

Visitation Projections by Region

Given the current state of the regions, what can we expect with regard to growth in visits? Assuming a continuation of existing trial and conversion strategies, the industry as a whole will grow about 9.4 percent (see Figure 9). The Pacific Southwest is positioned to experience the strongest percent growth in visits (21.6 percent) and the Northeast the weakest (2.1 percent). For the Midwest and Southeast, the strategy of trial and conversion will achieve growth, 18.4 and 9.8 percent respectively, but cultivating the Gen X market and increasing the average number of days skied/snowboarded within-region are also recommended.

The Rocky Mountains will experience a very modest 5.8 percent gain in visitation from 2004/05 to 2019/20. The strategy of trial and conversion has buffered the region against substantial declines; however leakage from the core skier and rider base has greatly sabotaged significant growth. Moving forward, the region must concentrate on creating fewer lapsed skiers and riders (i.e., strong core retention).

In the Pacific Northwest there will be a projected 16.2 percent total growth in visits from 2004/05 to 2019/20 if current trial, retention and conversion efforts are maintained. While trial and conversion does yield results for the region, a focus on core and revival retention would push growth further in the positive direction sooner. Without any interventions or maintained efforts to achieve growth, visits are projected to remain relatively flat in the Pacific Northwest over the next five years.

All of these projections assume a continuation of the status quo. Efforts to implement strategies that more aggressively address weaknesses in core retention rates, beginner conversion rates and the targeting of young families and youth will produce significant results.

Conclusions

Again, the overall message is one of hope. Challenges lie ahead but we have the tools to deal with them. Furthermore, we understand that growth occurs at a grassroots level. Each region has its own unique set of challenges and unique prescriptions for growth. The regional Models have allowed us to understand import/export patterns, identify regional opportunities in the minority market, quantify generational shifts and their geographic specificity and threat, identify our best customers, and reveal underperformance in specific age cohorts. Future articles will explore the practical implications of these findings in greater detail. We will specifically focus on the concept of customer loyalty, its correlation to growth, and why you should be measuring it at your resort. ■



Figure 9. 2020 Projected Growth Rates by Region

