



**Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast  
FY 2017  
Marketing Plan**





# CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Overview of Travel Industry.....	5
Research.....	9
Consumer Strategy.....	16
Digital Media.....	26
PR/Media.....	34
Meetings & Conventions.....	38

# A Message from Renée Areng Executive Director of Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast

It is my pleasure to present the FY 2017 Marketing Plan. This plan provides a blueprint for how we will continue to grow and achieve our goals. In 2015 we saw a 5% growth, and with all three counties officially on board with funding and operating agreements, we are anticipating even more growth in 2016. All performance indicators are growing and are on pace to meet the 2020 goals of 7 million visitors spending \$2.3 billion and 10,000 more jobs in the leisure and hospitality sector! Such a successful year would not have been possible without the visionary leadership of the Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast Board of Commissioners, our industry partners and support of our community leaders. The staff at Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast is ready for the next chapter as we meet challenges with creative solutions and strengthen partnerships. You can be assured that we consistently measure all marketing and sales efforts for continued results. We are also proud to announce that we have completed application for accreditation through Destination Marketing Association International, assuring you that all of our practices and procedures exceed industry standards.

With all of these great strides, we are primed to market the Mississippi Gulf Coast with one voice! In 2016 we announced cutting edge products in the market: Coast Champions, hospitality development program; Mississippi Gulf Coast Marathon, December 9-11, 2016; Development of a mobile app to accompany our wayfinding Shrimp Signs; Strategic Plan for Sports Tourism Development and Visitor Perception and Return on advertising investment study. All tools to promise a bright future as we move into FY 2017! We are together in tourism with one voice for the Mississippi Gulf Coast!



# Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast Overview

Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast serves as the official tourism entity for the Mississippi Gulf Coast, comprised of three coastal counties including Hancock, Harrison and Jackson. The purpose of our organization is to have a positive impact on the quality of life for residents of the Coast through advancement of the tourism industry.



## Core Purpose

To have a positive impact on the quality of life for residents of the Mississippi Gulf Coast through the advancement of the tourism industry.

## Envisioned Future

The Mississippi Gulf Coast is one of the top vacation destinations, places to meet and do business, and places to live in the Southeast region of the United States. The economy is booming. It is visually attractive, easy to navigate with a variety of quality amenities, services, facilities and products and of a high value for both residents and visitors to enjoy.

## Vision Statement

The vision of Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast is to establish the Mississippi Gulf Coast as a premier travel destination.

## Mission Statement

The mission of Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast is to positively impact the economy of the three county area by taking a dynamic leadership and visionary role to successfully market and assist in the development of the Mississippi Gulf Coast as a premier travel destination, competing effectively for leisure and group business through the development and execution of integrated marketing, communications, sales and research.

# The Numbers

## Occupancy Tax Receipts

2016

\$3,948,773

2015

\$2,942,862

2014

\$2,792,011

\*2016 includes Jackson County

## TOURISM leads to ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**5.8 MILLION**  
visitors in 2015



In 2015  
visitors spent  
**\$1.88 BILLION**

For every **\$1** spent on advertising,  
**\$2** in taxes were gained,  
**SAVING** Mississippi Gulf Coast residents  
**\$561 IN TAXES** annually.



For every **\$1** spent on advertising,  
**\$43** is spent by visitors on the Mississippi  
Gulf Coast.

**29,800**  
leisure  
hospitality  
employees = nearly **25%**  
of the Mississippi  
Gulf Coast's  
workforce

The hospitality industry is the  
**LARGEST PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYER**  
on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.



Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast  
 Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast

@VisitMSCoast  
 @VisitMSCoast  
 VisitMSCoast

# Results~Goals~Projections

	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017 Goals
Sales Leads Issued	275	424	340
Sales Definite Bookings	31,017	52,086	52,000
Gulfcoast.org Unique Visits	927,492	1,163,047	1,265,000
Number of Articles	2,041	4,102	3,250
*Media Value	\$106,709,210	\$1,274,233	\$689,814
Total Social Media	407,552	448,258	473,500
Facebook	93,095	101,903	108,000
Twitter	6,069	8,694	13,000
Pinterest	637	783	1,500
You Tube	306,500	333,099	345,000
Instagram	1,251	3,779	6,000

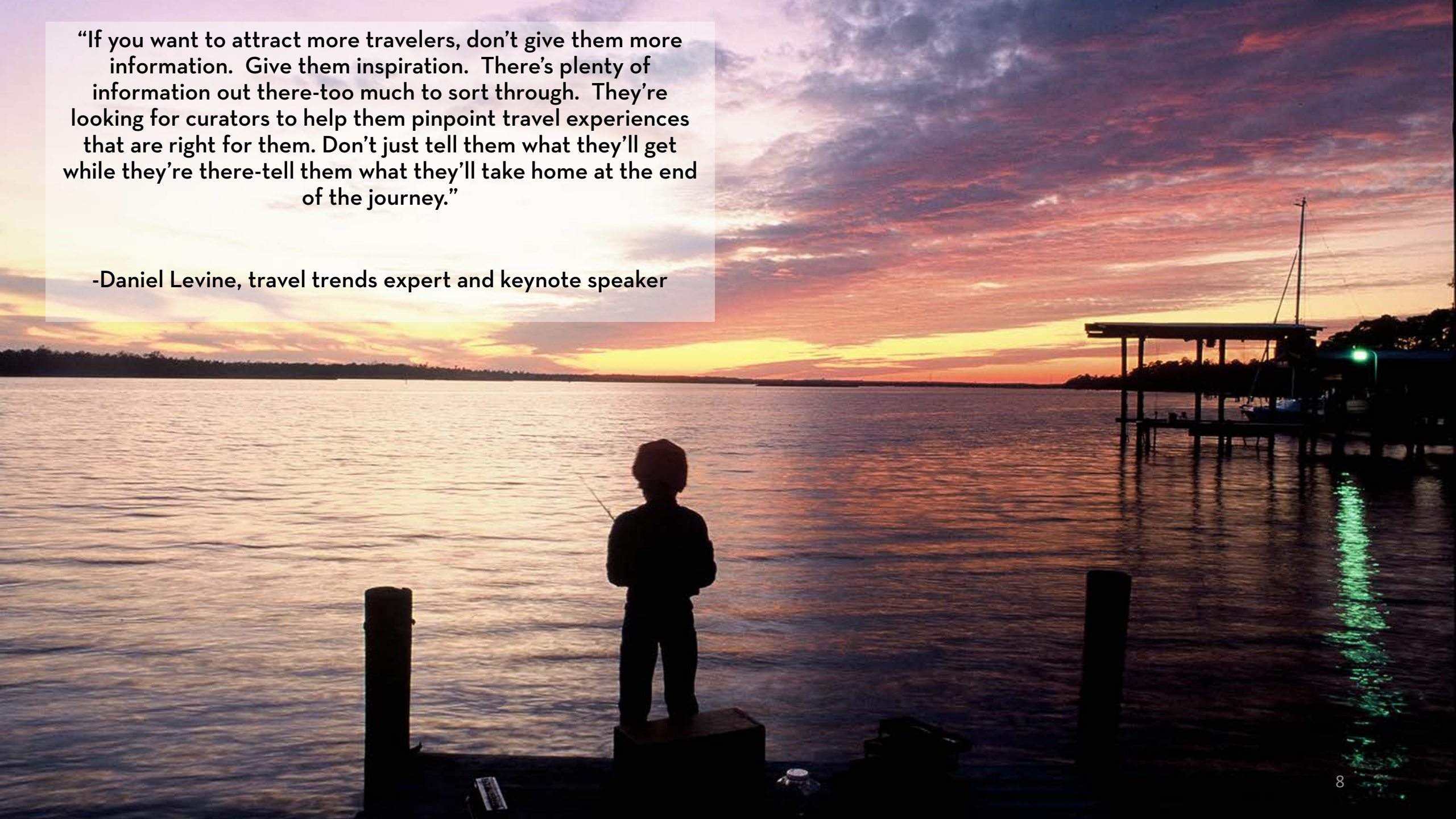
\*Measurement of media values revised in FY 2016

# Results~Goals~Projections

	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017 Projections/Goals
Occupancy Tax Receipts	\$3,166,548	\$3,948,773	\$4,388,066
Occupancy Rate Non-Casino	54.9%	54.6%	55.0%
Occupancy Rate Casino	88.98%	88.20%	89.0%
Occupancy Rate ALL	69.97%	68.20%	70.0%
Average Daily Rate Non-Casino	\$84.91	\$88.10	\$87.00
Average Daily Rate Casino	\$71.75	\$72.00	\$73.00
Average Daily Rate ALL	\$78.36	\$79.47	\$81.00
Gaming Revenue	\$1,131,388,584	\$1,080,355,632	\$1,178,000,000

“If you want to attract more travelers, don’t give them more information. Give them inspiration. There’s plenty of information out there-too much to sort through. They’re looking for curators to help them pinpoint travel experiences that are right for them. Don’t just tell them what they’ll get while they’re there-tell them what they’ll take home at the end of the journey.”

-Daniel Levine, travel trends expert and keynote speaker





# Travel Industry Trends & Insights

Travel doesn't just broaden the mind, it refreshes, rejuvenates, and improves people's outlook on life. But today's travelers can be finicky—they're looking for one-of-a-kind experiences, and they've got a whole world of options.

## Travel Influencing Trends:

- AUTHENTICITY—Travelers want to know what it's like to be members of the community, experiencing local culture, cuisine and adventures just as longtime residents do.
- "BLEISURE" TRAVEL— The business trip is getting a makeover. Travelers hunker down with clients, then unwind on hiking trails or in the local arts district.
- SEAMLESS PLANNING— Travelers long for human or digital experts who can help them package a trip from start to finish.
- MULTIGEN TRAVEL— Baby Boomers-hitting retirement age with money, time, and endless energy—are planning elaborate trips and inviting the kids and grandkids along.
- MOBILITY—Travelers are researching, planning, and even booking from their smartphones.



# Research, Analysis and Development

- ❑ Longwoods International conducted an Awareness, Image and ROI study on behalf of our organization in 2015
- ❑ Huddle Up Group conducted a Sports Assessment on behalf of our organization in 2016
- ❑ Ongoing research efforts with Mississippi Development Authority, Smith Travel Research (STR) and other sources to clearly gauge the effects of all sales and marketing efforts
- ❑ Continuing partnerships with [DMAI](#), [U.S. Travel Association](#) and [Phocuswright](#) to stay privy of industry trends and standards
- ❑ Continually update the Key Performance indicators as set forth to update the staff, board and communities of the effects of tourism marketing across the Coast
- ❑ Partnerships with Knowland Group and Backyard Marketing for lead development
- ❑ Conduct a Visitor Profile study in FY 2016-2017

# Awareness, Image and ROI

Longwoods International Research conducted an Awareness and Image study as well as ROI in 2015 of the 2015 tourism advertising campaign. The research provided strategic image data as well as measured the impacts of the advertising campaign. The complete study is available on [gulfcoast.org](http://gulfcoast.org). The study presented findings as they relate to:

- ❑ Mississippi Gulf Coast's image as a travel destination vs Gulf Shores/Orange Beach, AL, Pensacola/Panhandle, FL, Charleston/Savannah, SC, and Myrtle Beach, SC.
- ❑ Impact on image of travelers who saw the Mississippi Gulf Coast campaign and separately those who visited the Mississippi Gulf Coast.



# Longwoods Research Takeaways & Strategies

## 📍 Travel Motivators and Hot Buttons

### Key Takeaway

- ❑ The most important factors that drive interest in a destination choice in the Mississippi Gulf Coast's advertised markets are:
  - Is exciting-an exciting, fun, and must see place that provides real adventure
  - Being a great destination for adults
  - Somewhat lower priorities are seen as a destination that is luxurious, elegant, sophisticated restaurants and provides a family atmosphere and is worry-free - feeling comfortable and welcomed

### Strategy

- ❑ Capitalize on main travel factors, specifically those the Mississippi Gulf Coast can deliver upon strongly:
  - Excitement, fun, must see, adventure
  - Great destination for adults
  - Worry-free - feeling comfortable and welcomed



# Longwoods Research Takeaways & Strategies

## Advertising Image Impacts

### Key Takeaway

- ❑ All the image factors were positively impacted by the campaign. The individual Hot Buttons most improved by the advertising are:
  - An exciting place
  - A must see destination
  - A fun place
  - Good for an adult vacation

### Strategy

- ❑ The current “Stay Awhile” brand aims to convey these Hot Buttons, and based on the results indicated, has improved consumer perception of them. We must be vigilant to ensure that the advertising stays on strategy:
  - Portrays the adult target markets: 25-34 and 45-64 to convey adult destination
  - Showcases a wide variety of activities to combat a lack of awareness of Mississippi Gulf Coast features, specifically focusing on “excitement”, “fun”, “adventure: and “must see” features
  - Ensure the tone is warm and welcoming

# Longwoods Research Takeaways & Strategies

## Mississippi Gulf Coast Image

### Key Takeaway

- ❑ The Mississippi Gulf Coast's image is rated higher for the affordable factor versus the competitor's average overall whether the respondent had or had not visited or had or had not seen our advertising. The attributes that the Mississippi Gulf Coast has had advantage, most notable for:
  - Affordable to get to
  - Affordable to eat there
  - Right distance for a weekend getaway

### Strategy

- ❑ Although this is a factor the Mississippi Gulf Coast is rated highly on, it is not noted as a main travel motivator and will not be a main focus of our campaigns. There are certainly people looking for travel bargains, who we can reach by including "affordable" terms in SEM and on landing pages on the website, without making this a theme of our advertising

# Longwoods Research Takeaways & Strategies

## Advertising Awareness

### Key Takeaway

- ❑ 42% of all the respondents recalled seeing at least one of the Mississippi Gulf Coast's travel ads. While awareness is good, it can be improved in all markets with an increased consumer media budget.

### Strategy

- ❑ Outer markets and some Inner markets selected are large markets, and in many cases expensive. Advertising at the current levels have not saturated them, therefore we will continue running media in currently selected markets

## Exceeding Expectations

### Key Takeaway

- ❑ The experience exceeds expectations. Visitors can feel like they have truly discovered a hidden gem of a destination, an insight the "Stay Awhile" campaign was built upon.

### Strategy

- ❑ Consider tactical ways to capitalize on this finding,, continue promoting the branded hashtag in-market to encourage or possibly incentivize sharing as excited travelers experience the destination. Encourage visitors to connect with us socially and sign up for the e-mail database , to ensure ongoing remarketing and repeat visitation.

# Sports Tourism Strategic Planning Project

Huddle Up Group conducted a Sports Assessment that includes a SWOT analysis of the sports tourism efforts of Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast, as well as recommendations for future sports tourism development. The complete report is available on [gulfcoast.org](http://gulfcoast.org).

## Strategies:

- Submit bids in for the following groups for 2017/2018/2019:
  - U.S. Quidditch
  - USA BMX
  - USA Ultimate
- Attend the following shows to maintain and build relationships in the sports industry
  - NASC - National Association of Sports Commissions
  - Connect Sports Marketplace
  - TEAMS
  - US Sports Congress
- Develop a World Golf Amateur style event to run in conjunction with the Mississippi Gulf Coast Golf Association
- NASC Event RFP Database
  - Place bids on Division I, II, III NCAA championship events.
  - NAIA championships
- Use signature sporting events on the MS Gulf Coast as a hub to create mini-FAMS and entertainment for future meeting planners



# Consumer Strategy Overview

The current branding and advertising plan has completed its first **full** year and based on the Longwoods International Research, awareness of the Mississippi Gulf Coast sits at 42%. This is solid, but there is room for improvement.

Many of our current markets are large markets where we still have significant opportunity for improvement, so rather than target new markets with an increased budget, we should maintain and refine current strategy further penetrating the current markets recapped below:

- ❑ Outer (Atlanta, Birmingham, Little Rock, Memphis, Houston)
- ❑ Inner ( New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Jackson, Mobile-Pensacola, Tallahassee, Montgomery-Selma, Lafayette, Columbus GA, Columbus-Tupelo, Monroe-El Dorado, Panama City, Hattiesburg-Laurel, Dothan, Lake Charles, Alexandria LA, Meridian, Greenwood-Greenville)
- ❑ Fly-In (Washington, Tampa-St. Petersburg, Orlando, Nashville, Charlotte)
- ❑ Midwest (Chicago, Detroit, Minneapolis, Cleveland-Akron, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo-Battle Creek, St. Louis)

## Targeting our current demographics:

- ❑ Young Adults without Children - 25-34 (Millennials)
- ❑ Mature Adults - 45-64
- ❑ HHI \$50K +
- ❑ “Geotourists”
  - Focus on the experience of a destination-learning about its culture and history
  - Seek the authenticity of people and place; strong preference for the social aspects of travel
  - Desire to customize their experience and create personal connections while traveling
  - Have multi-faceted interests and will take in a number of attractions while traveling
  - Apt to get off the beaten path and discover something new
  - Like to “go local” and patronize locally-owned businesses and attractions
  - Spend more and stay longer than average tourists

# The Brand

## Promise

- ❑ An authentic, spirited, year-round coastal destination that will leave you feeling connected to the Coast - its setting, its offerings, its people and its way of life.

## Pillars

- ❑ AUTHENTICITY– The Mississippi Gulf Coast is not homogenized or commercialized; from its art and architecture to its customs and cuisine, the places and the people are genuine and sincere.
- ❑ APPROACHABILITY– The Mississippi Gulf Coast is an unpretentious place that always makes you feel welcome, comfortable and at ease; where you can be yourself, let loose and have fun.
- ❑ CELEBRATORY– From parades and gatherings to festivals and events, the Mississippi Gulf Coast is a place that commemorates and celebrates no matter how big or small the reason, or what the time of year.
- ❑ VARIETY– There really is a place for every taste - whether that place is on the water, the beach, the river, the greens, the felt or anywhere in between. Variety is the spice of life on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.



# The Brand

## Creative Anthem:

- ❑ You could say that life flows a little differently on the Mississippi Gulf Coast – and we’d say you’re exactly right. From the biggest challenges to the wildest adventures, we take on everything the same way – with a smile. We’re impulsive, carefree. And the only thing we appreciate more than the moment is the next one. *So why are we like this? Stay awhile. You’ll get it.*
- ❑ We’re not afraid to get our hands dirty – especially if we’re eating boiled shrimp. We have no idea what it means to laugh too loud. And we don’t use maps – we rely on our sense of adventure. *Why are we like this? Stay awhile. You’ll get it.*
- ❑ We’re about living. And doing. We’re always in pursuit of that next great experience. Epic battles with speckled trout. Eating our weight in crawfish, twice, by noon. Trading stories at our favorite carnival ball. All while sipping our favorite drink. *Why are we like this? Stay awhile. You’ll get it.*
- ❑ Here, it’s about full bellies. And birdies. And jackpots. And parties. And keepers. And, well... *Stay awhile, you’ll get it.*
- ❑ It’s about being down here on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Where you can spend time with your family and the hundreds of new friends you meet along the way. And where pretty much the only rule we follow is that if it’s fun, do it. Repeatedly. This is the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and once you’re here, you’re never going to want to leave. *Still not convinced? Don’t worry. Stay awhile. You’ll get it.*

# Content Segments

Content segments have been established to ensure advertising, public relations and social media communicate the attractions and activities of the Mississippi Gulf Coast to potential visitors. There is some overlap in categories, but as a whole, they are inclusive of all stakeholders in the region.

## **Outdoors & nature-based tourism**

- ❑ Nature Tours, Birding, Kayaking, Hiking, Etc.

## **Fishing & boating**

- ❑ Charter Boats, Boat Tours, Gulf Fishing, Pier Fishing, Etc.

## **Beaches & coastal**

- ❑ Beach Activities, Water Activities, Seafood, Etc.

## **Culture & history**

- ❑ Culinary, Art, History, Shopping, Festivals & Events, Etc.

## **Casinos/Nightlife**

- ❑ Gaming, Resorts, Entertainment, Etc.

## **Golf**

- ❑ Golfing, Tournaments, Packages, Etc.



# Strategic Areas of Focus

Armed with research, industry trends, the competitive landscape as well as insights from our industry partners, the following drivers have been identified that will support our growth objectives:

## ❑ Engaging Visitor Communications

- Reach potential visitors with meaningful messages, in locations where they are likely to interact with our messages, in ways that make it simple for them to connect with us.

## ❑ Visitor Experience

- Engage the community in creating brand consistent, positive customer experiences for visitors with ongoing hospitality training and communication. As well as, providing the visitors tools to navigate the coast with ease, making it a worry free experience.

## ❑ Content Marketing-Sponsored & Native

- Create and distribute valuable, relevant, and consistent content without selling, to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience.



*Photo by Julian Brunt*

# Content Drivers & Initiatives

## Mobile App for “Shrimp Signs”

### Goals:

- Create app awareness
- Drive app downloads in-market

### Message Focus:

- Education/enticement to download
- Link directly to app download or include app name for easy search

### Reporting- Google Analytics

- Number of downloads, Downloads by device, Top pages viewed

Through a “Geo-Fenced” Digital Network, we will target users in-market on their mobile devices and drive app downloads when target audience is ready to take action/utilize the app. We will also create an in-market non-media campaign to promote the app through social, email, in-market signage, and Coast Champions.



# Content Drivers & Initiatives



## Culinary Tourism

Travelers are increasingly allowing their passions to fuel their vacation choices, and with the continuing rise in foodie culture, more and more people consider culinary experiences a key driver in choosing a travel destination. (Skift)

## Eat MS Coast

Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast partnered with Eat Y'all to promote the exceptional culinary experiences that can be found on the Coast. Out of this partnership EatMSCoast.com was created to be the platform for valuable culinary content.

### Goals:

- Make outstanding culinary options in the region easily discoverable online
- Craft valuable culinary-themed content promoting the local food scene that will complement the other content segments established
- Provide valuable editorial coverage of the local food scene through a trusted third-party source on a consistent basis
- Measure results of this program to continually improve

# Content Drivers & Initiatives

## 🎯 Nature Tourism

Nature tourism is defined as, responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of its residents. It is tourism that relies on the experiences of the natural attractions of an area. Examples include: birdwatching, photography, star gazing, camping, hiking, fishing, etc. Nature-based tourism remains one of the most popular tourism sectors internationally and with its diverse natural attractions, the Mississippi Gulf Coast is well placed to capitalize on this.

## 🎯 Goals:

- Partner with local/regional key environmental and conservation groups to stimulate and grow Nature-based tourism
- Develop Nature-based tourism packages
- Create a Nature-based consumer newsletter





# Media Plan

The media goal is to create/maintain awareness of the Mississippi Gulf Coast by:

- Inspiring during the Dream phase
- Provide content during Research phase
- Drive to gulfcoast.org for Booking phase

As a result increasing hotel occupancy, attraction and event attendance, as well as dining and other travel related experiences.

\* *The full plan is available upon request.*

2017 Annual Media Plan - GH	October		November		December		January		February		March		April		May		June		
	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU
Week Of:																			
Meetings & Conventions and Trade																			
Digital																			
CLIENT																			
Digital Opportunities																			
Magazine																			
Connect Association																			
Connect Corporate																			
Connect Faith																			
Connect Sports																			
Meetings Today (Previously Meetings Focus) - Mississippi Issue																			
Convention South																			
MS Society of Association Executives - Membership Directory																			
LA Society of Association Executives - Membership Directory																			
AL Society of Association Executives - Membership Directory																			
Consumer Print																			
Magazine																			
Official Mississippi Tour Guide																			
Brand USA - Inspiration Guide Print Ad (Client direct)																			
Consumer Guide																			
Digital																			
Official Mississippi Tour Guide (Online added value)																			
Brand USA - Discover and Regional Page (Client Direct)																			
Escape to SouthEast																			

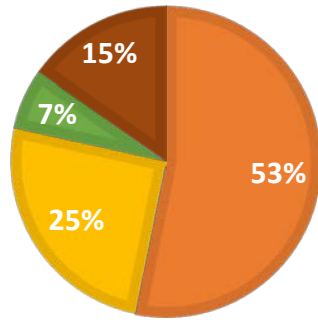
**16-17 Plan Draft**

# Media Spend Overview

## OUTER MARKETS

\$1,133,378

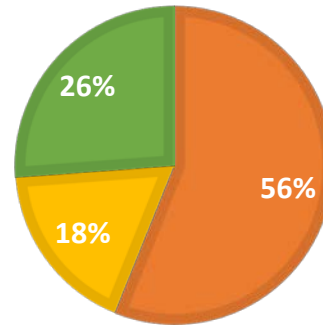
TV Digital Search Social



## INNER MARKETS

\$237,061

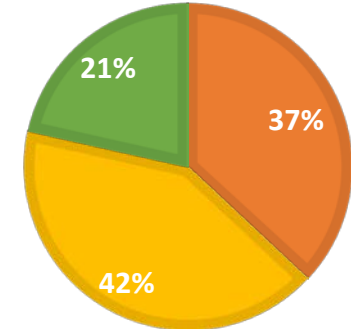
Digital Search Social



## MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS

\$125,678

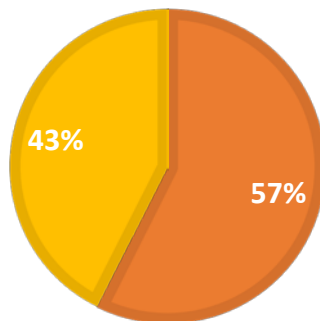
Digital Print Social



## FLY-IN MARKETS

\$115,000

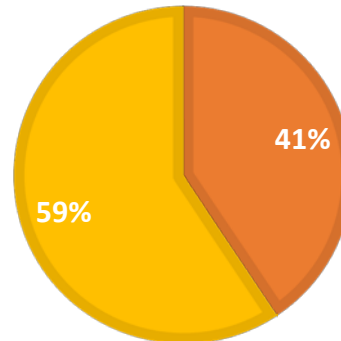
Search Social



## MIDWEST MARKETS

\$93,500

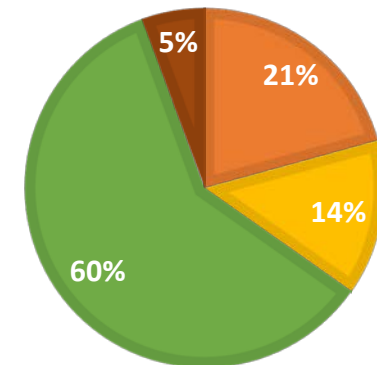
Search Social



## MISCELLANEOUS

\$43,253

Print Golf



# Digital Marketing Overview

## Goals

- Establish sizeable online databases of self-identified brand advocates who can authentically showcase the Mississippi Gulf Coast
- Establish relationships with social media influencers to increase Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast's visibility, engagement and following
- Increase interest and engagement by providing an online community where locals and visitors can interact with the brand and other advocates
- Help followers gain a better understanding of the region by consistently posting blogs to our Coastal Conversations page on [gulfcoast.org](http://gulfcoast.org)
- Expand the reach of brand messages by capitalizing on the viral nature of social media
- Collect information such as email and home addresses for e-newsletter and other marketing opportunities and demographic research
- Drive traffic to [gulfcoast.org](http://gulfcoast.org) by including valuable links in social media content

# Digital Marketing Strategies

## Facebook

- Live video
  - Cover live events and exclusive opportunities
- Post frequently
  - Consistently post to ensure that we stay top-of-mind in our followers' feed
- Visually appealing content
  - Continue to partner with local photographers to share eye-catching content
- Paid social media
  - Using paid social media will increase engagement, following, visibility and traffic
- Answer questions and encourage engagement
- Facebook exclusive offers
  - Offering Facebook only contests/giveaways will drive traffic
  - Cross-promoting the contests across other channels will increase engagement



# Digital Marketing Strategies

## Twitter

- ❑ Tweet, retweet frequently
  - We will tweets multiple times per day & retweet relevant content.
- ❑ Listen & respond to all relevant posts
- ❑ Utilize hashtags
  - We will use trending and popular hashtags to engage in conversations with large audiences.
- ❑ Visually appealing content
  - We will continue to partner with local photographers to share eye-catching content.
- ❑ Share different aspects of website on Twitter, including blogs, itineraries and events.
- ❑ Paid social media
  - Test using paid social media will increase engagement, following, visibility and traffic to our website.
- ❑ Twitter exclusive offers
  - Offering Twitter only contests/giveaways will drive traffic to our page.
  - Cross-promoting the contests across other channels will increase engagement.

# Digital Marketing Strategies

## Instagram

- Consistent aesthetics
  - Attracts potential followers. High-quality photos garner the most engagement
- Locations
  - Tagging locations allows users to easily find photos when searching a particular area
- Hashtags
  - Great way to gain visibility by potential followers
- User generated content
  - Posting images taken by others builds relationships and showcases the Coast authentically
  - A system, such as Crowdriff, can be used to collect UGC
- Work with influencers
  - Travel influencers will inform their audiences of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and encourage them to follow us for more information.
- Paid social posts
  - Test using paid social media will increase engagement, following, visibility and traffic to our website.
- Instagram exclusive offers
  - Offering Instagram only contests/giveaways will drive traffic to our page
  - Cross-promoting the contests across other channels will increase engagement

# Digital Marketing Strategies

## 🎯 Pinterest

- ❑ Cross-promote content
  - Pinterest is a great way to promote our website, blog and other social media sites.
- ❑ Place boards
  - Boards can be tagged with locations, allowing users to view pins based on a specific location.
- ❑ Paid social posts
  - Test using paid social media will increase engagement, following, visibility and traffic to our website.

## 🎯 LinkedIn

- ❑ Potential leads
  - LinkedIn is a great way to engage with potential meeting & convention planners.
- ❑ Post updates of the Mississippi Gulf Coast
  - LinkedIn is a great outlet for sharing news about the Mississippi Gulf Coast.
- ❑ Paid social posts
  - Test using paid social media will increase engagement, following, visibility and traffic to our website.

# Digital Marketing Strategies



## 📷 Snapchat

- ❑ Document events in real time
  - With the growth of live video, this outlet allows you to share pictures & video in real time.
- ❑ Collaborate and encourage interaction
  - Engagement is one-on-one, allowing us to build relationships with our followers.

## 📺 YouTube

- ❑ Post authentic videos
  - Video can be used to showcase our destination.
  - This content can also be shared on our website.
- ❑ Content for other social platforms
  - YouTube videos are easily shared across other social media platforms, such as Twitter and Pinterest.



# Digital Marketing Strategies

## 🎯 #MSCoastLife- a central location to organizing conversation about the Mississippi Gulf Coast and to tap into existing conversations; approximately 8,000 posts to date

- We will continue to distribute #MSCoastLife stickers locally to increase visibility in destination.
- We will continue to use the hashtag across all social media platforms.
- We will engage with users through the hashtag.
- We will continue to host giveaways, encouraging people to use the hashtag to enter the contest.

## 🎯 Influencers

- Local brand advocates**- locals who talk favorably about the Mississippi Gulf Coast and pass on positive messages about the region to other people.
  - Having locals contribute to our blog and social media sites will build an authentic relationship to showcase our destination from a unique point of view.
- Travel influencers**- individuals with vast reach and power to inspire others in their network
  - Travel influencers contributing to our blog and social media sites will greatly spread the word about the Mississippi Gulf Coast.
- Industry experts**
  - Having industry experts write a blog or contribute to our social sites will increase visibility and credibility in niche markets. (i.e.—chefs, musicians, etc.)

# Digital Marketing Strategies

## Coastal Conversations

- ❑ Create bit.ly links and share to social media channels to increase blog visibility and engagement
  - Bit.ly links allows us to see how many people are clicking the links once posted to a social media platform
- ❑ Continue using tags in blog posts to help with SEO
- ❑ Guest Bloggers
  - Guest bloggers will widen the audience of our readers
  - Guest bloggers will give a unique, personal perspective of the Coast

## Mobile app

- ❑ Push notification- message sent through app
- ❑ Geo-tagged notifications- message sent based off of location



# PR/Media Relations Overview

Challenges facing Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast include maintaining a unified message regarding the destination and capitalizing on findings from research recently conducted by Longwoods International, Inc. while maintaining the organization's brand positioning.

Public and media relations efforts will focus on priority content segments – culinary and nature-based offerings – with the aid of a robust creative campaign and through proactive and reactive media opportunities. Pitching efforts will also focus on lifestyle, general travel and a variety of other stories crafted for the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

According to findings from recent Longwoods International, Inc. perception study, the most important factors that drive interest in a destination choice in the Mississippi Gulf Coast's advertised markets are:

- Exciting – an exciting, fun, and must see place that provides real adventure
- Being a great destination for adults
- Somewhat lower priorities are seen as a destination that is luxurious, elegant, sophisticated restaurants and provides a family atmosphere and is worry-free – feeling comfortable and welcomed

Both public and media relations strategies will continue to focus on priority content segments (culinary and nature-based offerings) along with other story angles, while endorsing the area with the following attributes: exciting, fun, must-see, great destination for adults and worry-free.

# PR/Media Relations

## Media Trips

- 2016 Fiscal Year to date, the organization has hosted more than 20 media trips, a blend on individual and group.
- Notable media include:
  - Larry Olmsted, contributor to USA TODAY, Forbes, Hemispheres and more
  - Matt Meltzer, Thrillist Travel Editor
  - Rick Limpert, contributor to Yahoo!, Everything Georgia, Atlanta-Journal Constitution and more

## Trends

The Mississippi Gulf Coast is able to insert itself into current travel trends, as the destination doesn't have the notoriety of larger markets. The Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast Marketing Department continuously analyzes industry trends and develops pitches based on white space, i.e. where the Mississippi Gulf Coast own some of the conversation.

- Finding a “hidden gem” destination is trending in the travel space
- Writers are seeking out authentic experiences to share with readers
- Localizing experiences is critical when traveling – finding out where locals eat, drink, hang out is a top priority for travel writers

# PR/Media Relations

## Meetings and Events Pitching Efforts

Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast will continue to proactively pitch stories related to the Meetings and Events/Conventions space to relevant trade and association outlets, including: Smart Meetings, Successful Meetings, EmpowerMINT, ConventionSouth, MeetingsNet, Corporate & Incentive Travel, Association Meetings, TravelPulse, BizBash and more.

## Sports Sales Pitching

Once more findings are readily available to share, pitches will be crafted to showcase the impact of sports events on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Stories will be shared with relevant local, regional and national media to highlight the impact of this market on the region and how residents benefit.

# PR/Media Relations Goals & Strategies

## 🎯 Goals

- ❑ Securing earned coverage in top-tier lifestyle, travel, culinary and active lifestyle publications through proactive pitching and reactive opportunities
- ❑ Continuing to foster relationships with notable media representatives
- ❑ Hosting 10 individual press (or fam) trips for the fiscal year
- ❑ Identifying ambassadors throughout the region that will create itineraries for bloggers and reporters visiting the area
  - Builds relationships with influencers in the area while offering an exclusive opportunity to develop a trip for a notable guest

## 🎯 Strategies

- ❑ Proactively invite travel and lifestyle media to engage in press trips throughout the year
- ❑ Actively pitch stories related to the region based on trends in the travel/lifestyle space
- ❑ Research thought leaders in area that would be able and willing to provide insights when building out itineraries and opportunities for reporters
- ❑ Continue to research appropriate writers and reporters before proactively pitching and vigorously vetting reactive opportunities

# PR/Media Audience & Outlets

## 🎯 Target Audiences

- ❑ Primary Audience (maintain and grow):
  - “Geotourists” in the following markets
    - Inner Markets (New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Jackson, Mobile, Pensacola, Tallahassee, Montgomery, Selma, Lafayette, Columbus GA, Columbus OH, Tupelo, Monroe, El Dorado, Panama City, Hattiesburg, Laurel, Dothan, Lake Charles, Alexandria, Meridian, Greenwood, Greenville)
    - Outer Markets (Atlanta, Houston, Memphis, Birmingham, Little Rock)
- ❑ Secondary Audience (inform):
  - “Geotourists” in the following markets
    - Fly-In Markets (Washington DC, Charlotte, Tampa, Orlando, Nashville)
    - Midwest Markets (Chicago, Detroit, Minneapolis, Cleveland-Akron, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Battle Creek)

# Key Target Media

## Culinary

- Eater
- Serious Eats
- Taste of Home
- The New York Times Food
- Huffington Post Food
- Better Homes and Gardens
- Food & Wine Magazine
- Bon Appetite Magazine
- Munchies

## Lifestyle/Travel

- Huffington Post
- Thrillist
- Garden and Gun
- USA Today
- Budget Travel
- Southern Living

## Outdoor/Nature-Based

- Game and Fish Magazine
- Coastal Angler Magazine
- Field & Stream
- Outdoor Life
- Mississippi Game & Fish
- Salt Water Sportsman





# Meetings & Conventions Overview

The Mississippi Gulf Coast, known for its great southern hospitality is the perfect destination for conventions and meetings. As a coastal destination, the sales department of Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast continues to target meetings and conventions that are favorable to meet within our mid-week pattern and off-peak seasons to balance the need periods of our hotel community. Targeted markets within our interests are National, Regional and State associations, Sports, Leisure and International Tour Groups. The Mississippi Gulf Coast offers state-of-the-art meeting facilities at an affordable price via The Mississippi Coast Coliseum and Convention Center. Key initiatives include pursuing groups that will utilize the convention center and have interests in golfing, gaming, outdoor recreation as well as culinary, history and culture.

OGSM's (Objectives-Goals-Strategies and Measures) have been implemented for each Sales Manager and will act as an on-going assessment of their specific markets. All tradeshow set forth in the budget for 2016-2017 have been vetted and will continue to be evaluated for positive ROI.



# Meetings & Conventions Marketing Message Strategy & Campaign Goals

## Target

- Meeting planners, skewing female and younger
- They have options for destinations, all of which supply adequate space and technology to support their meeting needs
- They feel successful when their attendees feel positive about where they will be meeting
- Based on main media reach, they're working in the Southern region
- Viewing the ads in industry publications; likely to have seen other brand advertising

## Main Takeaway

- My attendees would LOVE to go to a meeting there!

## Campaign Goals

- Give Meeting planners a feel for the region and its features
- Cause them to reach out for more information



**Team building has a  
SCENIC ROUTE.**

The Mississippi Gulf Coast awaits your next convention. You and your colleagues can choose from sandy shores, golfing greens, authentic coastal cuisines, world-class casino resorts and some of the finest shopping in the South. And whether your party numbers 6 or 6,000, we've got enough coast to host you.

HERE'S WHAT ELSE YOU'LL GET WHEN YOU GO COASTAL:  
13,000 GUEST ROOMS | 413,000 FT2 OF MEETING SPACE | GULFPORT-BILOXI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

STAY AWHILE. YOU'LL GET IT.  
VISIT MISSISSIPPI  
GULF COAST

# National Sales

## Strategies

- Continuous sales calls to associations, societies, organizations and meeting planners on the national and regional level
- Monies budgeted for specialized site visits for convention center prospects and/or high room utilization clients
- Host client event in Washington, DC
- Host client event in Dallas, TX
- Host a pre or post FAM trip in conjunction with Connect Marketplace that will be held in New Orleans
- Monthly sales meetings with the Mississippi Coast Coliseum & Convention Center to discuss prospects
- Work with Convention Center to promote their discounted space fees based on food and beverage sales
- Continue utilizing the Extranet as an on-line process of communicating leads and bookings

<b>Texas Sales Calls</b>			Market: National - Regional Association / Corporate
<b>Atlanta Sales Calls</b>	2 per year December, 2016 April 2017	Atlanta, GA	Market: National - Regional Association / Corporate
<b>Destinations Showcase DC</b>	February 2017	Washington, DC	Market: National Association
<b>Connect Marketplace</b>	August 2017	New Orleans, LA	Market: National/Regional Assoc
<b>Connect DC Washington DC Sales Calls</b>	December 14, 2016 September 2017	Washington, DC	Market: National Association
<b>Meetings Quest</b>	TBD	Atlantic City, NJ	National/Regional Association/Corporate

### Tradeshow/Conference/Sales Calls

# State/Regional Sales

## Strategies

- Continuous sales calls to state association meeting planners and corporate planners with specific targeted message to MS State associations regarding the benefits and impact of keeping meetings in State
- Host client appreciation event in Jackson, MS
- Host client event in Baton Rouge, LA
- Host client event in Montgomery, AL
- Attendance at MSAE monthly luncheons
- Bi-monthly sales calls to targeted leads in Jackson, MS

<b>Alabama Council of Association Executives</b> *Annual Conference *Sales Calls	October 5-7, 2016 2 per year TBD:	Birmingham, AL  Birmingham, AL Montgomery, AL	Market: Regional Association / Corporate
<b>Louisiana Society of Association Executives</b> *Annual Conference *Sales Calls	2 per year TBD	New Orleans, LA Baton Rouge, LA	Market: Regional Association / Corporate
<b>Mississippi Society of Association Executives</b> *Annual Conference *Sales Calls	Sept 2017 TBD: Several per year	Orange Beach Jackson, MS	Market: State Association

### Tradeshaw/Conference/Sales Calls

# Leisure Group Sales Overview

## Domestic & International

Promotion of the Mississippi Gulf Coast to domestic tour operators, wholesale tour operators and inbound receptive operators. Emphasis will be placed on groups attendees with sales efforts that deliver business opportunities in the short-term window of groups arriving within 24 months that build a solid base of bookings into the future. Future booking sales efforts will be strongly influenced by expanded itineraries and hotel contracting.

The Leisure Group Sales is responsible for all areas related to the leisure travel markets. The two primary categories of concentration in the group travel arena are:

- Domestic Tour/Motorcoach Operator Market
- International Travelers / Inbound Receptive Market

# Leisure Group Sales - Domestic

## Strategies

### Direct Sales

- Phone/Email/Mail and face-to-face sales efforts quarterly to contacts derived from tradeshow attendance and membership directories

National Tour Association – Annual Convention	February 26-March 2, 2017	St. Louis, MO
Travel South Showcase – Domestic	March 12-15, 2017	Branson, MO
Travel Alliance Partnership – TAP Dance	June 2017	TBD
International Motorcoach Group	August 2017	TBD

### Tradeshow/Conference/Sales Calls

# Leisure Group Sales - International

## Strategies

### Direct Sales

- Phone/email and in person sales efforts will continue throughout the year to contacts derived from tradeshow attendance and membership directories

Travel South Showcase – International	November 28 – December 1, 2016	Atlanta, GA
IITA (International Inbound Travel Association)	February 7-8, 2017	Mississippi Gulf Coast
North American Journeys – Summit East	TBD –May 2017	New York, NY
United States Travel Association – IPW	June 2017	Washington, DC
UK Sales Mission with State Tourism Office	TBD	United Kingdom

### Tradeshow/Conference/Sales Calls

# Sports Sales

## Strategies

- Direct Sales
  - Phone/email and in person sales efforts will continue throughout the year to contacts derived from tradeshow attendance and membership directories
- Host pre or post FAM trip in conjunction with Connect Sports that will be held in New Orleans in 2017
- Host a pre or post FAM trip in conjunction with Conference USA
- Host a quarterly meeting with Park & Recreation Directors

<b>TEAMS</b>	TBD	TBD
<b>US Sports Congress</b>	December 5-7, 2016	Fort Myers, FL
<b>National Assoc. Sports Commissions</b>	March 27-30, 2017	Sacramento, CA
<b>Connect Sports</b>	August 25-27, 2017	New Orleans, LA
<b>International Assoc. of Golf Tour Operators</b>	TBD	Miami, FL

### Tradeshow/Conference/Sales Calls