biztrek International

Well, I may be a little biased here

since I am in the hospitality industry but I say yes. Tourism creates jobs and provides tax revenue that funds much of what we love about Greenville. Purpose-driven tourism, as described by Virginia above, has a tremendous economic impact. But so does the leisure tourism. It is much easier to measure the true economic impact of a convention than it is random leisure business coming into the market.

Jacqui Rose

Sycamore Investment Group

There are two very distinct types of tourism:

pleasure and purpose. Pleasure tourism (like Myrtle Beach) is better known, but lower yield. Charleston does a great job of combining the two—but the big money comes from purpose-driven tourism (like SE Wildlife, Spoleto, or conventions). MB's tourism is low yield and mostly folks who can drive in, competing with places like Branson. Charleston, on the other hand, competes with cities like San Francisco and New Orleans for very pricey convention business and, at the other end of the spectrum, still competes for the same market (family of four, drives three to seven hours) as MB or other areas that are largely tourist driven.

I throw this background in for one reason: in developing a vision around tourism, we would do well to pursue only the purpose-driven sector, building on specific events and high yield targets. While we are physically attractive enough to go after the camper/hiker market, the profits are so low and the downsides so high that it is strategically a bad choice. BUT, purpose-driven tourism gets three cheers and a “thumbs up.”

Imagine a four-day meeting of, say, the American Academy of Ophthalmology, with docs and spouses enjoying the golf courses, restaurants, natural beauties, arts, theatre, ball field, and our superb hospital system showcased at the center of it all. Typically a four-day academy meeting adds \$12- 15,000 per attendee to the host city's coffers. And doctors are a pretty conservative bunch with a low impact (except the numbers) on a community.

We have the events to build on (US Cycling, Euphoria, Artisphere, etc.). We have the destinations (ICAR, BMW track, Hospital System). We have the arts community and the aesthetics. We have the natural beauty and the outdoor activities (from golf to pontoon boats to ballooning). But we don't have the vision, strategy, or the in-place expertise.

As with too many things, our efforts—even our discussions!—are mired in thinking that is a decade or more old. One example? A recent survey asked about the degree to which we would embrace buying carbon credits (offsets) with an eye to putting a program in place here in the Upstate. However, the Chicago Climate Exchange (the only trading floor for carbon credits in the U.S.) has recently been shut down, the early players (like Terra Pass) are under fire as scams, and the once-interesting concept has been thoroughly discredited.

Purpose-driven, high-yield tourism could be a real boon to the area, but the approach would have to be a bold departure from the ho-hum mediocrity that is the state of affairs in the current model of Convention/Visitors Bureau thinking.

Virginia Simpson

Simpson & Partners

Join the discussion! Join our group—**Business Black Box**—on LinkedIn to give us your feedback on this and many other subjects!

“As with too many things, our efforts—even our discussions—are mired in thinking that is a decade or more old.”