

Truth or Consequences, New Mexico: Lost History, Emerging Opportunities

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Every community on planet earth also has a saga worth expressing. This is certainly true of the quaint and remote city of Truth or Consequences, New Mexico. As time progresses, many community histories become lost, especially in locations that do not possess the means—or will—to record and publicize them. Gleaning information from brochures, pamphlets, and residents of the area allows one to construct a heritage and cultural inventory of what the particular area can potentially market. This inventory helps to shape itineraries. These itineraries can work to bring tourists to the city and money to its economy.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism and Opportunity

The history of a place is a story. The key is to uncover it. Between the buffs and the professors, a similar theme emerges. Historic figures and their decisions create these common threads. Those choices shaped the story of a place and, subsequently, grant the power to shape how individuals make decisions today, including civic leaders looking to capitalize on the heritage and cultural assets in their community.

History matters. While it is important for individuals to strive to learn from the lessons of the past, it is equally as important for society to understand the past's significance. Heritage preservation is the principal tool used to promote the stories of the past. Citizens active in heritage preservation benefit from the additional resources and knowledge they have at their disposal. Even occasional consumers of an area's heritage will begin to develop a sense of belonging—tourism professionals often promote the preservation of an area's unique heritage and culture as the creation of “social capital.” Simply put, citizens who are proud of their home will seek to instill the same sense of pride into younger generations.

The creation of social capital can become habit forming. If successful, this process can also become transformational, and the area will experience a continuous growth of appreciation for its heritage. Furthermore, as younger generations are consciously or unconsciously exposed to their community's unique heritage, they will develop civic pride that will shape their lives and that of their society. Values gleaned from the past thus shape the future.

Tourism sells. Areas that preserve their heritage often benefit from economic gains. When done properly, an area experiences more tourist traffic because of the added incentive for visiting: knowledge of what made the area into what it is today. Typically, people only travel to a city to visit family or as they pass through on the way to another attraction. Good tourism attracts travelers on its own. These people want to learn.

Larger potential markets benefit businesses. When more traffic flows to an area, revenue inevitably increases because “heritage tourists tend to spend more money on shopping, lodging and food than many

other types of tourists. Likewise, they can afford to stay longer in the destination...[by] at least a few days” (Timothy, 2011, p. 28). The more places of interest an area has, the longer these tourists will plan to stay. Thus, more revenue flows into the community because the money these tourists spend feeds directly into the economy of the city.

History is a precious luxury. Each individual area’s history is no less valuable than any other’s. Thus, areas should make every effort to preserve their own unique history. If they pursue these opportunities to preserve an area’s history, that area should benefit economically from it. The more interesting a city’s history appears, the greater the possibility that a large economic upswing will occur. Individual citizens may express an interest in their area’s history, but they do not necessarily possess the means, knowledge, or will to immortalize these bygone times. The burden, therefore, falls on those who possess the knowledge and training to preserve the past. Through their efforts, it becomes possible to save the lesser-known histories of these areas and allows all who have an interest in that area’s history to enjoy them.

Local Heritage

Some of the most interesting histories are those of the smaller, lesser-known cities of the world. By nature of the size of these cities, their histories often go unnoticed by the remainder of the world’s people. One of these cities is Truth or Consequences, located in southern New Mexico off Interstate Twenty-Five. Truth or Consequences lies approximately equidistant between Albuquerque, New Mexico and El Paso, Texas. Truth or Consequences’ geography and climate afford the area several marketable characteristics because of the advantages afforded to both consumers and the city. Truth or Consequences needs a proper application of these features to benefit from them.

Every endeavor in heritage preservation requires unique focal points. Each of these individual foci must encompass the spirit of the city they represent. The tourism professional must determine what links the individual assets to each other as he or she researches the city. Once one makes a connection, a theme begins to develop. Themes enable the researcher to tailor the town’s assets to fit the thread that runs through the town’s origins. A common theme allows citizens to learn about their heritage and pass along the history, customs, and values of their community to future generations.

Two principle themes present themselves through Truth or Consequences’ assets. First, Truth or Consequences boasts a strong history of leisure and healing, which is still evident to this day. A proper marketing campaign focusing on the heavy tradition of leisure and healing bodes well for the town’s economy; opportunities for rest and recovery attract those looking for a relaxing vacation. If awareness of Truth or Consequences’ ability to offer healing and leisure grew, awareness of the town’s heritage and culture would also grow because of the increased traffic flow through the city.

The second theme present in Truth or Consequences lies in the personalized nature of the history. The Hamilton Military Museum especially encapsulates this theme. People enjoy learning of the exploits of other people because it creates the possibility that they will have a greater chance of relating to something that occurred in history. Visitors from further away will not necessarily relate to everything mentioned about these locals, but the personalization of history will help them gain insight into the town they are visiting. The interest sparked within their being could culminate in these visitors returning later to learn more or recommending the attraction to others. Combining these two themes, leisure and healing and personalization of history, will allow the researcher to maximize the marketing potential of the heritage and culture of Truth or Consequences.

Tourism presents many opportunities to the world. Every area should take advantage of the opportunities the tourism industry offers because “tourism, the world’s largest industry, is essential to a community’s economic vitality, sustainability, and profitability” (Historic Preservation Division Georgia Department of Natural Resources and Tourism Division Georgia Department of Economic Development, 2010, p. 2). In addition to the city benefiting from the industry, citizens will benefit from the feelings of pride and unity that arise within them. Working to enhance the portrayal of the city’s heritage leads to improved benefits for all stakeholders.

PURPOSE

For this project to benefit the town of Truth or Consequences, it must suggest additional value-adding activities. A simple regurgitation of what Truth or Consequences is doing or has done yields no benefit. The presentation of new ideas discovered through the research process is the primary method to achieve this goal. Once the researcher has determined what these value-adding activities are, presenting them becomes the next issue to confront. Potential presentation formats include handouts for hotels and visitor centers to distribute, billboards advertising attractions, published itineraries in travel and visitor guides, brochures of the proposed itineraries, and PDF versions of attractions for use on applicable websites.

Methodology

Saving the histories of any town is a multi-step process. First, people must view the location through the context of the larger tourism industry. Second, efforts at the state, regional, and local levels must undergo a reviewing process. Third, examining the area through the lens of the successes of another similar location allows the researcher to see if anything applies to the new case study. What worked in one small town may work again in another.

Tourism professionals need to know what they are working with. Researchers construct a heritage and cultural inventory by gleaning information from pamphlets, brochures, and residents of the area, as well as from any other sources they come across. Comparing these assets with those of another town similar in population and resources allows one to draw conclusions about the city. With this knowledge, one possesses the ability to begin construction of an inventory preservation plan. Following the completion of the preservation plan, the investigator can begin to assemble a marketing plan. Weighing all the information accumulated, the tourism professional can form the strongest marketing plan to best publicize the town's assets. After the formation of a marketing plan, the investigator has a finished product to present to city officials. Once these officials accept the marketing plan, the city possesses the means to implement a strategy to pursue an economic upturn.

Determining what activities would add value to Truth or Consequences required research. After researching what Truth or Consequences possessed for use in an inventory, the next steps involved analyzing what tourist traffic the town already experienced, as well as the town's ability to lodge additional tourist groups. Visitor statistics provided by the Geronimo Trail National Scenic Byway Visitor Center shed light on the number of visitors that the Visitor Center, and to some extent, the town received over a span of six years. The SHARE Center, an offshoot of the STR report, provided statistics on hotel occupancy rates in Truth or Consequences, as well as New Mexico, for use in this research. Analyzing the data held within the pages of their reports could allow the researcher to glean some trends about the town. The third research segment involved looking at the shops and restaurants in the MainStreet District and attempting to determine any patterns regarding hours of operations and why there are certain days that no institutions are in operation. This knowledge can help determine appropriate patterns to acknowledge throughout the presentation of the inventory.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES

Studying statistics is necessary to make important decisions in business. When researching a town, it is beneficial to look at visitor statistics, as well as hotel statistics, to gain an understanding of what tourist traffic the town is already experiencing. With this knowledge in hand, the researcher can work to fit his or her suggestions within the scope of what the town is already experiencing, as well as recommending improvements that serve to improve the tourist traffic to the town.

Description of Data Collection

The Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Visitor Center is located in the MainStreet District of downtown Truth or Consequences, as are many of the town's attractions. The researcher used the Visitor Center's data to track the number of visitors annually. The first set of data recorded total visitors to the visitor

center, broken down by three points of origin (New Mexico, other states in the Union, and international) from 2010-2015. Additional spreadsheets tracked the visitors by individual cities in New Mexico, each state in the United States (as well as the District of Columbia), and various countries around the globe.

The second set of data originated from the SHARE Center. Data in the reports sent from the SHARE Center included a trend analysis of hotels in New Mexico, showing occupancy rate, average daily rate, revenue per room, as well as several other measures; revenues and expenses for different accounting line entries; supply history; and census data for the area’s hotels. The data in the SHARE Center reports came from a larger database that the STR has at its disposal. As researchers pull the data together, it becomes possible for them to formulate trends and unlock the potential of what the town has at its disposal.

Shortfalls of Data

As a small town, Truth or Consequences lacked both the wide-ranging coverage and the number of assets that a larger city might have had at its disposal. For example, volunteers often staffed institutions in Truth or Consequences, leading to a lack of consistency in day-to-day operations due to the differences in the people working at any given time.

The data provided by the Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Visitor Center exemplified this characteristic. Over the six years documented, the Visitor Center underwent several changes that skewed the data. Thus, one is unable to draw any trends from this data because of its inconsistencies and biases. Table 1 shows the overall percentage change in visitors between years, as well as in the three categories of visitors (New Mexico, other states in the Union, and international).

TABLE 1
GERONIMO TRAIL SCENIC BYWAY VISITOR CENTER
VISITATION STATISTICS 2010 TO 2015

	New Mexico	United States (except NM)	International	Totals
% Change 2014-2015	28.1	27.3	4.2	25.5
2015 Visitors	2064	2460	373	4897
% Change 2013-2014	23.3	11.6	16.6	16.6
2014 Visitors	1611	1933	358	3902
% Change 2012-2013	5.5	24.3	18.5	15.7
2013 Visitors	1307	1732	307	3346
% Change 2011-2012	154.9	10.8	-1.1	44.2
2012 Visitors	1239	1393	259	2891
% Change 2010-2011	56.3	60.7	36.5	56.0
2011 Visitors	486	1257	262	2005
2010 Visitors	311	782	192	1285

Note. Adapted from “Visitor statistics compiled from Geronimo Trail Visitor Center registration log,” by Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Visitor Center, 2016.

To completely understand the data provided by the Visitor Center, one must understand the changes the Visitor Center underwent. Conversations with LaRena Miller helped to interpret the data provided by the Visitor Center because of the knowledge she possessed and provided about the changes undertaken by the organization. Originally, the Visitor Center was located next to the Geronimo Springs Museum. At the time, volunteers were not a constant presence at the Visitor Center. Thus, few people signed in. In late 2011, the Visitor Center moved to its new location in the MainStreet District. When it did, volunteers regularly staffed the visitor center, and it operated with a fixed set of hours. During the second half of 2014, the Visitor Center moved to its current location on Foch Street. The city requested the move to

coordinate with Spaceport America’s visitor center, located in the same building, on matters regarding visitors and reaching them when they came to Truth or Consequences.

In addition to the changes the Visitor Center experienced, Truth or Consequences endeavored to increase tourist traffic to the city. As part of this endeavor, in 2012, the city hired a marketing firm to create an advertising campaign. The campaign involved advertisements in New Mexico travel guides and the El Paso Visitors Guide, summer and winter inserts in *The Albuquerque Journal*, billboards between Socorro and Las Cruces, press releases, and articles written by professional travel writers published in nationwide travel magazines (Miller, 2017). This marketing campaign helps to explain the 154.9% increase in numbers of visitors from New Mexico, as displayed in Table 1. It is important to note that it is impossible to ensure the visitors who signed in at the Visitor Center accurately represent all visitors.

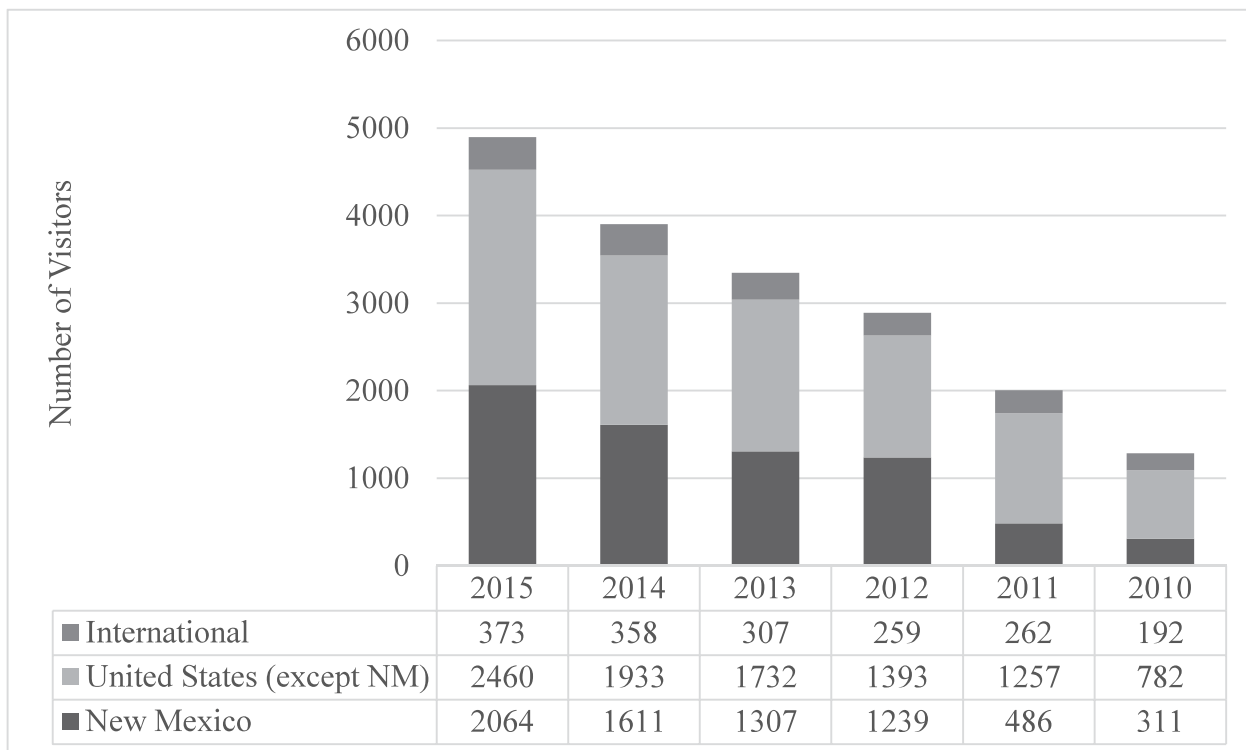
Limited participation from hotels in the city made it impossible for the SHARE Center to glean any trends in Truth or Consequences. In fact, the SHARE Center ran many of the reports on the whole state of New Mexico or only included data for six months of one year.

Data Analysis

Unfortunately, the nature of the data did not lend itself to most forms of statistical analysis. Because of this, simple descriptive statistics comprised the entire analysis the researcher could perform on the data. All the analyses reflect the fact that the data included only the total number of visitors who signed in at the Visitor Center, because there is no way to be certain that all visitors to the Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Visitor Center registered their presence by signing in on the visitor log.

Figure 1 depicts the number of visitors that signed in at the visitor center, classified by one of three places of origin—New Mexico, another state in the Union, or another country.

FIGURE 1
GERONIMO TRAIL SCENIC BYWAY VISITOR CENTER VISITORS, BY YEAR

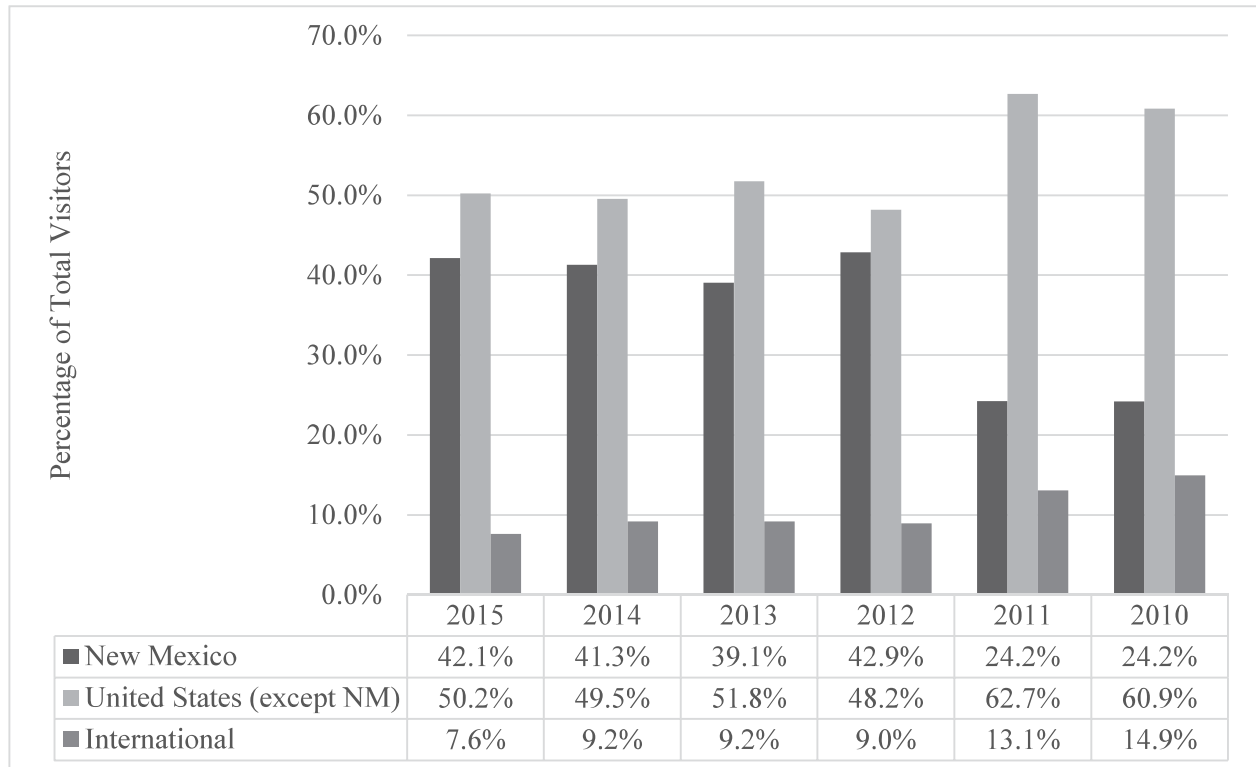


Note. Adapted from “Visitor statistics compiled from Geronimo Trail Visitor Center registration log,” by Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Visitor Center, 2016.

From Figure 1, one can see that over the six years included in the data, the total number of visitors who signed in at the Visitor Center increased. As time progressed, awareness of Truth or Consequences and the visitor center increased, and the visitor center itself made more concerted efforts to reach tourists.

Figure 2 displays the three classifications of visitors used by the Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Visitor Center (New Mexico, United States [except NM], and International) in terms of percentage of the total number of visitors for each of the six years included.

FIGURE 2
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL VISITORS, BY POINT OF ORIGIN, BY YEAR

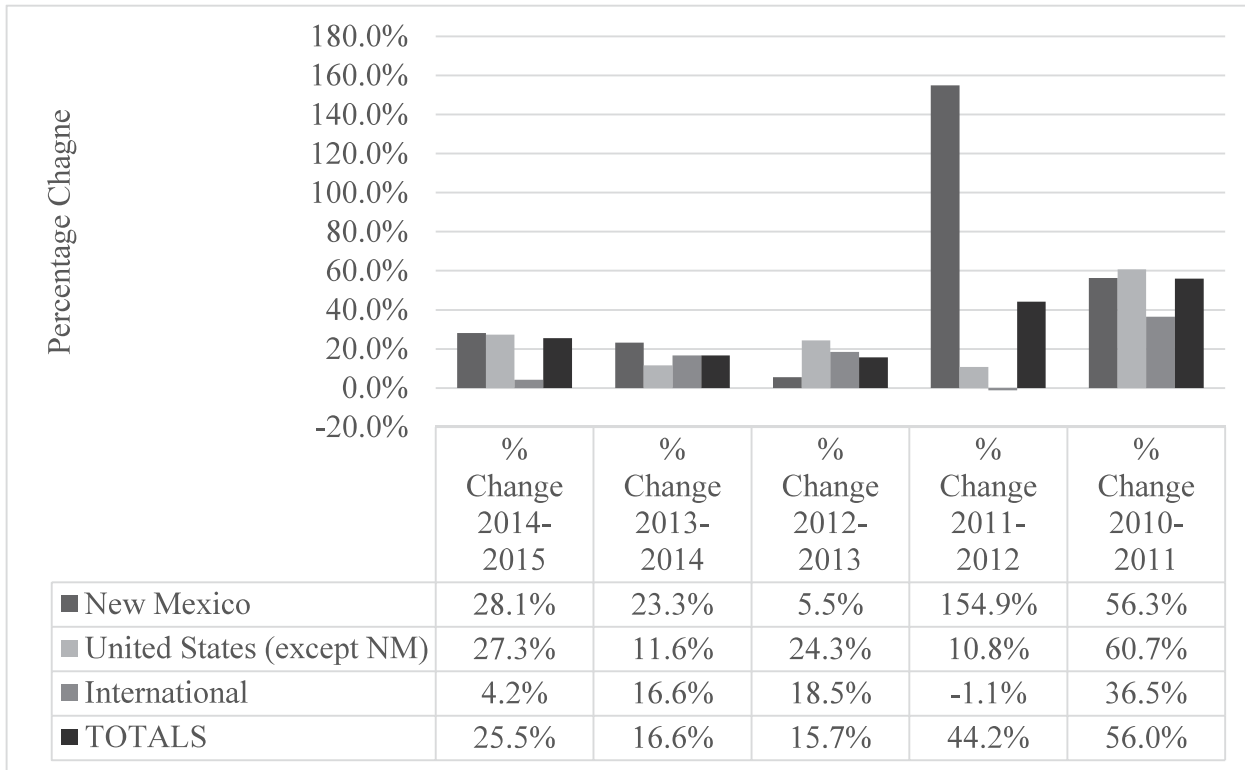


Note. Adapted from “Visitor statistics compiled from Geronimo Trail Visitor Center registration log,” by Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Visitor Center, 2016.

Again, one can conclude very little from this data because there is no way to ensure that every visitor signed in. The percentage of visitors who signed in from states excluding New Mexico composed well over half the total number of visitors who signed in at the visitor center. Over the course of the six years, that percentage fell to represent approximately one-half of all visitors to the Visitor Center.

As mentioned before, Truth or Consequences and the visitor center itself underwent several changes over the course of the data collection period. Figure 3 shows the percentage change from year to year in the number of visitors, who signed in, from the three different areas, as well as the total change in sign-in participation.

**FIGURE 3
PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN VISITORS TO GERONIMO TRAIL
SCENIC BYWAY VISITOR CENTER, FROM YEAR TO YEAR**



Note. Adapted from “Visitor statistics compiled from Geronimo Trail Visitor Center registration log,” by Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Visitor Center, 2016.

Figure 3 is a graphic representation of the percentages displayed in Table 1. It illustrates changes in the number of visitors the center had from each area compared to the previous year. The large spike in New Mexico sign-ins probably resulted from the heavy emphasis on the marketing campaign Truth or Consequences launched in early 2012 (Miller, 2017). The heavy attention the area received worked to draw more people from around New Mexico to Truth or Consequences to see what the town had to offer.

The previous data dealt with the total number of visitors. However, the data provided by the Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Visitor Center also included visitor statistics for cities in New Mexico, other states in the United States (as well as Washington, D.C.), and various international countries. They included the number of visitors from each of these originating points. Pulling from the data provided by the visitor center allows one to see the percentage of visitors who signed in from the three categories that came from Sierra County and the top nine cities, ten states, and six countries.

Because the visitor center reported total visitors from Sierra County and not the number of visitors from individual cities within the county, the researcher determined the percentage of New Mexican visitors that came from the county for each of the six years. Of the total New Mexican visitors in 2010, 12.2 percent came from Sierra County. In 2011, the percentage of visitors rose to 17.5 percent. By 2012, the percentage of New Mexican visitors from Sierra County had risen to 45.3 percent. The remaining three years in the data set saw the percentage taper off slightly. In 2014, it had fallen to 41.0 percent. By 2015, the percentage of New Mexican visitors from Sierra County was 39.4 percent (Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Visitor Center, 2016). Once the visitor center began receiving more publicity (circa, 2012), a relatively sizable percentage of the New Mexican visitors who signed in at the visitor center came from Sierra County.

Continuing with the analysis of visitors from New Mexico, the researcher studied nine cities. It is important to note, in calculating the percentage of visitors from the nine cities, the analysis excluded Sierra County's total number of visitors from the New Mexico totals. These nine cities had significant numbers of visitors for at least five of the six years in the data set. The researcher did not add a tenth city because there was a steep drop-off in the number of visitors from the tenth city compared to the ninth. Table 2 shows the percentage of the remaining visitors from New Mexico from each of the top nine cities. The researcher compared each city's number of visitors to the total number of visitors from New Mexico, excluding Sierra County, to arrive at the percentages.

TABLE 2
PERCENT OF TOTAL VISITORS FOR TOP NINE CITIES,
EXCLUDING SIERRA COUNTY, BY YEAR

	% of Visitors					
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Alamogordo	2.2	2.1	4.9	2.4	4.2	5.5
Albuquerque	31.6	31.1	31.0	40.1	36.7	26.0
Las Cruces	14.0	16.4	18.2	14.9	10.0	21.6
Los Lunas	1.9	2.0	1.4	1.6	1.0	0.7
Rio Rancho	2.4	2.0	1.8	3.2	4.0	3.7
Santa Fe	12.1	12.3	10.1	10.5	8.7	6.6
Silver City	3.0	3.7	4.9	4.3	5.0	0.7
Socorro	1.8	2.8	1.8	0.7	2.7	0.7
Taos	1.8	2.0	4.8	1.3	1.0	2.6
Total	70.8	74.2	79.0	79.1	73.3	68.1

Note. Adapted from "Visitor statistics compiled from Geronimo Trail Visitor Center registration log," by Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Visitor Center, 2016.

For each of the six years included in the data set, these nine cities composed a significant percentage of the remaining total visitors from New Mexico. This means that most of the visitors to the center, who signed in, came from a few cities in New Mexico, and there are dozens of cities whose citizens have little to no contact with the Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Visitor Center.

Just as it is important to know how many people are coming to the visitor center from New Mexico, it is important to know how many people are coming from different states throughout the Union. Table 3 lists the ten states that provided the most visitors. The researcher compared each state's number of visitors to the total number of visitors from the United States (excluding New Mexico) to arrive at the percentages.

TABLE 3
PERCENT OF TOTAL VISITORS FOR TOP TEN STATES, BY YEAR

	% of Visitors					
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Arizona	8.5	6.3	6.2	8.0	9.6	8.2
California	10.2	6.9	9.5	5.2	8.2	6.1
Colorado	9.1	7.8	9.5	8.7	5.3	8.6
Florida	2.9	3.0	3.4	2.7	2.4	2.7
Michigan	3.3	2.7	2.8	2.5	3.0	3.6
Minnesota	4.6	5.4	5.2	6.1	5.6	3.1
New York	3.4	3.5	3.5	2.7	6.4	3.6
Texas	19.8	24.6	19.3	19.3	25.6	19.8
Washington	3.3	2.7	2.8	2.4	3.7	3.5
Wisconsin	3.2	3.6	1.7	3.4	1.8	2.8
Total	68.2	66.6	64.0	61.0	71.5	61.9

Note. Adapted from “Visitor statistics compiled from Geronimo Trail Visitor Center registration log,” by Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Visitor Center, 2016.

Again, the researcher did not include an eleventh state because of the steep drop-off in the number of visitors between the tenth and eleventh states. As with the cities, these ten states are where most of the American visitors call home.

Finally, the visitor center tracked international visitors. Table 4 displays the percentage of total international visitors that came from the top six countries. A comparison of each country’s number of visitors to the total number of international visitors granted the percentages.

TABLE 4
PERCENT OF TOTAL VISITORS FOR TOP SIX COUNTRIES, BY YEAR

	% of Visitors					
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Australia	7.2	4.7	6.8	5.8	4.6	1.0
Canada	35.1	40.2	42.7	35.1	37.8	41.1
England	9.9	14.8	10.1	12.0	9.5	14.1
France	5.4	8.9	7.5	8.1	20.2	3.1
Germany	19.6	8.7	13.4	12.0	9.2	10.4
Mexico	2.9	1.4	0.7	4.2	3.1	5.7
Totals	80.2	78.8	81.1	77.2	84.4	75.5

Note. Adapted from “Visitor statistics compiled from Geronimo Trail Visitor Center registration log,” by Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Visitor Center, 2016.

As with the cities and states, the researcher chose not to include a seventh country because of the drop-off in the number of visitors who signed in between the sixth and seventh countries. The six countries comprised most of the total number of international visitors for each of the six years included in the data set.

The purpose of this project is to add value to what Truth or Consequences is already doing—to draw additional tourist traffic to the area. To accomplish this, the visitors must have something to do to pass the time; while they are in the city and must have somewhere to stay the night. With 18 total hotels and lodges and a combined capacity of 420 rooms, tourists can stay overnight in Truth or Consequences. Two activities that people can participate in while visiting a town are shopping and eating. Appendix A shows the hours of operation for a selection of eight shops and nine restaurants, all of which are in—or just slightly removed from—the MainStreet District in downtown Truth or Consequences. Shopping and eating allow tourists to have something to do between and after other scheduled attractions. However, if these places have sporadic hours of operation, it can be difficult for the tourists to visit these places because of their limited hours.

Shops in the MainStreet District have more hours of operation later in the week, assuming a week with a Sunday start. Few shops have hours on Sundays and Tuesdays. The restaurants, on the other hand, have more consistent hours of operation, but many close early. Thus, visitors may have few choices for nightly dining, especially on the first night of their visit.

Data Assessment

Despite the limitations of this project's data, the researcher gleaned some insights into the town of Truth or Consequences. The data confirmed the hypothesis that smaller towns sometimes do not care enough, or do not possess the required resources, to accurately track visitation. The study of the hours of operation in the MainStreet District provided insight into the ability of the town to attract and entertain tourists by providing local cuisine and souvenirs. The analyses presented in this chapter will help to shape the recommendations that the researcher will make at the conclusion of this project.

MARKETABLE ITINERARIES

Tourism is vital to the economy of any city. In the past, Truth or Consequences experienced some tourist traffic. However, before Truth or Consequences can experience any growth in tourist traffic, it must ensure that people become aware of what the town has at its disposal. If they do not believe that there is anything of worth to spend their time and money on, then they will not make the trip to contribute to the economy of Truth or Consequences.

The purpose of this project is to present new ideas that add to the work already completed in Truth or Consequences. Simply put, the key is to contribute combinations of attractions that Truth or Consequences has not already thought of as a means of enticing more people to come to Truth or Consequences.

When marketing a town, the most important goal is to attract diverse groups of people, while considering the 4-X rule. The 4-X rule states that tourists should spend four times the amount of time spent traveling at attractions. Attracting different groups of people is essential because not all people share the same interests. Proposing different itineraries is the best way to accomplish this goal. This project will propose four individual sets of attractions in Truth or Consequences and the surrounding area. The four itineraries proposed in this project are historical; family fun; outdoor adventures; and past, present, and future. Each of these itineraries proposes a few attractions to visit while in or on the way to Truth or Consequences. Additionally, the restaurants and businesses listed in Appendix A provide other opportunities for visitors to enjoy while in Truth or Consequences. The researcher will suggest some restaurants as part of the itineraries, but visitors have the option to obtain food where they see fit as they explore Truth or Consequences. Appendix B displays the hours of operation for many of the other attractions presented in these itineraries. Referring to it allows one to gain a better understanding of when he or she should plan to visit the attractions listed throughout the table.

The first itinerary appeals to those with a deep appreciation for history and a desire to learn more about the history of different towns. Many of the attractions in this group have links to military history. Visitors arriving from the north can begin their visit to Truth or Consequences by making a stop approximately fifty miles outside of the city at Fort Craig. A stop at Fort Craig grants visitors the chance

to learn what life was like for the military on the western frontier (Bureau of Land Management, *Fort Craig*). Another chance to learn about military life presents itself through the Battle of Val Verde site, just upstream from Fort Craig (El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail, *El Camino Real*). Visiting this battle site allows visitors to come to a better understanding of the American Civil War and how far west it reached.

Once in Truth or Consequences, visitors can go to the Geronimo Springs Museum to learn more about the history of Truth or Consequences and Sierra County. After spending the morning at the Geronimo Springs Museum, visitors can pick up lunch at Bar-B-Que on Broadway before making their way to the Veterans Memorial Park and Museum. The Veterans Memorial Park and Museum are attractive stops for those people who possess a deep interest in the military history of the United States, specifically the contributions of New Mexicans during those conflicts. Additionally, the park contains a half-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall (Veterans Memorial Park and Hamilton Military Museum, *Veterans Memorial Park and Hamilton Military Museum*). The memorial wall is an attractive piece for those who have an interest in visiting the wall, but who do not possess the means to make the trip to the nation's capital to see the original wall.

The final piece of this tour involves visiting the ghost towns of Sierra County. These towns offer a glimpse into what life was like in the past (Whelpley, 2015). Visiting them and looking at the remaining buildings allows visitors to gain a new perspective on life in southern New Mexico.

The second itinerary consists of family fun attractions; while it has fewer attractions listed, visitors can spend great amounts of time at the events included. The primary event to attend as part of the family fun tour is the Truth or Consequences Fiesta. However, as it is a specifically scheduled event, visitors must plan to come to Truth or Consequences the first weekend in May to attend (Sierra County Recreation and Tourism, 2017). While at the three-day festival, families can participate in a variety of events; chances are there is at least one event every person can enjoy. Visitors can take a lunch break at Bar-B-Que on Broadway or A&B Drive-In. After enjoying the festival, a family can make their way to Elephant Butte to camp or spend time on the lake, which is New Mexico's largest body of water (Sjostrom, 2014). At the lake, people can choose to explore the nature of New Mexico and/or take part in any one of several water sports available (Whelpley, 2015). These events provide a way for family members of all ages to have an enjoyable vacation in southern New Mexico.

The third itinerary speaks to people who long for adventures in the outdoors of New Mexico. In the areas surrounding Truth or Consequences, visitors can take time and go one of several trails that encompass various geographical features found in southern New Mexico. Visitors begin at Elephant Butte and enjoy the amenities the lake has to offer, including camping and water sports (Whelpley, 2015). From there they can use Truth or Consequences as a hub to venture down one of several scenic byways, including the Jornada del Muerto, Geronimo Trail, and the Lake Valley Back Country Byway. Before embarking on one of these journeys, tourists can eat breakfast at A Little Slice of Heaven or Passion Pie Café. The Jornada del Muerto is a portion of El Camino Real. Visitors embarking on this waterless trek can share in experiences the Spanish had in southern New Mexico when they first came to the land (El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail, *El Camino Real*; Gabriel, 1996). Visitors can experience different types of New Mexican geography along the Geronimo Trail National Scenic Byway and the Lake Valley Back Country Byway. The Geronimo Trail includes breathtaking views of the Chiricahua Desert and the Gila Wilderness. The Lake Valley Back Country Byway is a walking, self-guided tour of the ghost towns of Sierra County. As visitors take in the ghost towns, they experience the grass and wildlife of the area and all their natural wonder (New Mexico Tourism Department, *New Mexico Scenic Byways*; Bureau of Land Management, *Lake Valley*). Upon returning to Truth or Consequences, visitors can get dinner at Latitude 33 or Bella Luca Café Italiano. Any one of these trails offers the opportunity to explore Sierra County and experience the natural beauty of New Mexico.

The fourth itinerary puts together a tour of the past, present, and future of Truth or Consequences. Visitors begin with breakfast at the Passion Pie Café and proceed to the Geronimo Springs Museum. The exhibits within the Geronimo Springs Museum tell the story of Truth or Consequences by covering distinct aspects of the area and the influence various people groups had on the area (Geronimo Springs

Museum, *Geronimo Springs Museum*). Spending time at the Geronimo Springs Museum allows visitors to gain an understanding of how the town has evolved over the years. Following a morning at the museum, tourists can obtain lunch at El Faro. After lunch, visitors can browse through shops in the MainStreet district before continuing with their day.

Bathhouses bridge the past and the present because they are some of the original structures in Truth or Consequences. Soaking in a bathhouse provides visitors with a way to rejuvenate themselves, as well as to share in an activity that generations of residents have enjoyed. Visitors have access to the bathhouses by either using one of the lodges as a hotel or arranging a specific time to go to one of the spas (Whelpley, 2015). Soaking in the mineral waters will prove to be a great way to end a day of touring Truth or Consequences. The principal attraction of the present is Elephant Butte. Again, there are several types of events available at the lake that everyone in the family can find something to do.

Spaceport America represents the attraction of the future. Visitors interested in space and space travel can decide to go on a tour of the spaceport departing from Truth or Consequences. While on the tour, they can absorb the exhibits at the Spaceport, as well as learn about the opportunities for commercial space flight.

There are many attractions highlighted on websites that advertise Truth or Consequences and Sierra County. The researcher grouped the itineraries above in a way that adds something different to what Truth or Consequences has already done. As such, the researcher designed the itineraries to appeal to distinct groups of people and provide enough activities to keep tourists in Truth or Consequences for more than just one day, thereby providing revenue to the economy through food, lodging, and shopping. These itineraries are by no means a replacement for what Truth or Consequences currently promotes. Rather, they serve as a complement to the efforts already undertaken by the city with the goal of making Truth or Consequences attractive to a greater number of people.

DISCUSSION

Recommendations

Knowing is half the battle; proposed itineraries can only accomplish so much. For these itineraries to attract and interest potential visitors, the researcher must propose methods for implementing and marketing the itineraries. Visitors must feel inclined to see for themselves what caught their eye after learning what is available.

People may feel hesitant to embark on a journey if they do not know the way. One remedy to this situation is to provide hotels and visitor centers with handouts for their guests illustrating directions to and hours of operation for various attractions. Appendix C displays a sample two-sided handout that one can distribute at places with high levels of tourist traffic. Another option for promotion is to transfer the handouts to billboards along the route to these attractions or to include them in the section on Truth or Consequences in travel and visitor guides.

Formally presenting these itineraries in brochures is another eye-catching way to generate tourist traffic to Truth or Consequences. The city of Truth or Consequences, the Geronimo Trail National Scenic Byway Visitor Center, or another interested and capable party could create brochures that detail the events of each of the itineraries. These brochures would provide interested tourists with a preview of the attractions included in the itinerary. Additionally, relevant parties could upload PDF versions of the brochures to their websites to provide visitors with a way to learn about what Truth or Consequences has to offer in the event no staff members are present at the visitor center.

Opportunities for Future Research

This study is by no means all-inclusive. While the researcher established an inventory for Truth or Consequences, there is still work to do. One opportunity for future research would be to conduct a dedicated hotel capacity study to determine Truth or Consequences' capacity for increased tourism and learning how to use or developing a relevant economic model to forecast the economic impact of tourism on the town.

Another opportunity for research in the future involves the hours of operation of the shops in the MainStreet District. Observing and studying the traffic patterns around the shops could provide convincing evidence to persuade businesses to change their hours to better accommodate the people trying to visit their shops. This, in turn, could affect the economy of the town because their shops would be generating more income for the city.

The third opportunity for future research is to analyze the current demographics of visitors to Truth or Consequences. Learning more about these demographics would allow the researcher to create more itineraries marketed specifically towards these groups of people. Studying what brought visitors from outside New Mexico to Truth or Consequences would allow the researcher to expand the tourism base. Moreover, it would allow the researcher to develop itineraries targeted at people outside of New Mexico.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study encompass several aspects of Truth or Consequences' identity and potential, including history, science, entertainment, and healing. Each of these aspects works to attract a unique target market to Truth or Consequences. Not every individual will show interest in each aspect, but if the desire to experience one is strong enough, he or she will make the effort to experience what Truth or Consequences has to offer. By tying all these aspects together, Truth or Consequences will be able to effectively market the town as an attractive location to visit, and, thus, see the potential for economic growth.

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APPENDIX A

Hours of Operation in the MainStreet District

**TABLE A1
HOURS OF OPERATION OF SHOPS IN THE MAINSTREET DISTRICT**

Shop	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Xochis		08:00 - 18:00	08:00 - 18:00	08:00 - 18:00	08:00 - 18:00	08:00 - 18:00	09:00 - 17:00
Black Cat Books and Coffee	08:00 - 17:00	08:00 - 17:00				08:00 - 17:00	08:00 - 17:00
January's				11:00 - 17:00	11:00 - 17:30	11:00 - 17:30	11:00 - 17:30
Martha's		09:00 - 17:00	09:00 - 17:00	09:00 - 17:00	09:00 - 17:00	09:00 - 17:00	11:00 - 14:00
Vic's Broadway New Mexico		10:30 - 16:00			10:30 - 16:30	10:30 - 17:30	10:30 - 16:00
CHF Thrift Shop		8:30 - 14:30	08:30 - 14:30	08:30 - 14:30		08:30 - 14:30	08:30 - 14:30
Dust & Glitter	10:00 - 12:00			10:00 - 17:00	10:00 - 17:00	10:00 - 17:00	10:00 - 17:00
Moon Goddess Boutique*		12:00 - 17:00		12:00 - 17:00	12:00 - 17:00	12:00 - 17:00	

*This shop is located slightly outside of the MainStreet District.

TABLE A2
HOURS OF OPERATION OF RESTAURANTS IN THE MAINSTREET DISTRICT

Restaurant	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Grapevine Bistro	08:00 - 14:00	07:00 - 14:00	07:00 - 14:00	07:00 - 14:00	07:00 - 14:00	07:00 - 14:00	08:00 - 14:00
El Faro		08:00 - 20:00	08:00 - 20:00	08:00 - 20:00	08:00 - 20:00	08:00 - 20:00	08:00 - 16:00
A Little Slice of Heaven		09:00 - 17:00	09:00 - 17:00		09:00 - 17:00	09:00 - 17:00	
Bar-B-Que on Broadway		07:00 - 16:00	07:00 - 16:00	07:00 - 16:00	07:00 - 20:00	07:00 - 20:00	07:00 - 15:00
Latitude 33	11:00 - 20:00		11:00 - 20:00	11:00 - 20:00	11:00 - 20:00	11:00 - 20:00	11:00 - 20:00
A&B Drive In	11:00 - 18:30	10:00 - 20:45	10:00 - 20:45	10:00 - 20:45	10:00 - 21:00	10:00 - 21:00	10:00 - 21:00
Bella Luca Café Italiano	15:00 - 21:00	15:00 - 21:00		15:00 - 21:00	15:00 - 21:00	15:00 - 22:00	15:00 - 22:00
Passion Pie Café	07:00 - 15:00	07:00 - 15:00	07:00 - 15:00	07:00 - 15:00	07:00 - 15:00	07:00 - 15:00	07:00 - 15:00
Turtle Back Oasis		09:00 - 17:00	09:00 - 17:00	09:00 - 17:00	09:00 - 17:00	09:00 - 17:00	09:00 - 14:00

APPENDIX B

Hours of Operation of Itinerary Attractions

TABLE B
HOURS OF OPERATION OF SELECTED ITINERARY ATTRACTIONS

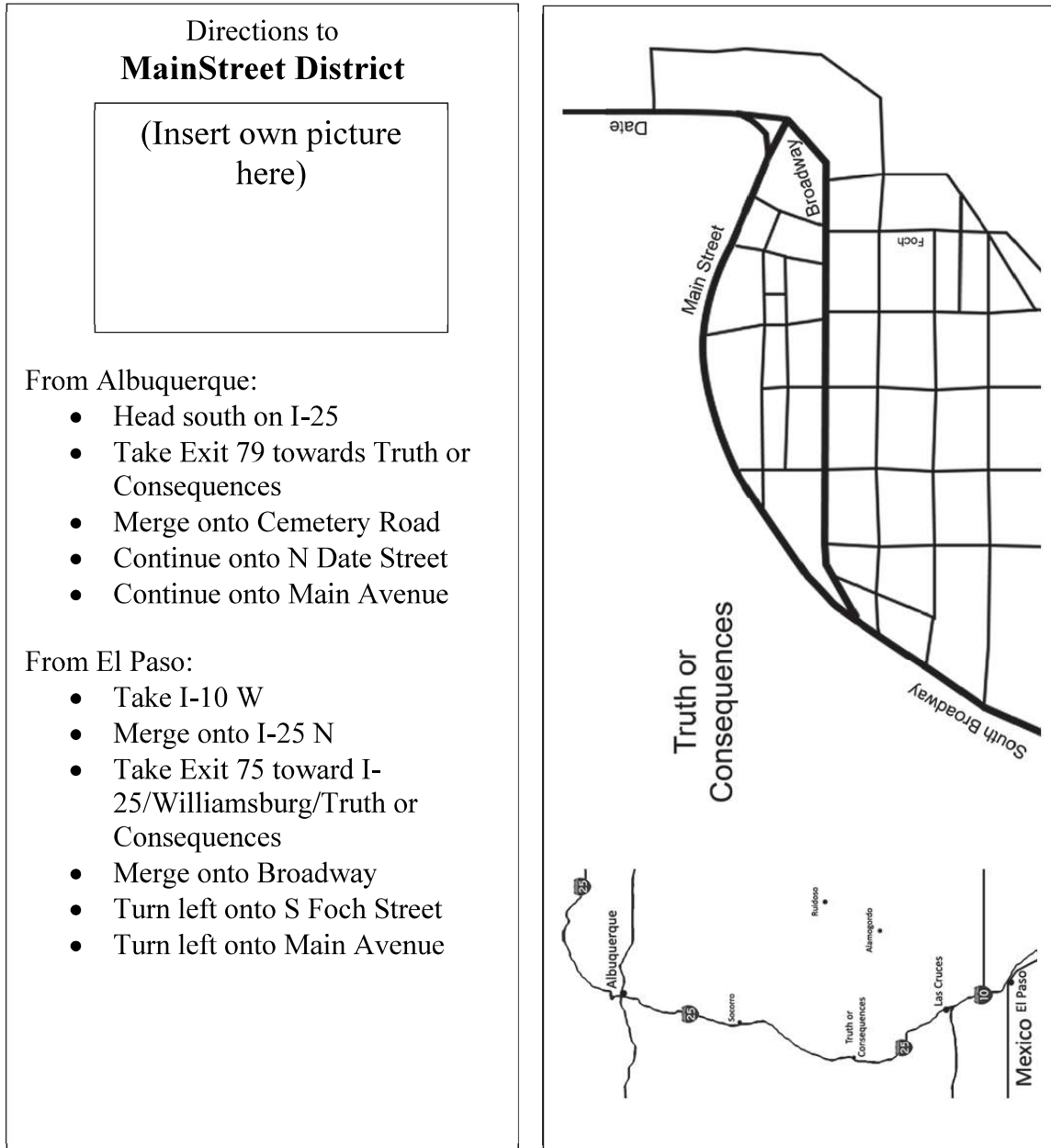
Attraction(s)	Hours of Operation
Spaceport America	Tours: Saturday and Sunday, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm; during peak season (May-September, 1:30 pm to 5:30 pm); Group tours by appointment, Tuesdays and Wednesdays
Geronimo Trail National Scenic Byway Visitor Center	Monday through Saturday, 9:00 am to 4:30 pm, Sunday, 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm
Spaceport America Visitor Center	Sunday through Saturday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm
Geronimo Springs Museum	Monday through Saturday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Sunday 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm
Dianne Hamilton Military Museum	Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, Sunday, 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm
Hot Springs Lodges	8:00 am to 8:00 pm*

*Hours may vary by location

APPENDIX C

Sample Handout

FIGURE C
EXAMPLE HANDOUT FEATURING THE MAINSTREET DISTRICT



(Front)

(Back)

Note. Includes directions to the MainStreet District in Truth or Consequences, NM from both Albuquerque, NM and El Paso, TX and maps of the area and the District on the reverse side.