

Abstract

There are over 3,000 counties in the United States. This abundance makes the task of developing a marketing strategy that sufficiently differentiates any one county from the rest particularly difficult. Existing research on place marketing has demonstrated that building unique selling points and strong branding is crucial, and many urban areas have followed these strategies with success. However, there is lack of practical application of these principles in rural areas. This paper developed a marketing plan for Washington County, Indiana, a sparsely populated, rural county in southern Indiana. To accomplish this, data from federal, state, and local sources was collected and analyzed using a Four P's marketing strategy and SWOT analysis. After careful analysis, it was concluded that the best marketing strategy for Washington County is for it to nationally differentiate itself based on its proximity to Louisville, KY and regionally differentiate itself based on it being the community-focused, historic capital of southern Indiana. This paper also contains policy recommendations that will help in the implementation and effectiveness of this strategy. Implementing the plan presented in this paper may help Washington County reverse negative trends like aging population and dependency on a few economic sectors, while also enabling it to take advantage of emerging opportunities like the virtual economy and growing regional population.

Honors College  
Ball State University  
Muncie, IN 47306