

MISSISSIPPI ALABAMA GEORGIA
MOBILE JACKSON TALLAHASSEE
GULFPORT
MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST

2015-2016

Marketing Plan



STAY AWHILE. YOU'LL GET IT.

MISSISSIPPI
GULF COAST 

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Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast

2015-2016 Marketing Plan

Executive Summary

The Mississippi Gulf Coast Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau, or Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast, begins its third fiscal year continuing to establish a true three-county marketing effort. With the permanent participation of Jackson County, the organization is formally in place. Working toward achieving Premier status as a destination by 2020 and therefore will be a major initiative for this fiscal year.

The newly formed Mississippi Gulf Coast Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau has defined Premier Destination status as:

- 1) Increase annual visitation from 5 million in 2012 to 7 million annually;
- 2) Transform current \$1.6 billion annual tourism spending into \$2.3 billion;
- 3) Create roughly 10,000 new tourism jobs on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The FY 2016 Marketing Plan will address the challenges of meeting these goals by identifying new, permanent sources of funding for sales and marketing that can be used to incentivize sales staff, add advertising and marketing to build a strong national brand for the Mississippi Gulf Coast and to address gaps in providing a unique value proposition as a destination. This year, we will continue to identify and target markets and customer segments that will produce the best results given our budget and unique product while continuing to develop relationships through sales efforts that will produce results looking into the future.

National and Regional Industry Trends, Development and Projections

A recent trend in the travel industry is that visitors are seeking “authentic” experiences such as nature, culinary, history and those that provide educational opportunities. According to the International Culinary Tourism Association, culinary tourism is growing exponentially every year, as travelers are in the pursuit of unique and memorable food and drink experiences. With the steady increase in interest of food channels, travel shows featuring local and regional cuisine, food documentaries and online culinary travel shows, more consumers are traveling to various destinations just to enjoy a new food and wine experience. The function of culinary tourism is to educate and inspire food enthusiasts while giving the traveler a chance to explore a destination and learn about local food trends, cooking techniques and food history. Nature tourism is defined as, responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people. 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.

At a recent Hotel Data Conference presented by STR, experts offered insights on the profile of the “Next gen renter,” who is passionate about travel. Of Next gen renters, 50% have a desire to see as much of the world as possible. More than 50% are millennials 18 to 34 and they are seeking a unique authentic experience. According to Travel and Leisure, traditional luxury travel packagers are offering more affordable and casual vacations that prioritize authentic experiences targeted to Millennials (adults in their twenties and thirties). The U.N. World Tourism Organization predicts there will be some 1.6 billion eco-inspired trips taken by 2020. According to Forbes, adventure travel — kayaking, cycling, hiking, scuba diving, skiing, mountain climbing — is enjoying popularity among the 50+ crowd. Another trend is specialization. As we enter the age of “information

overload” and consumers seek more qualified information and insider recommendations, travel professionals have had to embrace specialization. More than a third of respondents (38%) in a survey by American Express Travel feel a deep knowledge of a particular destination or travel experience, such as family, culinary, or adventure travel, will be the most important tool in their arsenal as the travel industry evolves over the next five years.

Mississippi Gulf Coast

According to Mississippi Development Authority, 25% of all visitors to the state of Mississippi, visit Mississippi Gulf Coast. 5.5 million visitors spent \$1.81 billion on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in 2014. The Leisure and Hospitality sector is the Mississippi Gulf Coast’s largest private employer, representing 29% of the jobs on the Coast. The Mississippi Gulf Coast accounted for \$199.5 million in state and local taxes/fees attributed to Travel or Tourism; 32.2 percent of the estimated \$619.9 million statewide figure. *STR predicts a 4% increase in occupancy for the Mississippi Gulf Coast in FY 2015, along with a 5% increase in Average Rate and a 6% increase in Revenue per available rooms. The Mississippi Gulf Coast is in an excellent position to take advantage of this trend with our abundance of natural amenities, unique eco-tourism opportunities and rich history and culture. There continues to be positive signs of development on the Mississippi Gulf Coast that will directly benefit the tourism industry including much needed family attractions. We welcomed the recently opened MGM Park baseball stadium; 400 room addition to Island View Casino; the opening of the Scarlet Pearl Casino Resort in late 2015; an aquarium in Gulfport is expected to open in 2016; a water-park themed resort on the beach was announced this year; and numerous new restaurants opened across the Coast; we saw the addition of water sport rental companies; along with Pascagoula waterfront development and the Bay St. Louis Harbor development, providing even more options and diversification of our tourism product.

**Will update when data becomes available.*

FY 2015 YTD Results

	2013-2014 YTD	2014-2015 YTD
Social Media:		
Twitter	4,255	5,693
Facebook	87,782	90,573
You Tube views	279,266	301,238
Instagram		1,178
Pinterest		593
Media Relations:		
Articles	116	1,101
Media Value	\$106,520.35	\$55,782,178.20
Group Sales:		
Tentative Leads	163	208
Definite Business	84	82
Room nights	34,419	24,532
Attendees	34,989	28,159
Groups Assisted:		
Attendees	90	110
	7,174	8,052

Key Initiatives -

- Mid-week and off-peak in Harrison County
- Efforts for weekend groups in Jackson and Hancock Counties
- Golf
- Gaming
- Outdoor and recreation
- Culinary
- Culture

Sales leads issued increased along with definite room nights from those qualified leads. Sales managers have been given more-defined markets with quantifiable goals in individual leads issued and total definite room night. Supportive roles, including events and off-site venues, have been moved to the Services Department. Leads issued has increased 27% over FY 2014 and lead conversion to definite now exceeds conversion to lost business.

Results -

Key performance indicators of combined casino hotels and non-casino hotels shows occupancy decrease, but an increase in average daily rate. Gaming revenue has increased 6.7% and hotel occupancy tax is up 4.4%.

Gaps -

- Perception of Mississippi Sound
- Lack of headquarter hotel at state-of-the-art convention center
- Limited air service
- Limited destination marketing funding
- Transportation needed between hotels and convention center
- Beautification and signage

Sales Strategies

Mississippi Gulf Coast Group Sales Inventory:

- The Mississippi Gulf Coast boasts 683,312 square feet of Convention/Exhibit Space.
- The Mississippi Coast Convention Center complex offers 400,000 square feet of space.
- The Mississippi Coast Coliseum offers 39,280 square feet of space and reserved seating for 11,458 people
- The Mississippi Gulf Coast inventory of sleeping rooms totals 13,899
- Casino lodging rooms total: 5,774
- Non Casino lodging rooms total: 8,125
- Food and beverage outlets total: approx. 677
- Golf courses total: 19
- Charter boats total: 58
- Attractions total: 130
- Three major sports complexes totaling 28 baseball/softball fields, 13 soccer/lacrosse fields, 8 tennis courts and a water park.
- Various other facilities exist along the coast featuring four baseball/softball fields including Bay St. Louis, Long Beach, Gulfport, D'Iberville and Pascagoula.
- Private tennis facilities account for more than 50 courts throughout the coast.
- Local high school facilities provide additional venues for basketball, volleyball and other sports.

Mississippi Gulf Coast Group Sales Assets:

- Climate and natural beauty
- Southern hospitality
- Vast number of gaming and entertainment options
- Variety of sleeping accommodations to meet any budget
- Restaurants to meet any budget
- Gulf seafood and cultural influences
- Great golf courses (19)
- History and culture of the area dating back to 1699
- Gulf of Mexico and other nature based attractions, resources and amenities
- Mississippi Coast Coliseum & Convention Center
- Shopping venues from boutiques to outlet shopping
- Year-round festivals and events
- Convenient location for drive-in markets
- Vast number of sports complexes located in close proximity to lodging, shopping, dining and attractions.
- Ease of travel with four-lane highways running both north-south and east-west.
- Variety of sports complexes available (softball, baseball, soccer) along the entire Mississippi Gulf Coast

MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS

Convention Sales is responsible for all areas related to convention markets, corporate travel, meetings and trade shows. The two primary categories of concentration in the convention arena are:

- a) National Convention Sales - Includes SMERF (Social, Military, Educational, Reunion, Fraternal)
- b) Regional and State Convention Sales

a. National Sales

Strategies:

Tradeshow/Conference/Sales Call Attendance

International Association of Exhibits & Events	December 1 - 3, 2015	Baltimore, MD	Market: National Association / Tradeshow Management Co's
Destinations Showcase DC	March 2016	Washington, DC	Market: National Association
Kellen Manager's Summit	August 2016	Atlanta, GA	Market: National Association
Connect Marketplace	August 25 - 27, 2016	New Orleans, LA	Market: National/Regional Assoc
Washington DC Sales Calls	TBD: 2 per year	Washington, DC	Market: National Association
Texas Sales Calls	TBD: 2 per year	Dallas/Houston, TX	Market: National - Regional Association / Corporate
Atlanta Sales Calls	TBD: 2 per year	Atlanta, GA	Market: National - Regional Association / Corporate

Direct Sales/Meetings

- 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 Baton Rouge, LA
- Host client event in Montgomery, AL
- Host a pre or post FAM trip in conjunction with Connect Marketplace that will be held in New Orleans
- Bi-weekly 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 as incentive to book
- Quarterly hotel sales directors meeting
- Continue utilizing the Simpleview extranet as an on-line process of communicating leads and bookings.

b. State Convention Sales

<i>Tradeshow/Conference Attendance</i> Alabama Council of Association Executives *Annual Conference *Sales Calls	October 7-9, 2015 TBD: 2 per year	Sandestin, FL Montgomery, AL	Market: Regional Association / Corporate
Louisiana Society of Association Executives *Annual Conference	February 17 - 19, 2016 TBD: 2 per year	New Orleans, LA Baton Rouge, LA	Market: Regional Association / Corporate
Mississippi Society of Association Executives *Annual Conference *Sales Calls	Spring 2016 TBD: Several per year	TBD Jackson, MS	Market: State Association

Direct Sales/Meetings

- 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
- Attendance at MSAE monthly luncheons
- Bi-monthly sales calls to targeted leads in Jackson, MS

1. Leisure Group Travel

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

- A) Domestic Tour/Motorcoach Operator Market
- B) International Travelers / Inbound Receptive Market

Strategy Overview: 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.

a. Domestic Operator Market

Strategies:

Tradeshow/Conference Attendance

American Bus Association - Annual Marketplace	January 9 - 12, 2016	Louisville, KY
National Tour Association - Annual Convention	January 31 - February 4, 2016	Atlanta, GA
Travel South Showcase - Domestic	March 6 - 9, 2016	Winston-Salem, NC
Travel Alliance Partnership - TAP Dance	June 5 - 9, 2016	Duluth, MN
International Motorcoach Group	August 2016	TBD

Direct Sales

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

b. International Travelers / Inbound Receptive Market / Wholesale

Strategies:

Tradeshow/Marketplace Attendance

Meier's Go West	November 17 - 18, 2015	New Orleans, LA
Travel South Showcase - International	November 30 - December 3, 2015	Charlotte, NC
Receptive Services Association of America	February 9 - 10, 2016	New York, NY
North American Journeys - Summit East	May 2 - 3, 2016	New York, NY
United States Travel Association - IPW	June 18 - 22, 2016	New Orleans, LA
International Association of Golf Tour Operators	June 2016	TBD
Delta Vacations/MLT University	September 2016	Minneapolis, MN
UK Sales Mission with State Tourism Office	TBD	United Kingdom

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 USTA IPW that will be held in New Orleans in 2016

2. Sports Sales

Sports Strategies:

Tradeshow Attendance:

The below meetings are very beneficial for not only making contacts with potential clients but the educational seminars provide discussion on current trends in the sports travel industry.

S.P.O.R.T.S., The Relationship Conference		October 5 - 8, 2015	Shreveport, LA
TEAMS		November 9 - 12, 2015	Las Vegas, NV
US Sports Congress		December 7 - 9, 2015	Fort Worth, TX
National Association of Sports Commissions		April 3 - 7, 2016	Grand Rapids, MI
Connect Sports Marketplace		August 25 - 27, 2016	New Orleans, LA

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 2016

Marketing, Advertising and PR/Media Relations

OBJECTIVES:

- Continuously promote the Mississippi Gulf Coast as a singular destination
- Reposition the region in a more distinctive and differentiating manner from competitors
- Maintain advertising that is memorable and compels action
- Penetrate growth markets and reach best prospects to create awareness and drive inquiries
- Maintain awareness in inner markets, encouraging getaways and supporting key initiatives

Inner Markets -

Situation: The Mississippi Gulf Coast is a unique coastal vacation destination that needs to get on the consideration set of our best prospects while they are planning a vacation or getaway.

Best Prospects:

- People actively considering a vacation or getaway in MS, LA, FL, NC, SC, GA, AL
- Ages 25-34 and 45-64
- Income of \$50K+
- Travelers seeking authentic cultural experiences
- Budget travelers

Geo-targeting:

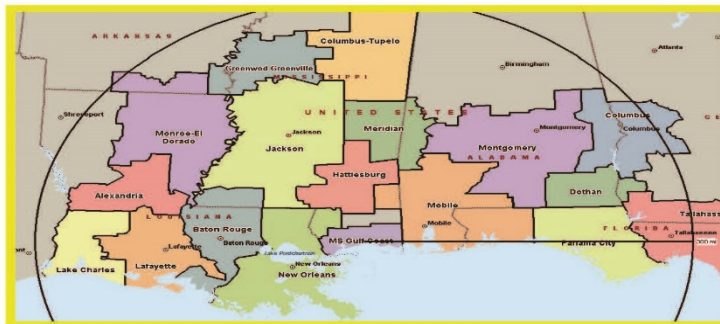
New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Jackson, Mobile, Pensacola, Tallahassee, Montgomery, Selma, Lafayette, Columbus GA, Columbus OH, Tupelo, Monroe, El Dorado, Panama City, Hattiesburg, Laurel, Dothan, Lake Charles, Alexandria, Meridian, Greenwood, Greenville

Interests:

Outdoors & Nature, Fishing & Boating, Casinos, Golf, Beach & Coastal Destinations, Culture & History, Major Festivals

INNER MARKETS: MAINTAIN (WITHIN 300 MILES)

MARKET	RANK
New Orleans	51
Baton Rouge	60
Jackson	93
Mobile-Pensacola	94
Tallahassee	106
Montgomery-Selma	118
Lafayette	124
Columbus, GA	127
Columbus-Tupelo	133
Monroe-El Dorado	137
Panama City	159
Hattiesburg-Laurel	166
Dothan	169
Lake Charles	175
Alexandria, LA	179
Meridian	186
Greenwood-Greenville	188



Target Audience:

4,009,944

Adults 25-34 / 45-64

Outer (Growth) Markets –

Situation: The Mississippi Gulf Coast is a unique coastal vacation destination that needs to get on the consideration set of our best prospects while they are planning a vacation or getaway.

Best Prospects:

- People actively considering a vacation or getaway in MS, LA, FL, NC, SC, GA, AL
- Ages 25-34 and 45-64
- Income of \$50K+
- Travelers seeking authentic cultural experiences
- Budget travelers

Geo-targeting:

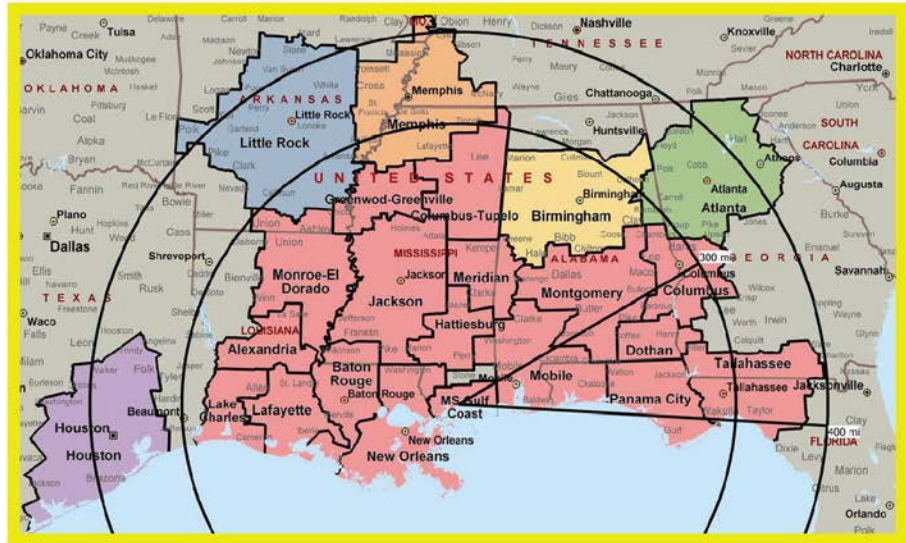
Atlanta, Houston, Memphis, Birmingham, Little Rock

Interests:

Outdoors & Nature, Fishing & Boating, Casinos, Golf, Beach & Coastal Destinations, Culture & History

OUTER MARKETS: GROW
(300-400 MILES)

MARKET	RANK
Atlanta	9
Houston	10
Birmingham	43
Memphis	50
Little Rock	56



Target Audience:

6,998,000

Adults 25-34 / 45-64

Fly-In Markets -

Situation: Inform these selected markets that the Mississippi Gulf Coast is a unique coastal vacation destination that needs to get on the consideration set of our best prospects while they are planning a vacation or getaway.

Best Prospects:

- People actively considering a vacation or getaway in MS, LA, FL, NC, SC, GA, AL
- Ages 25-34 and 45-64
- Income of \$50K+
- Travelers seeking authentic cultural experiences
- Budget travelers

Geo-targeting:

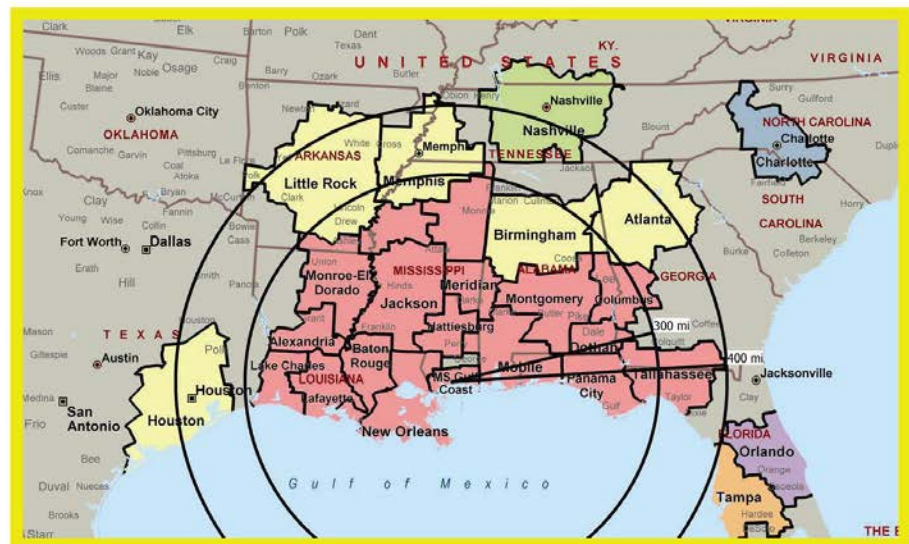
Washington DC, Charlotte, Tampa, Orlando, Nashville

Interests:

Outdoors & Nature, Fishing & Boating, Casinos, Golf, Beach & Coastal Destinations, Culture & History

FLY-IN MARKETS: INFORM

MARKET	RANK
Washington DC	8
Tampa	13
Orlando	18
Charlotte	24
Nashville	29



Target Audience:

8,064,000

Adults 25-34 / 45-64

Midwest Markets -

Situation: Educate these selected markets that the Mississippi Gulf Coast is a unique coastal vacation destination that needs to get on the consideration set of our best prospects while they are planning a vacation or getaway.

Best Prospects:

- People actively considering a vacation or getaway in MS, LA, FL, NC, SC, GA, AL
- Ages 25-34 and 45-64
- Income of \$50K+
- Travelers seeking authentic cultural experiences
- Budget travelers

Geo-targeting:

Chicago, Detroit, Minneapolis, Cleveland-Akron, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Battle Creek

Interests:

Outdoors & Nature, Fishing & Boating, Casinos, Golf, Beach & Coastal Destinations, Culture & History

MIDWEST MARKETS: EDUCATE (SNOWBIRDS)

MARKET	RANK
Chicago	3
Detroit	11
Minneapolis	15
Cleveland-Akron	18
Indianapolis	26
Kansas City	31
Milwaukee	34
Cincinnati	35
Grand Rapids- Kalamazoo- Battle Creek	133
	39



Target Audience:

8,257,302

Adults 50+

Psychographic Overview:

“Geotourists” have further been identified as best prospects.

This group:

- Focuses on the experience of a destination – learning about its culture and history
- Seeks the authenticity of people and place; strong preference for the social aspects of travel
- Desires 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 result will be an advertising campaign that is highly targeted to an appropriate audience of individuals who have interests suited to what is offered by a Mississippi Gulf Coast visit AND who are actively seeking a similar getaway.

With a very limited media budget, the goal is to reach as efficiently as possible these targeted individuals with a compelling advertising message, and to drive them to gulfcoast.org.

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.

This Promise is supported by:

- A wide variety of adventures and accommodations
- Unpretentious, friendly and hospitable people with a laid-back attitude
- Historic small-town charm with modern day comforts
- Moderate Gulf-of-Mexico climate
- A sense of perseverance and community across the Coast

Brand 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.

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.*

Strategy Overview:

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. Note that Lodging is also promoted separately from these activity categories.

The main goal of FY 15-16 is to produce interesting, unique content within each of the below outlined segments:

1. Outdoors & Nature-based Tourism
(Includes Nature Tours, Birding, Kayaking, Hiking, etc.)
2. Fishing & Boating
(Includes Charter Boats, Boat Tours, Gulf Fishing, Pier Fishing, etc.)
3. Beaches & Coastal
(Includes Beach Activities, Water Activities, Seafood, etc.)
4. Culture & History
(Includes Culinary, Art, History, Boutique Shopping, etc.)
5. Casinos
(Includes Gaming, Resort, etc.)
6. Golf
(Includes Golfing, Tournaments, etc.)

With an established brand, it is now important to translate this singular, focused voice across other channels to spread the reach of our messages in an authentic way, speaking to our target audience of geo-tourists and providing individualized content, based on their interests.

Taking into consideration our target audience, established content segments, and recent travel trends, culinary and nature tourism will be used as content drivers during this year.

CULINARY:

According to the International Culinary Tourism Association, culinary tourism is growing exponentially every year, as travelers are in the pursuit of unique and memorable food and drink experiences. With the steady increase in interest of food channels, travel shows featuring local and regional cuisine, food documentaries and online culinary travel shows, more consumers are traveling to various destinations just to enjoy a new food and wine experience. The function of culinary tourism is to educate and inspire food enthusiasts while giving the traveler a chance to explore the Mississippi Gulf Coast and learn about local food trends, cooking techniques and food history.

Strategies:

- Work with local chefs and restaurateurs to establish culinary experiences for the traveler.
- Develop culinary tourism packages.
- Seek out culinary bloggers.
- Establish culinary specific newsletter.
- Participation/presence in regional culinary consumer events.

NATURE:

Nature tourism is defined as, responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people. 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.

Strategies:

- Partner with local key environmental and conservation groups to stimulate and grow nature-based tourism.
- Develop nature-based tourism packages.
- Seek out nature-based tourism bloggers.
- Establish nature-based tourism newsletter.

PR/Media

Influencer Program

Establish an influencer program incorporating thought leaders, who are knowledgeable and experienced in a given industry or subject, as we consider these influencers subject matter experts, and their influence will give credibility to stories we pitch and content we produce.

- Thought leaders will be chosen based on identified pillars and priorities
- Thought leaders to contribute to the Coastal Conversations blog, social media platforms and more
- Create key messages to share with each influencer when creating content for Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast media channels
 - Key messages will also be shared with journalists visiting during FAM trips
- Invite thought leaders/experts in culinary and nature/eco-tourism to contribute to Coastal Conversations blog, social media platforms and contribute insights to help inform proactive pitching efforts

Earned Media

- Proactively invite travel and lifestyle media to engage in FAM trips/Site visits throughout the year during Mississippi Gulf Coast peak travel periods
- Actively pitch stories related to the region based on trends in the travel/lifestyle space and offer exclusive interviews with local thought leaders/influencers

Crisis Communication

- Develop key messages prior to/during crises and arm partners with uniform messaging to ensure approach is consistent

Social Media

- Invite influencers to own Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast social media channels for a day, coupled with Coastal Conversations blog or relevant pillar
- Develop year-long social media content strategy based on established pillars, allocating a theme for each month of the year and adding longevity by determining which pillars inspire the most engagement
- Maintain awareness of #MSCoastLife campaign through launching a contest to encourage social media engagement, local partner participation and drive brand excitement

Meetings, Conventions and Trade Shows

Strategy Overview: To provide collateral, advertising and media relations support for sales efforts; to take advantage of value added opportunities.

Special Promotions

- Newsletters sent on a quarterly basis from each of the sales managers to their specific client list within the database. Newsletters will highlight different aspects of the Mississippi Gulf Coast including new attractions, new hotels, upcoming events, restaurants, coming soon, as well as tying in consumer branding efforts.

Social Media

- Promote #MSCOASTLIFE with signage throughout the Convention Center.
- Continue to utilize Twitter handle specific for meetings to welcome conventions and attendees to the Mississippi Gulf Coast and post when CVB staff is at conventions with booths. Twitter handle - @MeetMSGulfCoast

PR/Media

- Pitch stories to local media regarding conventions being held on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.
- Establish contacts with journalists/bloggers within the meetings and conventions industry to gain editorial coverage.
- Host a FAM trip in conjunction with larger events held at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum & Convention Center, inviting influential reporters in the Meetings & Conventions space to learn more about Mississippi Gulf Coast's offerings.

Customer Service

Group Services

Strategies:

Specialty Items (budget for specialty items included in convention and leisure group sales budgets)

- Maintain inventory of specialty items for groups, client gifts, and fam tour turn down gifts
- Client gifts for FAM tours/site inspections – included in other sales budgets
- Giveaway items for convention / bus groups – included in other sales budgets
- Gifts for “Silent Auction” baskets – industry requests – utilize existing inventory – discontinue non-industry related local event requests
- Name badges / holders for convention / bus groups

Research, Analysis and Development

Research and Analysis

- Continue research efforts with Mississippi Development Authority, STR and other sources to clearly gauge the effects of all sales and marketing efforts.
- Continually update the Key Performance Indicators as set forth to update the staff, board and communities of the effect of tourism marketing across the Coast.
- Conduct a comprehensive consumer perception and conversion study.

Strategic Partnerships

- Work with Visit Mississippi, STR, and Destination Marketing Association International to update industry trends in the travel industry.
- Align strategic partnerships with industry leaders and organizations across the country including GPT Airport Commission, Hotel Lodging Association, Hospitality and Restaurant Association, Casino Operators Association, Attractions Association and Mississippi Gulf Coast Golf Association among others to gather industry-wide trends and opportunities.
- Collaborate with coast wide events that have national and international visitation.

Overview:

- Hospitality Industry Training (USM and MGCCC) Form a strategic partnership with USM, MS Gulf Coast Community Colleges, and the Hospitality Industry to ensure available trained work force and to develop incentives to strengthen the tourism and hospitality industry on the MS Gulf Coast.
- Amenity and Attraction Development
 - In addition to national brand awareness, the recent air service study suggests that subsidies supported by the community may be necessary to initially attract a low cost carrier and to increase existing service and add new markets. We will continue to support efforts by the Gulfport Biloxi Regional Airport to pursue these objectives and raise awareness of their importance to advancing tourism and convention/meeting sales on the MS Gulf Coast.

- Discuss possible shared-cost paid charter flight opportunities from other markets with marketing partners, airlines and the Gulfport-Biloxi Airport.
- Beautification and Tourism Signage
 - Work with MDOT, State, County and City officials and local organizations to coordinate and improve efforts and increase the value and importance of improving beautification of the MS Gulf Coast.
 - Pursue increased funding for beautification efforts including maintenance, cleaning and gateway enhancements by communicating the economic benefits and return on investment to State government officials and legislators.
 - Work with MDOT, State, County and City officials and local organizations to improve tourism signage and directional information for visitors such as numbering traffic lights - coordinate with directories.
 - Work with local organizations and tourism partners to improve communication of tourism information to visitors in coordination with improved signage.
 - Pursue available funding including grants and volume discounts for a Coast-wide coordinated tourism signage and identification program.
 - Establish a fund for programs that enhance tourism by improving the appearance of the MS Gulf Coast in the major tourist areas including I10, Beach Boulevard at Gateways and the identification and communication of tourism information.

Funding

Overview:

- Sponsorships and alignments
 - Create opportunities for tourism associations, individual tourism entities and other businesses to participate in co-operative advertising, sales and marketing efforts by offering segment specific programs, i.e. produce a gaming centric campaign and co-op with the MS Gaming and Hospitality Assn.
 - Meet with local and State tourism, economic development, civic and business organizations that also fund tourism marketing efforts for the MS Gulf Coast to combine current efforts for greater effectiveness such as coordination of large event sponsorships, vertical campaigns and destination brand advertising in development markets.
- Public Funding
 - Participate and assist with discussions regarding implementation of business zones such as entertainment zone around Pascagoula waterfront and Bay St. Louis harbor development as a possible solution to provide funding for the regional tourism organization.