

VISIT  
**walla  
walla**

**2017  
ANNUAL  
REPORT**



## VISIT WALLA WALLA OVERVIEW

Visit Walla Walla is a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) which functions to grow the tourism industry as a means to benefit the local economy and quality of life. Visit Walla Walla (VWW) aims to increase hotel occupancy and revenue through both leisure and group business, while simultaneously increasing awareness of Walla Walla as an attractive visitor destination.

VWW uses market research and visitor data to create and implement a strategic marketing plan which includes print and video advertising, a robust paid and organic social media campaign, public relations, support and implementation of public and private events.

VWW promotes the Walla Walla brand, led by our reputation as a leading northwest destination for wine, culinary, and sunshine. VWW has historically focused on these three brand assets—wine, culinary, sunshine—in marketing the region. In 2017, VWW committed to efforts to expand brand awareness to include other key assets, including our rich history, fine/performing arts, and sports and recreation. This does not mean a shift away from core brand assets—wine, culinary and sunshine—but an expanded approach to our brand assets. This new strategy, still in its infancy, is starting to show early results, and will continue in 2018.

Marketing efforts by VWW have historically targeted consumers identified as our key demographic: empty-nesters (Baby Boomers) with disposable income, self-identified as wine and culinary aficionados. This has been a successful approach for the past many years, and a good surgical approach for a small DMO with limited funds. VWW will continue targeting this audience in 2018. Howev-

er, research shows that Millennials, a younger demographic, have started to surpass Baby Boomers in travel spending, and therefore our pool of potential visitors has expanded. In response, we shifted some resources in 2017 to develop this market, and will continue this approach in 2018. Specifically, we have expanded digital advertising/marketing, eliminated radio advertising, and shifted some print allocations to attract a younger audience. We have also updated our advertising campaign to feature more “organic” or “in-the-moment” photography and messaging. This approach has, so far, been well received, as tracked and measured through engagement with our digital channels.

Also, in response to global shifts in travel spending habits, we have added two key demographics to our pool of targeted consumers: Families, and the LGBTQ community. In both cases, we are focusing this preliminary efforts in the Pacific Northwest, particularly Seattle, which continues to supply the majority of our visitors. Parents traveling with children fit nicely with our efforts to expand our brand to include outdoor recreation, history and arts. And the LGBTQ community in Seattle is the second largest in the United States. The travel industry has long understood the wisdom of pursuing the LGBTQ market, which represents a high percentage of affluent travelers with discretionary income, a willingness to spend and a taste for adventure. Where the LGBTQ market goes, the rest of the world typically follows. LGBTQ visitors from Seattle and the PNW carry home the message that Walla Walla is a safe and welcoming community, with lots to do, much to explore, and well worth the trip.

The leisure market is only part of our story.

VWW also has a mandate to bring group business to the region. In 2016/2017 we implemented a plan to attract more group business to the region, with particular emphasis on mid-week and off-season bookings.

Groups are divided into two sectors—corporate group business, and “SMERF” group business, which is the acronym for Social, Military, Educational, Religious and Fraternal organizations. The Social market includes weddings, anniversaries, etc. Fraternal includes service clubs such as Rotary, Exchange Club, etc.

Group business is developed through long-term relationship-building and repeated contact with key decision-makers. Those decision-makers are traditionally found through trade publications, trade shows, “hosted buyer” events and reputation. Meeting planners need to be convinced that Walla Walla has the amenities, infrastructure and accessibility to execute these events. The meeting planners’ reputations are staked on the success of their latest conference, and sometimes nothing short of a visit to the region will sway them to recommend us to their clients.

Weddings may be planned with as little lead time as a few weeks, to a couple of years. Corporate group meetings have a longer lead time of typically nine-months to two or more years. We are working today for business that will arrive in 2020.

Nationally and internationally DMOs are changing to adapt to changing times. Where formerly a primary function of a DMO was public relations and advertising, today, DMOs are both outward- and inward-facing, considered key partners in economic development, strategic planning, and involved in conversations about the core values of a community. By

adopting these modern definitions, Visit Walla Walla has necessarily change its tactics and approach. We are out in the community as a much more visible presence, and out in the world in direct contact with potential visitors, partners and in search of decision-makers.

The strategies identified in 2017 still have a lot of development potential and we will continue along the same path in 2018. We established many beneficial partnerships here in Walla Walla and out in the greater universe, and we will keep at it so those relationships grow and flourish to our mutual benefit. Just to name a few key partners outside Walla Walla who have proven to be important and helpful to our efforts: the Greater Seattle Business Association, ‘GSBA’ (the largest LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce in North America), the Washington Tourism Alliance (championing legislation to establish a government funded statewide marketing campaign), the Port of Seattle and Visit Seattle (strong advocates and allies in moving visitors across the mountains) and Destinations Marketing Association West, DMAWest (a trade association of DMOs west of the Mississippi, providing advocacy, education, resources and trends).

Here in the Valley, our key partners are any and every business, organization, group, association or individual with a vested interest in the tourism economy. From big hotels to families with a room to rent to short-stay visitors; restaurants and wineries, taco trucks and grocery stores; the City, the County and the State; our musicians, artists, craftspeople and growers; schools and universities; our business leaders and civic leaders and our concerned citizens. If tourism touches your life, your business or your family, then you are a stakeholder of Visit Walla Walla, and your opinions are meaningful and valuable to us.

## VISIT WALLA WALLA LEADERSHIP

### **Ron Williams, Executive Director**

With 18 months under his belt at Visit Walla Walla, Ron has enjoyed taking the organization in a new direction, in keeping with the changing times. It is serendipitous that he arrives in this new career at the same time that the business of destination marketing has undergone a sea change in how potential visitors are identified and approached.

Ron comes to the job with an extensive background in hospitality management, marketing, program management, arts, and entertainment.



He is particularly proud of the team he has assembled- a group of creative, intelligent and compassionate thinkers, who are always ready to challenge an old practice, offer a new point of view, and to show Walla Walla as the Center of the Universe we all know it to be.

## VISIT WALLA WALLA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



### **Christopher Garratt, Chair**

Providence St. Mary Foundation

Chris Garratt is the Chief Development Officer of Providence Health & Services which includes direction of the St. Mary Foundation, a nonprofit corporation which raises, manages, invests, and distributes all philanthropic revenue to Providence St. Mary Medical Center. Prior to accepting the position at Providence in 2012, Chris spent nine years in hotel sales and marketing,

**Ann Hooper**, Treasurer  
Wealth Management  
Consultant – Retired

**Zachary Fraser**, President,  
Pacific Baseball Ventures

**Terra Luthi**, at large

**Mindy Nelson**, Coffey  
Communications

**Scott Peters**, COO,  
Columbia REA

**Jennifer Northam**,  
Assistant Director of Alumni  
Relations, Whitman College

**Dan Leeper**, General  
Manager, Marcus Whitman  
Hotel & Conference Center

**Emily Anderson**, Manager,  
Browne Family Vineyards

**Leah Wilson-Velasco**, CEO,  
Walla Walla Symphony

**Mike Corliss**, at large

**Dean Snider**, Athletic  
Director, Whitman College

**James Payne**, Executive  
Director, Fort Walla Walla  
Museum

**Tabitha Crenshaw**, Owner,  
Olive Marketplace & Cafe,  
The Saint & The Sinner

**Jennifer Skoglund**, Airport  
Manager, Walla Walla  
Regional Airport

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## VISIT WALLA WALLA STAFF

### **Caleb Agee**, Marketing & Communications Manager

Caleb joined the VWW team last year and brings years of marketing, design and communications experience to help spread the word about Walla Walla. He received his bachelor's degree from Walla Walla University and returned to Walla Walla in 2014. He enjoys being involved in the community, being a member of Exchange Club, and serving on the board of Shakespeare Walla Walla. Outside of work, he enjoys cooking with his wife, spending time with friends and family, and finding ways to spend time outdoors.

### **Michelle O'Connor**, Administrative & Project Manager

Michelle also joined the VWW team last year and brings with her years of administrative experience. Formerly the Executive Assistant at the Marcus Whitman Hotel, she has a background in hospitality, which serves her well in her current position. Michelle is also a skilled photographer and graphic designer and has been featured in several publications in the past year, including Sunset Magazine and Touring & Tasting magazine. Although she is originally from Portland, Michelle has developed a passion for the beautiful Walla Walla Valley and its community. When she's not at work or running her photography business, she can be found taking care of her goats and volunteering with Blue Mountain Action Council.

### **Daylan Gibbard**, Sales & Service Manager

Daylan joined the VWW team in August and brings years of sales experience in the wine industry. A WWCC graduate, he spent 11 years in the automotive collision industry and as a tasting room associate at several Walla Walla wineries. Daylan is active in the community volunteering through the local Kiwanis club and is an area administrator for the PNW District of Key Club International. When he is not working you will typically find him around town in one of his classic cars or spending time with his dog Luke Skywalker.

### **Erika Arlie**, Visitor Information Specialist

Erika is new to the VWW team and brings years of customer service experience. Originally from California, Erika made her way to Walla Walla five years ago and instantly fell in love with the region. She has been excited to learn about the community and its rich history ever since. Erika loves to work with people and children. She has completed an Early Childhood Development internship and is conversationally fluent in American-Sign Language.

# 2017 PRINT ADVERTISING

**1889 Magazine** (Issues: August/September) Circulation: 25,000

**Seattle Met** (Issues: February, April) Circulation: 50,069

**Horizon** (Issues: April, September) Circulation: *Requested*

**Scenic WA State Guide** (Issue: March) Circulation: 200,000

**Travel 50** (Issue: March) Circulation: 150,000

**Washington State Wine Tour Guide** (Issue: January) Circulation: 110,000

**Northwest Travel Magazine** (Issues: January/February, May, September) Circulation: 45,000

**Seattle Bride Magazine** (Issue: January) Circulation: 20,000

**Edibles Seattle** (Issues: March/April, May/June, September/October) Circulation: 170,000

**Edibles Portland** (Issues: March/April, May/June, November/December) Circulation: 170,000

**1859 Magazine** (Issue: November/December) Circulation: 25,000

**SIP Northwest** (Issue: October/December) Circulation: 108,000

**Portland Monthly** (Issue: January, April, October) Circulation: 492,075

**Western Journeys AAA** (Issue: October) Circulation: 650,000

**Sunset NW Travel Planner** (Issue: April) Circulation: *Requested*

**Sunset Travel Chronicles** (Issue: October): *Requested*

**Sunset Magazine** (Issues: April, September) Circulation: *Requested*

**walla walla** **Inside & Out**

**VISIT walla walla**

Here's how to enjoy a world-class Chamber Music Festival the Walla Walla way: surrounded by oak barrels with a glass of wine in hand. Soak in the warm weather at Wine Valley Golf Club by savoring the expansive greens and a bottle of wine on this Top 100 course.

Find your next memorable moment at [VisitWallaWalla.com](http://VisitWallaWalla.com)

**Alaska AIRLINES** Fly from Walla Walla and check your first case of wine for free! TasteAndTote.com

**walla walla** **Inside & Out**

**VISIT walla walla**

Experience an uncommon collection of culture, cuisine and wine. With urban offerings and small-town charm, this is Washington wine country at its most welcoming.

Plan your experience at [VisitWallaWalla.com](http://VisitWallaWalla.com)

**Alaska AIRLINES** Fly from Walla Walla and check your first case of wine for free! TasteAndTote.com

Fall is the time to be in **WALLA WALLA**

**WHEN SUMMER'S BOUNTY** makes way for fall grape harvest and crush, it signals for many the time to make an annual pilgrimage to wine country. This is hardly a secret to wine lovers, which explains the crowds that typically flock to many wine regions in September, October, and November.

Visitors to Walla Walla's wine country will find a much more relaxed and welcoming experience, especially midweek. With cooler weather and the changing color of leaves on trees and vines alike, fall in the Walla Walla Valley is both vibrant and beautiful.

Fall also fuels Walla Walla's eclectic culinary scene. Widely regarded as the "Breadbasket of the Pacific Northwest," Walla Walla is home to wheat farms, orchards, ranches, the beloved Walla Walla Sweet Onion, and so much more. The season's fresh harvest is prepared by local, renowned chefs, moving antipodeal from farm to table and savored in one of downtown Walla Walla's charming French bistros, hip cafes, traditional steakhouses, or gastropubs.

"Time and time again we hear from fall visitors that they wished they had another day or two to explore the area some more, and that they cannot wait to return the next year," said Ron Williams, Executive Director of Visit Walla Walla.

Walla Walla Valley wineries swing open their doors for two special autumn weekends. Fall Release Weekend, set for Nov. 3-5, treats wine lovers to winemakers' newest creations, including special releases only found at the winery itself. Winemakers usher in the holiday season with Holiday Barrel Weekend, Dec. 1-3, by providing samples of future releases straight from the barrel. Unique events, such as Walla Walla's monthly Food Truck Night, serve imaginative culinary creations, locally crafted beer, spirits, and wine. And the Downtown Walla Walla Farmers Market, held each Saturday at the Farmers Market Pavilion, hosts locals and visitors alike well into October.

**FALL EVENTS IN WALLA WALLA**

- First Friday Art Tour Sept. 1, Oct. 6
- Walla Walla Food Truck Night Sept. 4, Oct. 2
- Downtown Farmers Market Saturdays through October
- Wheelin' Walla Walla Weekend: Sept. 8-9
- Walla Walla Symphony Oct. 3, Nov. 7, Dec. 1
- Walla Walla Balloon Stampede: Oct. 18-22
- Dis de los Muertos Oct. 21-22
- Fall Release Weekend Nov. 3-5
- Holiday Barrel Weekend Dec. 1-3

Explore the many autumn tastes of Walla Walla and start planning your trip at [wallawalla.org](http://wallawalla.org).

## 2017 RADIO ADVERTISING

Week of Jan. 23 -  
Seattle, Spokane, Portland

Week of Feb. 6 - Seattle, Spokane, Portland

Week of Feb. 13, 20, 27 - Seattle, Spokane, Portland, Tri-Cities, Yakima

Week of Mar. 6 - Seattle, Spokane, Portland Tri-Cities, Yakima

Week of Sept. 18, 25 -  
Seattle, Spokane, Portland

Week of Oct. 9, 20 -  
Seattle, Spokane, Portland, SW Washington

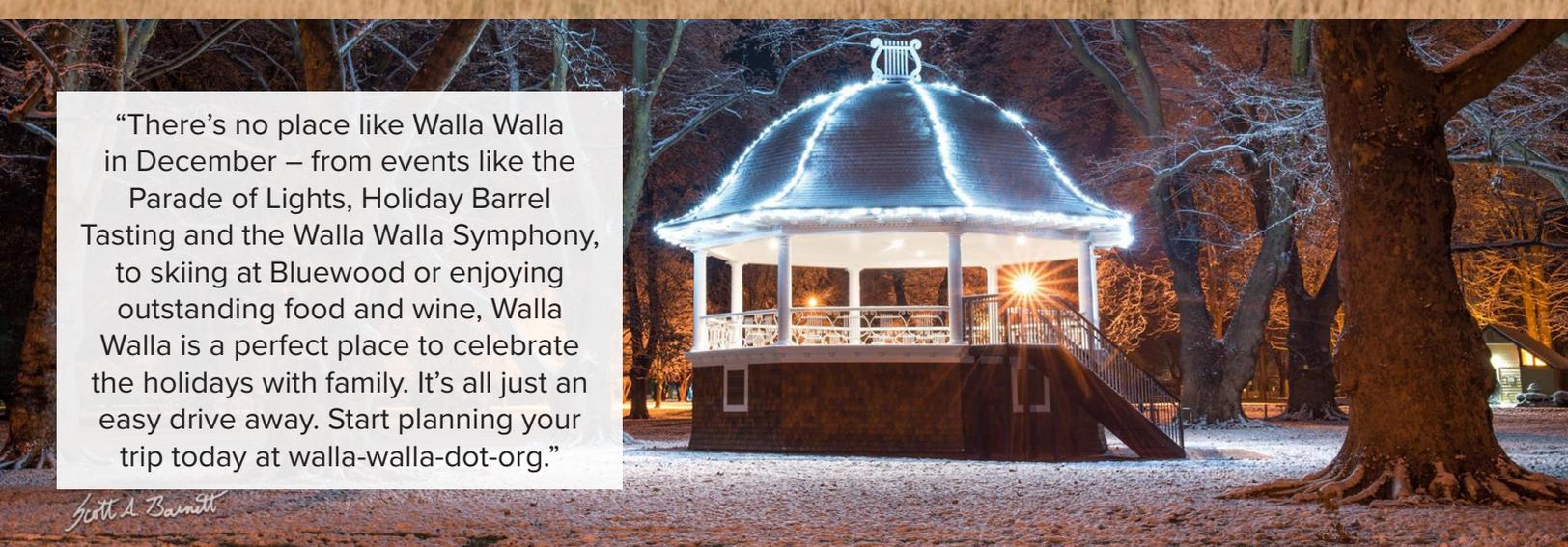
Week of Nov. 9 -  
Seattle, Portland, SW Washington

### Radio in spring and fall have specifically promoted:

- The Walla Walla Symphony
- Walla Walla Chamber Music Festival
- Fort Walla Walla Museum
- Kirkman House Museum
- Wine Valley Golf Course
- Walla Walla Sweets
- Spring Release
- Fall Release
- Holiday Barrel
- Ski Bluewood
- Macy's Parade of Lights



“Celebrate spring in Walla Walla. Enjoy blue skies, savor in the more than 130 wineries, and experience the Walla Walla Symphony with two concerts in March, highlights include Mozart’s Clarinet concerto, and Ravel’s G-Major piano concerto. All just an easy drive away. Go to [Walla-Walla-dot-org](http://Walla-Walla-dot-org) to plan your trip.”



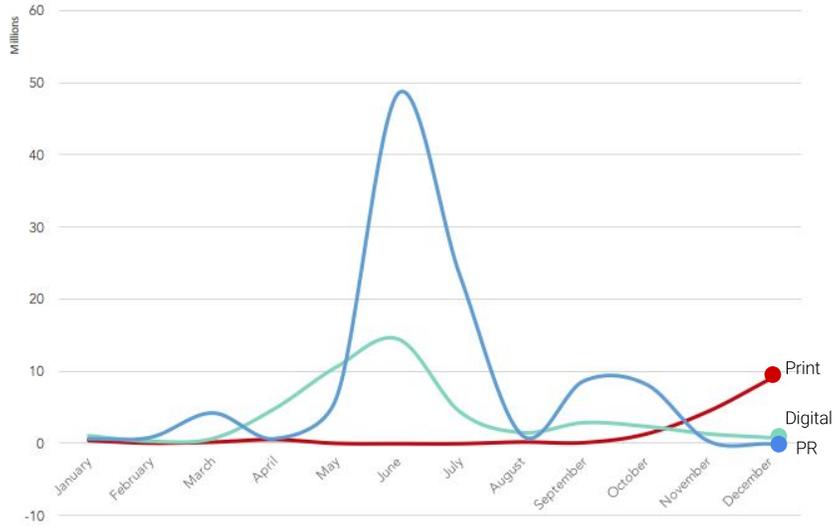
“There’s no place like Walla Walla in December – from events like the Parade of Lights, Holiday Barrel Tasting and the Walla Walla Symphony, to skiing at Bluewood or enjoying outstanding food and wine, Walla Walla is a perfect place to celebrate the holidays with family. It’s all just an easy drive away. Start planning your trip today at [walla-walla-dot-org](http://walla-walla-dot-org).”

*Scott A. Barnett*

# 2017 WEBSITE SNAPSHOT

## EXPOSURE

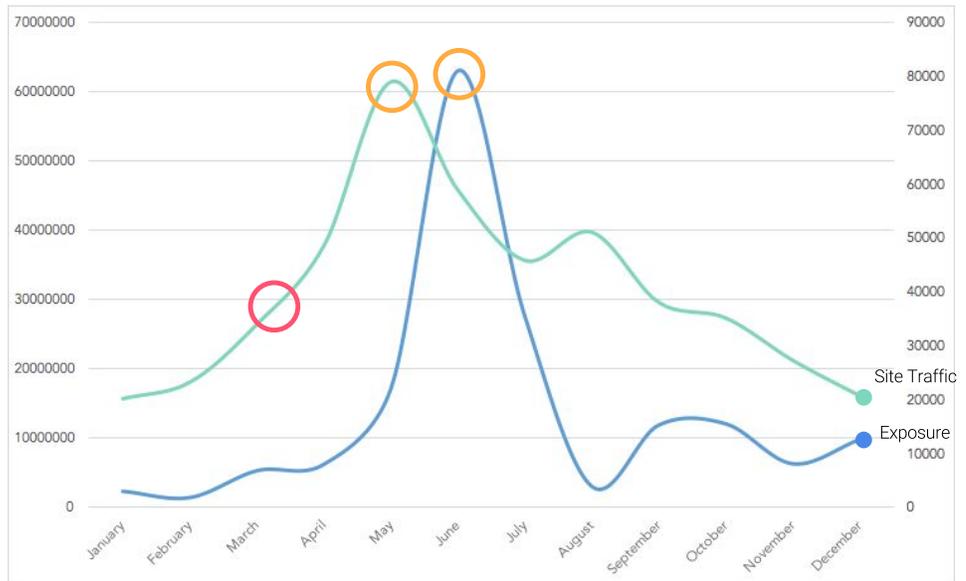
In 2017, we received over 164 million impressions coming from social, display, print, and PR.

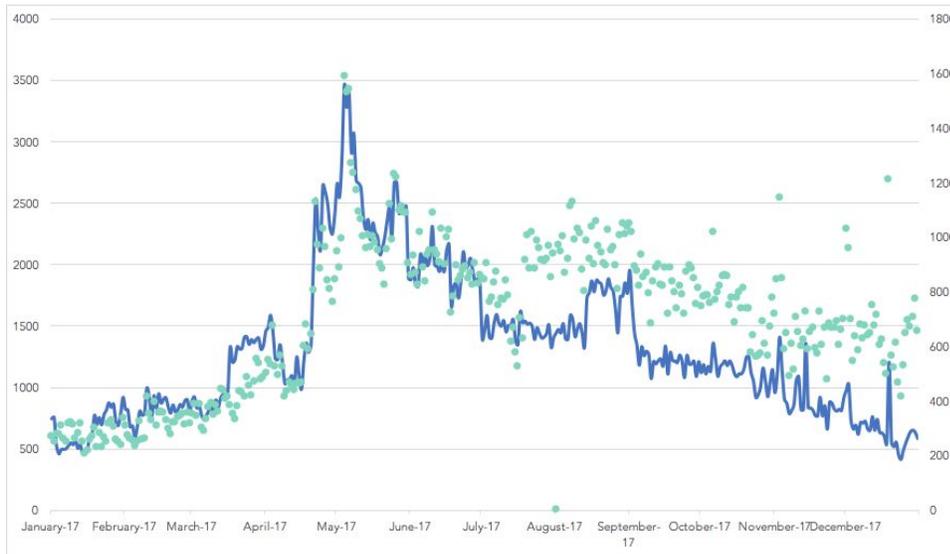


## TRACTION

In 2017 we see exposure and traffic trend pretty closely together. Both peaked May through June as Port campaigns were running in addition to always-on brand campaigns, before trending down throughout the remainder of the year.

- Lift in exposure primarily caused by a bump in PR coverage
- Intense upswing in exposure and site traffic due to the influx of budget and media associated with the Port of Walla Walla and Port of Seattle campaigns.





## ACTIVITY

Historically, goal conversions have trended similarly to site traffic.

However, we see in late July that though traffic dipped, our goal conversions remained close to previous levels. Starting in late September, we see goal conversions trending downward with traffic due to seasonality.



## GOAL CONVERSIONS

**1,979**

Visitor Packet Downloads

**303**

Newsletter Sign-Ups

**2199**

Clicks to Book

**38,930**

Clicks to Stakeholders

## 2017 BY THE NUMBERS

**164** million  
impressions



**481** thousand  
site visits

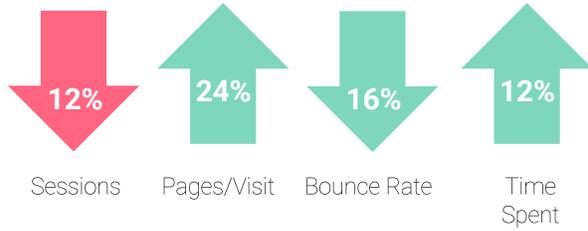
Impressions were up 122% in 2017 dues to more print and PR exposure.

Site traffic was down in 2017, however, traffic quality improved greatly (data shown in next slide)

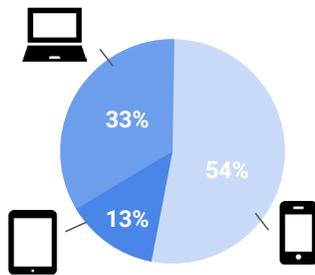


## WEBSITE SNAPSHOT

On-page metrics greatly improved in 2017, likely due to higher quality traffic being driven to the site.

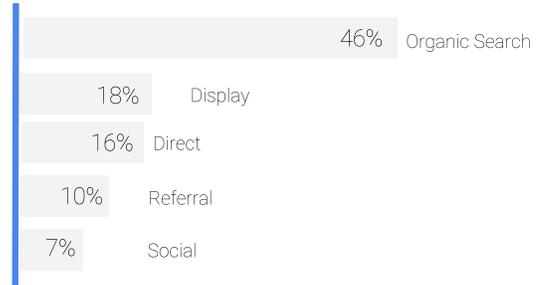


YoY Site Metrics



Device Metrics

### Traffic Source Breakdown

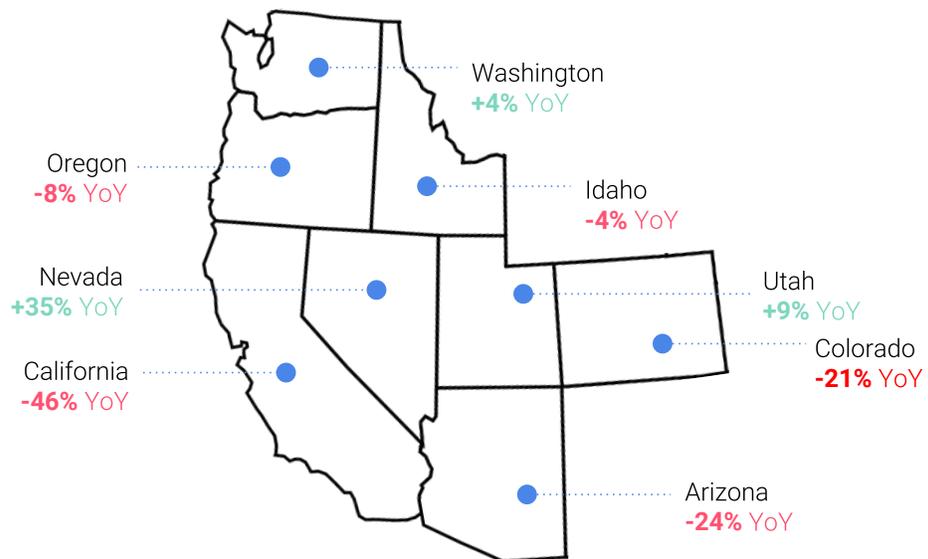


### Top Five Pages

1. Homepage **22%**
2. /wine-country-getaway **5%**
3. /wineries **4%**
4. /things-to-do **4%**
5. /calendar **4%**

## WEBSITE STATS

Year over year, traffic is down across most regions, due to less traffic driven from Facebook campaigns. However, much higher quality traffic was driven based on the on-page metrics above.



## 2017 TOP SOCIAL CAMPAIGNS

### April-November Brand Campaign

**Impressions:** 17,670,834

**Clicks:** 42,360

**Avg. CPC:** \$0.77 CPC

**Visit Walla Walla**  
Sponsored · 🌐

**A Must See Destination:  
Walla Walla, Washington**  
Unforgettable scenery. Awe inspiring

[Learn More](#)

👍❤️😮 4.3K 359 Comments 812 Shares

👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share

**Visit Walla Walla**  
Sponsored · 🌐

Exploring the 120 wineries of Walla Walla inside and out allows you to truly experience the fruits of our labor.

**Aged in here** ↗️

The wine patiently waits [Learn More](#)

**A quiet spot for two**

206 Reactions 16 Comments 35 Shares

👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share

### April-June Port Co-op

**Impressions:** 11,795,595

**Clicks:** 54,116

**Avg. CPC:** \$0.49 CPC

**Visit Walla Walla**  
Sponsored · 🌐

Travel on Alaska Airlines to Walla Walla, one of the nation's finest wine regions with 120 wineries, and your wine travels home with you for free.

**Brown out here** ↗️

**Savored in here** ↗️

Wine flies FREE from Walla Walla [Learn More](#)

Wine flies FREE from Walla Walla [Learn More](#)

415 Reactions 17 Comments 94 Shares

👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share

**Visit Walla Walla**  
Sponsored · 🌐

Travel on Alaska Airlines to Walla Walla, one of the nation's finest wine regions with 120 wineries, and your wine travels home with you for free.

**Paired in here** ↗️

**Celebrated out here** ↗️

Wine flies FREE from Walla Walla [Learn More](#)

Wine flies FREE from Walla Walla [Learn More](#)

55 Reactions 3 Comments 13 Shares

👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share

2017 TOP DISPLAY CAMPAIGNS

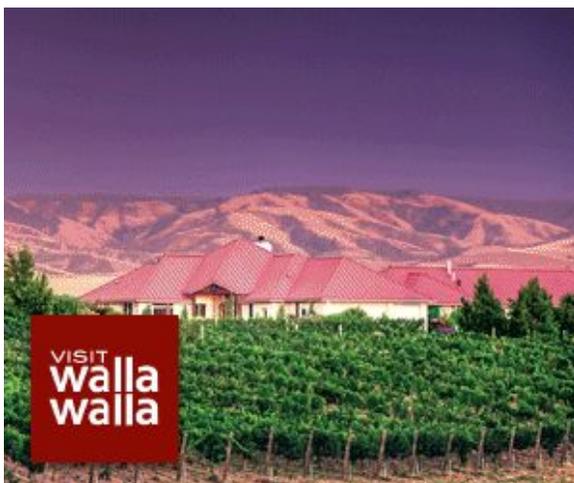
PNW & Boise Brand Awareness

**Impressions:** 28,348,926  
**Clicks:** 68,100  
**Avg. CPC:** \$0.50 CPC



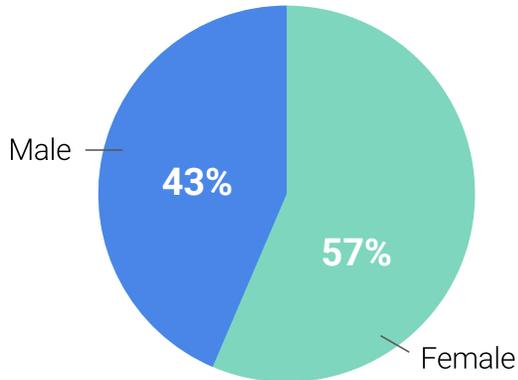
April-June Port Co-op

**Impressions:** 9,186,719  
**Clicks:** 27,278  
**Avg. CPC:** \$0.66 CPC

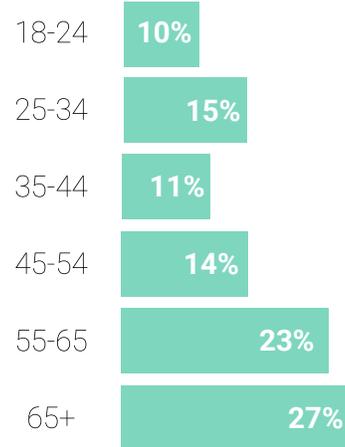


## DIGITAL: SOCIAL

In 2017, we saw that most people clicking on ads were female. We also saw that the engaged audience trended heavily toward the 55-65+ age range.

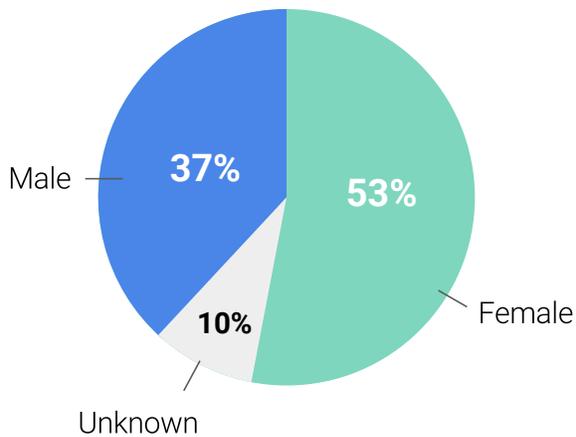


### Brand

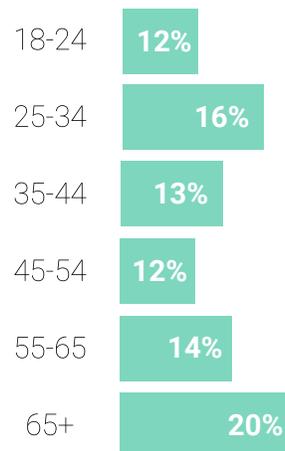


## DIGITAL: DISPLAY

In display, the audience also skewed toward women. We also saw a fairly even spread between age groups, with the 65+ age group clicking most often.



### Age



## 2017 PUBLIC RELATIONS RESULTS

Due in large part to an aggressive and proactive media outreach strategy, in 2017 Visit Walla Walla helped generate editorial coverage with a media value of more than \$2.1 million and a combined print circulation of more than 91 million readers. This represents an increase of more than 150 percent and 250 percent, respectively, over 2016 numbers.

Editorial coverage included more than 520 stories throughout the year, while face-to-face media visits with Travel + Leisure, Wine Spectator, Sunset, Via, Journey, Seattle Magazine, and other media outlets paved the way for future editorial coverage.

Earned media coverage continues to be the most efficient and cost-effective means of reaching our core audiences, giving us a presence in key media outlets that advertising dollars cannot.

The following is a list of notable coverage/clippings from 2017. A complete recap of YTD clippings, including circulation, unique visitors, and PR value can be found at the following link: [bit.ly/2rfFjIW](http://bit.ly/2rfFjIW)

**2017 Total Circulation:** 91,564,541

**2017 Total Media Value:** \$2,185,601

### **Spokesman-Review** **March 18, 2017**

*Walla Walla: Come for the wine, stay for everything else Red, white and the Blues*  
John Nelson's article about a spring escape in Walla Walla.

### **Alaska Beyond** **April 6, 2017**

*Cycling in Walla Walla*  
John Nelson's piece on cycling in southeastern Washington.

### **MSN** **June 8, 2017**

*26 Summer Tourist Spots to Avoid -- and Where to Go Instead*  
Mia Taylor's list recommends skipping Napa Valley for Walla Walla.

### **Eater Seattle** **June 15, 2017**

*Discover the Wonders of Walla Walla's Restaurants*  
Matthew Lombardi's Walla Walla dining recommendations.

### **Seattle Magazine** **July 20, 2017**

*Washington's Premiere Wine Destination is Getting Even Better*  
Kristen Russell's article on new attractions and restaurants coming to Walla Walla.

### **Seattle Met** **September 13, 2017**

*Walla Walla Isn't Napa-And Thank the Wine Gods for That*  
Allison William's piece compares Walla Walla to Napa Valley

### **PaleOMG** **October 11, 2017**

*Walla Walla - The Town So Nice, They Named It Twice*  
Article on the dining and attractions in Walla Walla.

### **Where to Retire** **October 11, 2017**

*Profile: Walla Walla, WA*  
Jean Arthur's article features Walla Walla as a perfect place to retire.

### **Bellevue Lifestyle Magazine** **November 1, 2017**

*Walla Walla Wine Tour*  
Jordan Blaine on his tour of Walla Walla wineries and restaurants.

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## STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION

Our stakeholders include any business, public facility, or institution connected in any way to the tourism economy, including hotels, wineries, restaurants, shops, salons, spas, transportation companies, tour companies, museums, sports facilities, city properties, schools, colleges, and public festivals. We communicate regularly with stakeholders via an electronic newsletter, which shares vital statistics, media coverage, and features about what's happening in the world of tourism in our Valley. We currently have 15,877 subscribers to our consumer newsletter.

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## VISITOR KIOSK

The Visitor Kiosk on Main Street is a fundamental venue for us to directly interact with consumers. For up to 2,100 visitors each month, our friendly staff provides direction, encourages visitors to take printed materials supplied by our stakeholders, and gives recommendations. This customer-centric facility introduces visitors to activities in Walla Walla of which they may not have otherwise been aware. The kiosk also displays information on upcoming events.

The team in our visitor kiosk also curates the Visit Walla Walla calendar. To ensure current, accurate information on this calendar, our team visits all of the public calendars, plus our stakeholder Facebook pages. They also call members of the community for information that has not been recently updated. In this way, the Visit Walla Walla calendar is a one stop shop for visitors to identify activities for their stay.