



FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022

TOWN OF BLUFFTON

DESTINATION MARKETING PLAN

bluffton

HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY



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Year in Review

Awards & Mentions



**Montage Palmetto Bluff named among
“Best Places to Travel in May”**

**The Cottage named in the “Eat” category for one of the
“Greatest Travel Spots” by *South Magazine***

**Montage Palmetto Bluff named among *Travel + Leisure* World’s
Best Awards “The Top 15 Resort Hotels in the South”**

**Montage Palmetto Bluff was a featured destination
for future travel and as a spot in “Best Weekend Road Trips”
in *Travel + Leisure***

**Montage Palmetto Bluff receives *Forbes*
Travel Guide’s 5-Star Award**

**Bluffton is listed as among
“20 Small Towns that Leave an Impression” in *Country Living***

**Montage Palmetto Bluff is named to *Condé Nast Traveler’s* World
Gold List one of only 17 resorts in the U.S.**

**Montage Palmetto Bluff named among *Condé Nast Traveler’s*
Reader’s Choice Awards “Best Resorts in the South”**

Social Performance

In 2020, we built on 2019's launch success by focusing on increasing impressions for brand awareness and follower growth, as well as fostering engagement among our audience. We found natural beauty photography outperforms any other kind of content, and are continuously finding ways to showcase the culinary scene, historic landmarks, art scene, and culture in ways that resonate with our audience.


In Q3 and particularly Q4 of 2020, as Covid-19 restrictions loosened, we also implemented new tactics with more direct CTAs to book a Bluffton getaway and posting Instagram Stories with CTAs to click the link in our bio. These efforts proved successful for us which you will see in the numbers below.

Channel Growth



377%
OVERALL
GROWTH RATE


120K
OVERALL
ENGAGEMENT




5.96%
FACEBOOK
ENGAGEMENT RATE
(FACEBOOK AVERAGE 0.09%)



19,282,684
FACEBOOK
REACH



3.76%
INSTAGRAM
ENGAGEMENT RATE
(INSTAGRAM AVERAGE 1.6%)



1,786,881
INSTAGRAM
REACH

Executive Summary

The Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce/Visitor & Convention Bureau continues to be the leader in promoting tourism within Bluffton. The organization as a whole utilizes national economic and tourism trends, consumer research, prior program performance, demographics and takes into consideration the needs of our community (residents and businesses) to be in the best position as the steward of the destination.

The Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce and Visitor & Convention Bureau implemented major actions aimed at maintaining its commitment to excellence and leadership in the marketplace this past fiscal year. These included:

- Development and implementation of the Path Forward Readiness Plan, a uniform set of recommended protocols for businesses to follow, provided a consistent and evidence-based approach to protecting the health of our residents, workforce and visitors. Over 150 business owners, residents and community members and government officials gave their input and over 300 businesses took the Pledge to adhere to the recommended guidelines. The Path Forward story was picked up by 140 different media outlets and adopted nationally by VRMA, Vacation Rental Management Association.
- Integration of Zoom technology for our organization to be able to adapt and continue operating seamlessly.
- Development of weekly Tele-Town Hall series to deliver relevant and up to date information to listeners and provide insight from key thought leaders throughout 2020 and into 2021.
- Launch of VisitBluffton.org as an independent website.
- Expansion of air-service and air-carriers at both airports serving the region.
- Board approved 10-year Destination Management Plan that provides the roadmap and shared vision for the community to ensure responsible and sustainable tourism growth.



Vision

A welcoming, world-class community embracing nature, culture and economic vibrancy for residents and visitors.

Mission

Stimulate the regional economy while enhancing the quality of life for all.

Brand Commitment

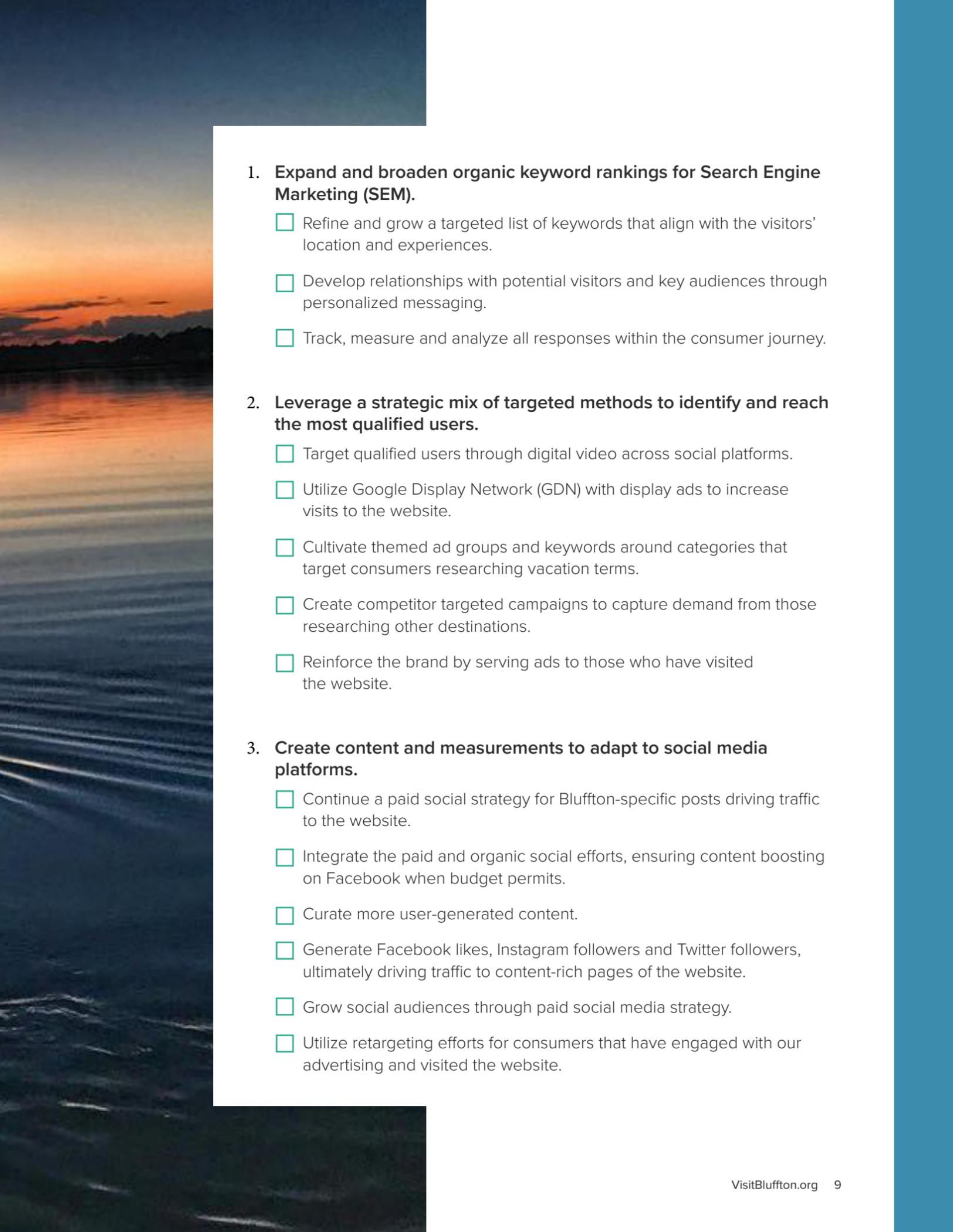
Bluffton is the heart of the Lowcountry. It speaks to the town's central location, its lovable characteristics, and that Bluffton is the pumping, economic life force of the Lowcountry. Most importantly, it's a tone and a feeling. When you're in the Town of Bluffton, you can see and feel the love. It's real and authentic. It's the heart symbol in your logo, on a window, the pride residents have in their downtown or the warmth shared with strangers at an oyster roast. The Town of Bluffton is a well-kept secret. Nowhere else in the Lowcountry do you feel the love like you do when you are in Bluffton.

Source: Rawle Murdy Associates 2013



2021-2022 Strategies & Tactics





1. **Expand and broaden organic keyword rankings for Search Engine Marketing (SEM).**

- ☐ Refine and grow a targeted list of keywords that align with the visitors' location and experiences.
- ☐ Develop relationships with potential visitors and key audiences through personalized messaging.
- ☐ Track, measure and analyze all responses within the consumer journey.

2. **Leverage a strategic mix of targeted methods to identify and reach the most qualified users.**

- ☐ Target qualified users through digital video across social platforms.
- ☐ Utilize Google Display Network (GDN) with display ads to increase visits to the website.
- ☐ Cultivate themed ad groups and keywords around categories that target consumers researching vacation terms.
- ☐ Create competitor targeted campaigns to capture demand from those researching other destinations.
- ☐ Reinforce the brand by serving ads to those who have visited the website.

3. **Create content and measurements to adapt to social media platforms.**

- ☐ Continue a paid social strategy for Bluffton-specific posts driving traffic to the website.
- ☐ Integrate the paid and organic social efforts, ensuring content boosting on Facebook when budget permits.
- ☐ Curate more user-generated content.
- ☐ Generate Facebook likes, Instagram followers and Twitter followers, ultimately driving traffic to content-rich pages of the website.
- ☐ Grow social audiences through paid social media strategy.
- ☐ Utilize retargeting efforts for consumers that have engaged with our advertising and visited the website.

4. Improve the visibility of the Bluffton website within the search results of both search engines and social networks for branded key phrases and emerging search queries.

- ☐ Ongoing technical audits and comprehensive reviews to ensure content on the website remains crawlable and indexable by search engines.
- ☐ Identify target keywords for content, and regularly highlight optimization opportunities for existing content to ensure relevance for search engines.
- ☐ Identify and attract high quality links from high authority sites, along with sharing of content through influencer outreach and a targeted social media strategy.
- ☐ Optimize and take advantage of new Google My Business (GMB) features where relevant to ensure users interest is captured both on and off-site.
- ☐ Research to find new opportunities for content that, once indexed by search engines, will drive qualified searchers to the website.

5. Market the destination to prospects in all meetings and group market segments to grow shoulder and off-season business.

- ☐ Attend tradeshow and/or connect with meeting planners to build awareness and generate leads for group business.

6. Create a collateral piece with compelling imagery and content about the destination.

- ☐ Develop and produce the Official Bluffton Vacation Planner.
- ☐ Distribute the planner to visitors, businesses, elected officials, tradeshow, events and media.
- ☐ Create an immersive digital and social version of the planner to leverage the ever-growing visitors online engagement.

7. Use research and reports to influence future marketing efforts.

- ☐ Ongoing maintenance of ThinkBluffton.org, the Chamber's online economic metrics portal for Bluffton.
- ☐ Procure Smith Travel Research (STR) and DestiMetrics reporting on a regular basis for measuring lodging occupancy, average room rates, room demand and RevPAR.
- ☐ Collaborate with College of Charleston Office of Tourism Analysis along with ensuring details of our Google analytics and social platforms to provide quarterly and annual performance updates.







Budget

*Note that the proposed budget is a projection and dependent on actual ATAX collections for 2021-2022. We will continue to work with the Town of Bluffton throughout the year to make adjustments as needed.

SEO / Social Media (Organic)	\$18,900
Digital Promotions	\$45,000
Media Management & Reporting	\$5,265
Website & Campaign Maintenance	\$14,310
Bluffton Insiders (enews)	\$4,860
Bluffton Vacation Planner	\$22,500
Regional Vacation Planner	\$12,165
Group Tour	\$900
Photography / Videography	\$12,000
Research & Planning	\$4,500
Contingency	\$4,500
Ops & Management	\$85,100
Total Expenses	\$230,000



Demographics & Personas

We use multiple primary and secondary data sources to understand who our visitors are and what motivates them to visit Bluffton. Our real-time data sources include Google Analytics, in addition to research, partnering with the Office of Tourism Analysis at the College of Charleston and the University of South Carolina Beaufort. Using these insights we are able to extract visitor persona detail which allows us the ability to further refine our messaging to a more qualified potential consumer.

Today, as we adjust to the new traveler needs, we will continue to keep our demographics and key personas at the forefront, but will adapt as necessary in the short-term to address the consumers travel sentiment. We will expand our drive radius as travelers are willing to drive further distances post quarantine and continue to focus on our short-haul fly markets, supporting new air lift as it becomes available.

We have identified the following key persona groups as:

- Family
- Snowbirds
- Activities/Recreation Enthusiasts
- The Weekender
- Arts, Culture and History
- Culinary

Our Target Leisure Traveler for the Region



67.4%
Female



32.6%
Male



\$150K+
Affluent Traveler



59.1%
Undergraduate
Degree or Higher



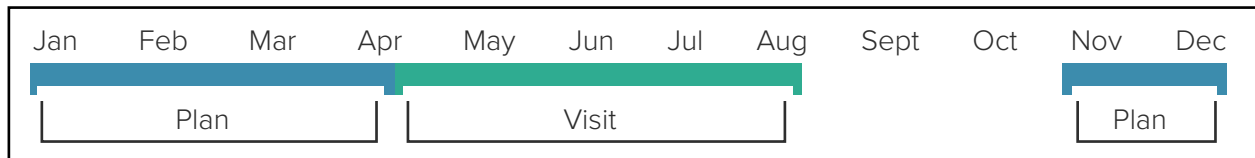
2-4 Trips per Year
7 Nights Average
Length of Stay

Family

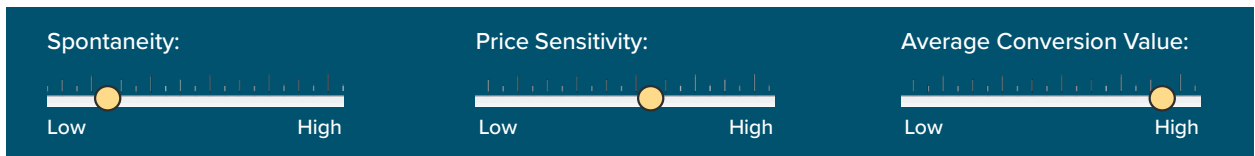


Family Travel Objective

Find a vacation spot that will please everyone during the school holidays.




Travel Habits



Who They Are


Upscale & Status
Oriented


Values
Family Time


Creating a
Legacy


Active & Health
Conscious

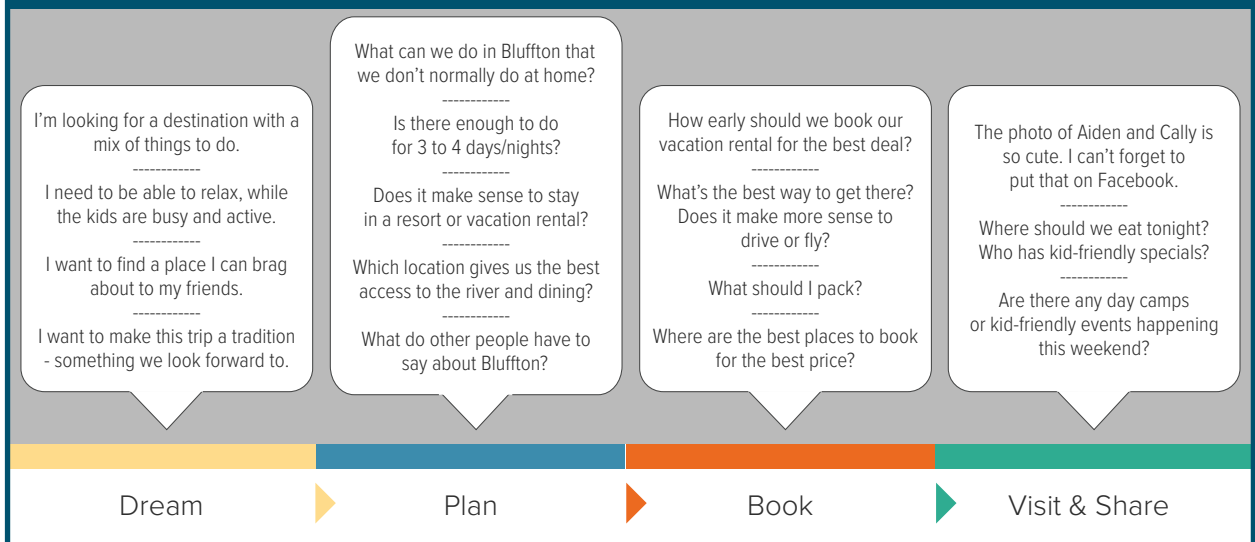
Preferred Activities & Attractions

Vacation Rentals & Resorts
Beach & Water Activities
Biking & Hiking
Tennis & Pickleball
Festivals & Events
Kid-friendly Dining
Museums & Day Camps

Marketing Channels & Formats

Facebook Videos
Instagram
TripAdvisor
TV
Online Video
Forums & Blogs
Pinterest

“Let’s Make Memories.” Their Path to Purchase



Snowbirds



Snowbirds Travel Objective

Find a warm destination that feels like home for the winter, where they can welcome family and friends for visits.



Travel Habits



Who They Are



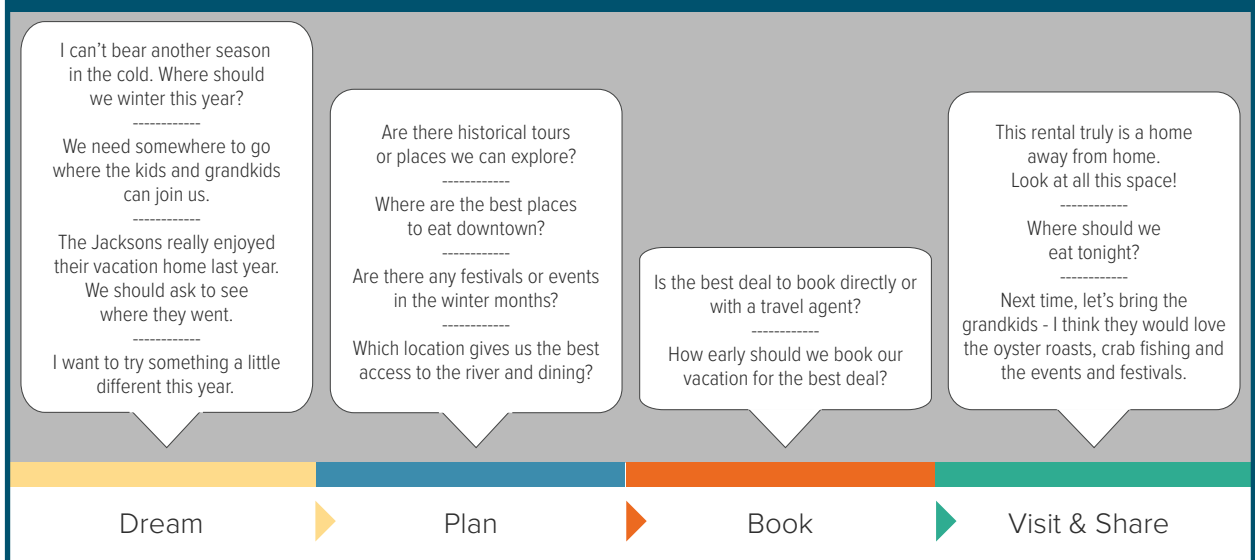
Preferred Activities & Attractions

Vacation Rentals
Dining
Golfing
History / Culture
Excursion / Tour
Biking

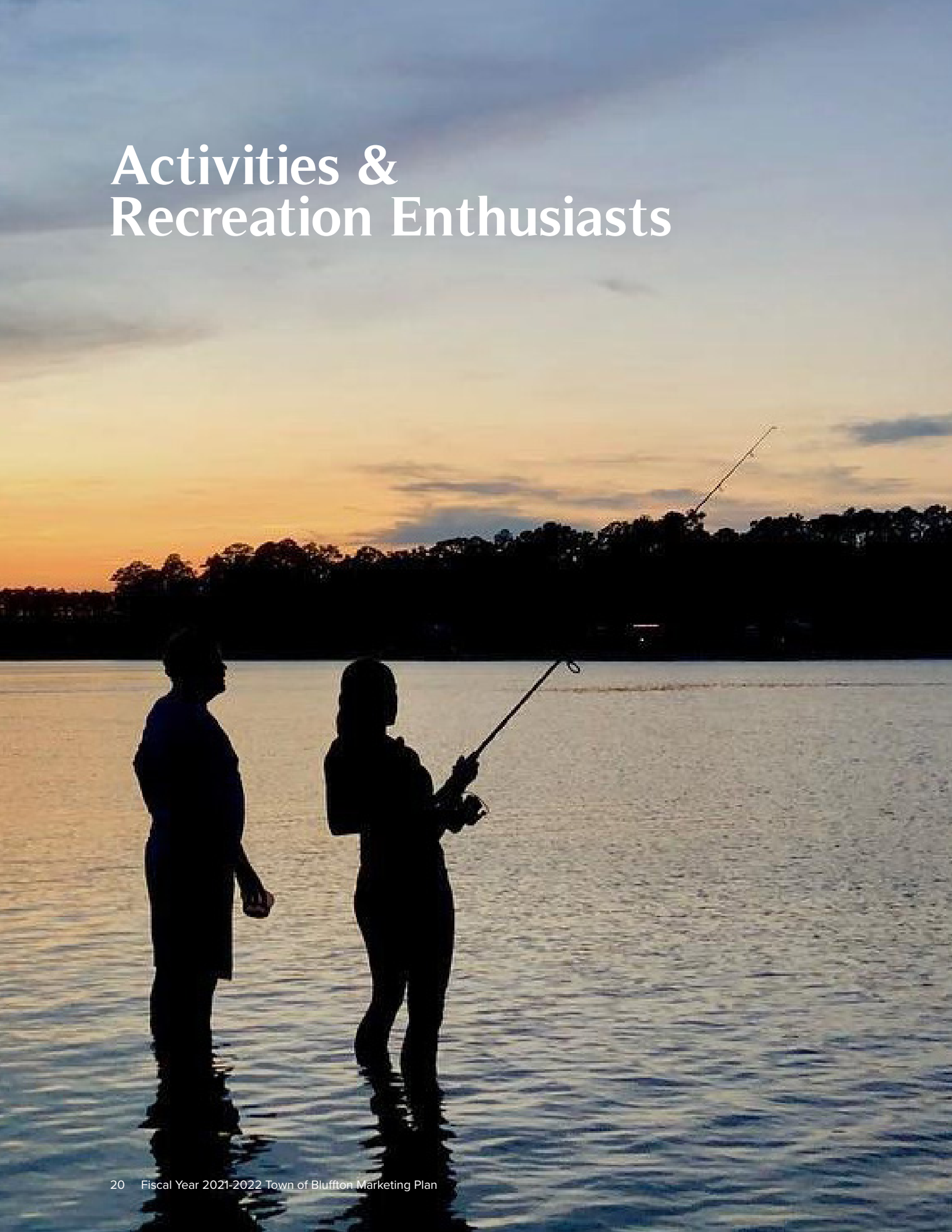
Marketing Channels & Formats

Facebook
Print
TripAdvisor
Radio
TV
Online Video

"Let's Make this Feel like Home." Their Path to Purchase

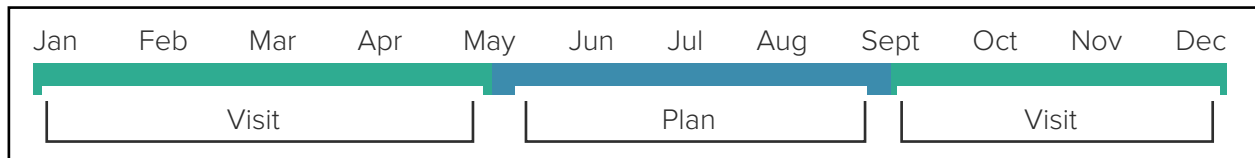


Activities & Recreation Enthusiasts

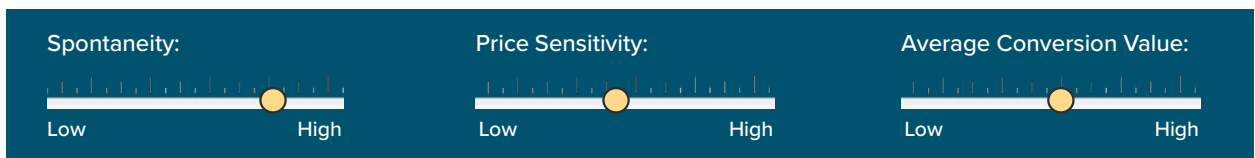


Activities / Recreation Enthusiast Travel Objective

Find a destination where they can pursue their interests on their downtime.



Travel Habits



Who They Are



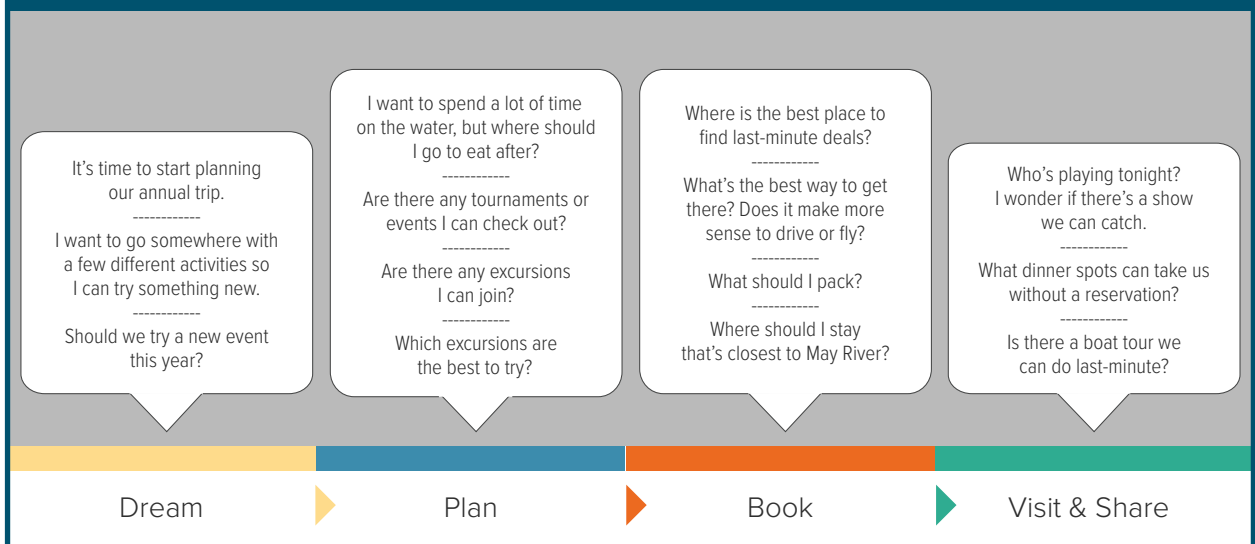
Preferred Activities & Attractions

Golf
Boating & Water Activities
Hiking & Biking
Nightlife

Marketing Channels & Formats

Facebook Videos
Instagram
Twitter
TripAdvisor
TV
Online Video
Forums & Blogs

“Let’s Explore.” Their Path to Purchase

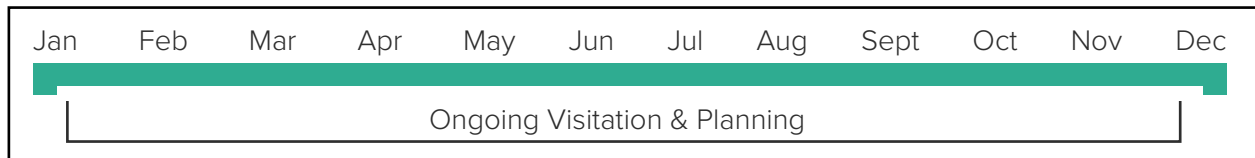


The Weekender



The Weekender Travel Objective

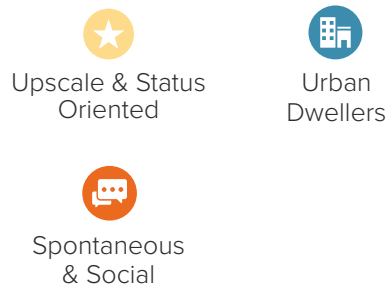
Find a fairweather weekend escape from work and city life.



Travel Habits



Who They Are



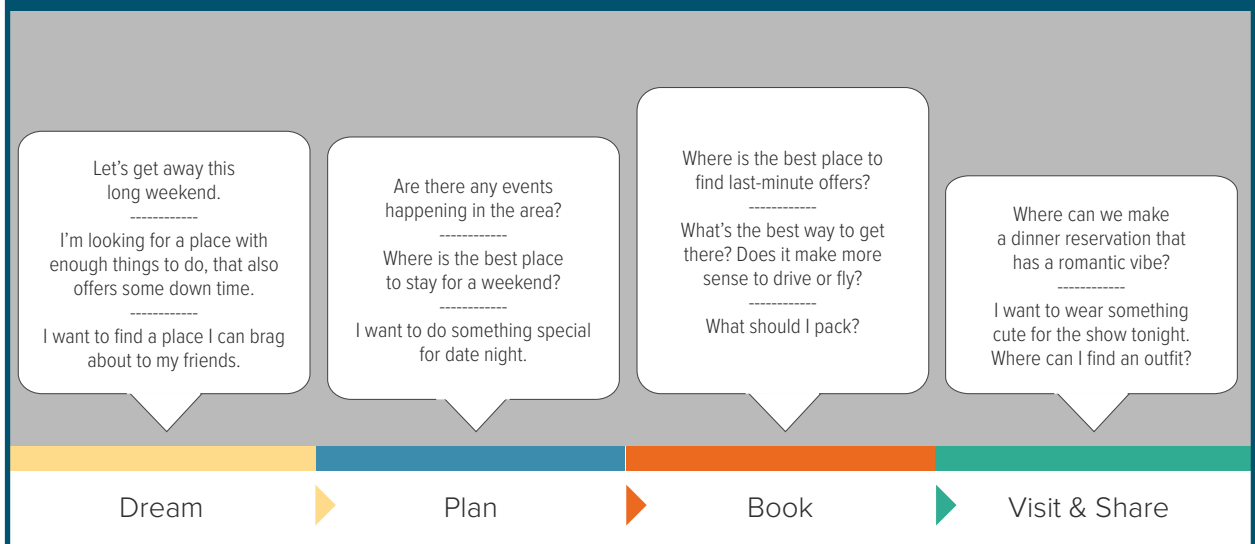
Preferred Activities & Attractions

Vacation Rentals & Resorts
Water Activities
Dining & Shopping
Romantic Things to Do
Festivals & Events
Weddings
Palmetto Bluff

Marketing Channels & Formats

Facebook Videos
Instagram
TripAdvisor
TV
Online Video
Forums & Blogs
Pinterest

"Let's Get Away." Their Path to Purchase

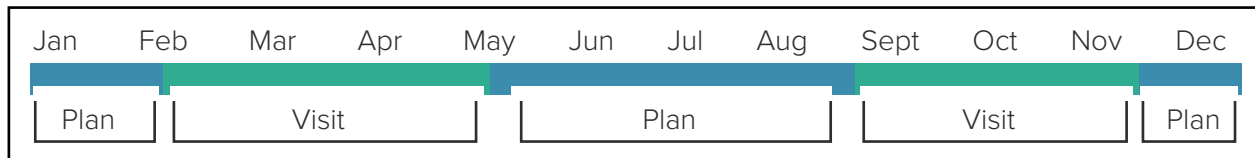


Arts, Culture & History



Arts, Culture & History Travel Objective

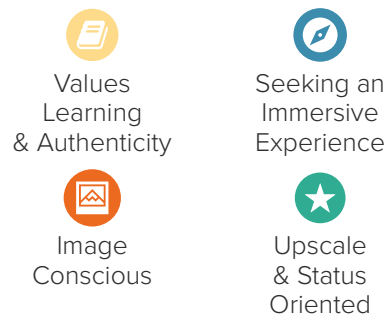
To explore cultural attractions, historical sites and the local arts scene.



Travel Habits



Who They Are



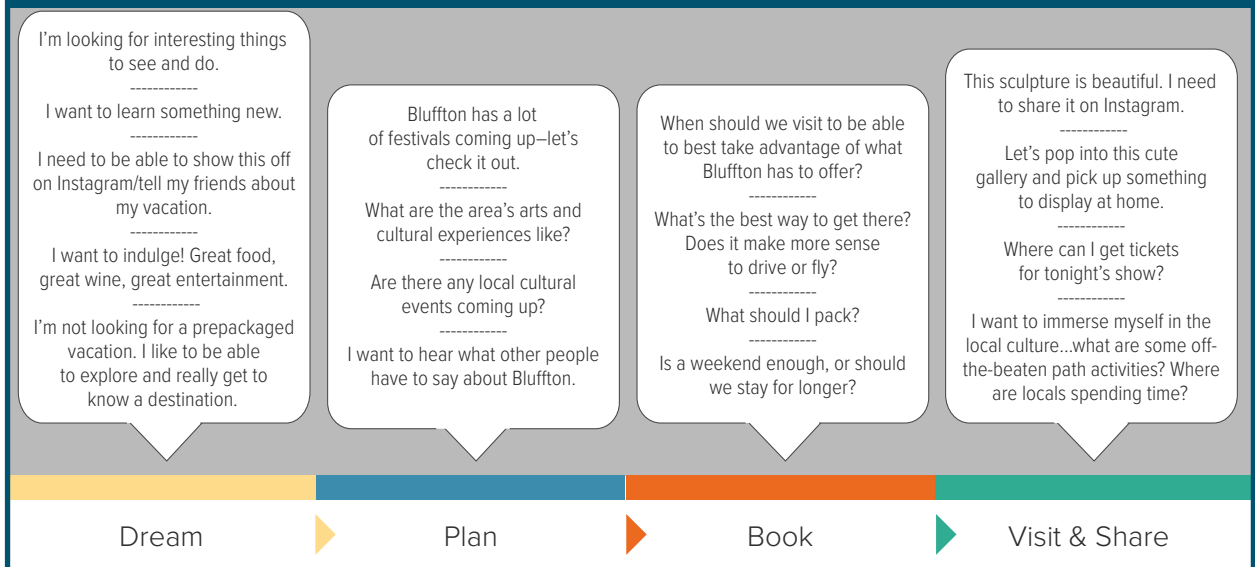
Preferred Activities & Attractions

Historical District & Attractions
 Art District & Galleries
 Cultural District
 Gullah Geechee Cultrual Heritage
 Festivals & Events
 Art of Old Town
 Church of the Cross

Marketing Channels & Formats

Facebook Videos
 Instagram
 TripAdvisor
 Online Video
 Forums & Blogs
 Pinterest
 Earned Media (Print/Digital)

“Experiences are Greater than Things.” Their Path to Purchase

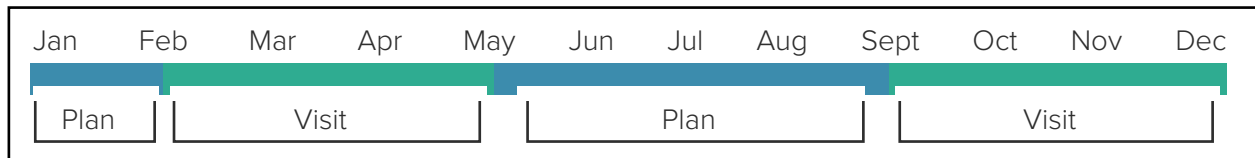


A close-up photograph of several oysters on ice with lemon wedges. The oysters are arranged on a bed of crushed ice, and several lemon wedges are scattered around them. The oysters are fresh, with their shells open, revealing the glistening meat inside. The lemon wedges are bright yellow and add a pop of color to the scene. The overall composition is appetizing and visually appealing.

Culinary

Culinary Travel Objective:

Be immersed in a new destination (or an old favorite) by exploring the pursuit of unique and memorable culinary experiences.




Travel Habits




Who They Are


Values
Authenticity


Seeking an
Immersive
Experience


Spontaneous
& Social


Unconventional

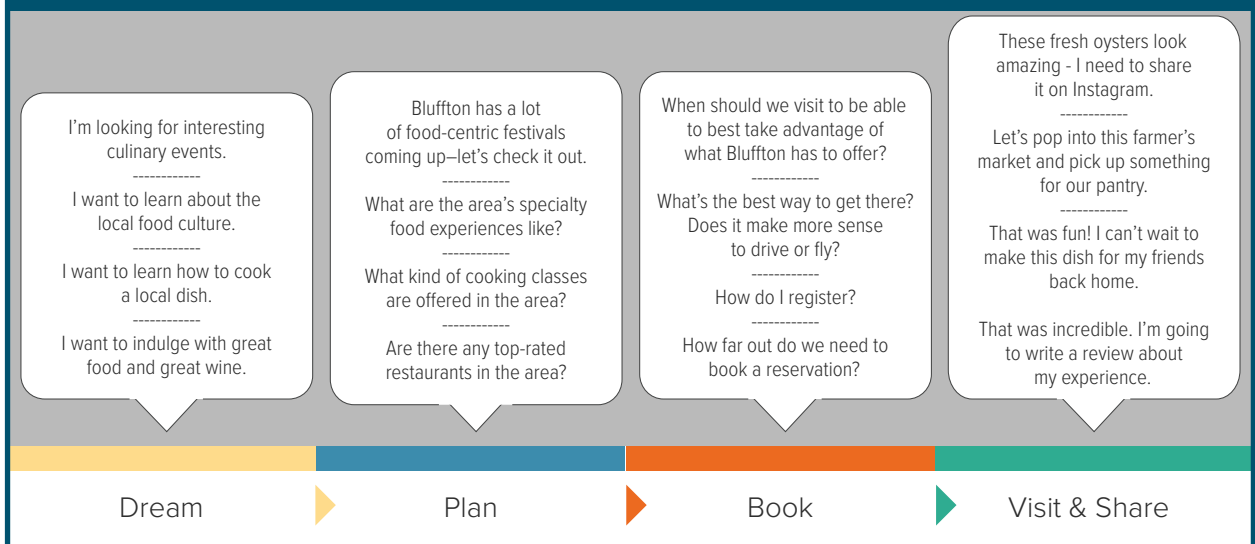
Preferred Activities & Attractions

Cooking Classes
Food Tours
Wine, Beer and Food Festivals
Specialty Dining Experiences
May River Oyster Roasts

Marketing Channels & Formats

Facebook Videos
Instagram
TripAdvisor
Forums & Blogs
Pinterest

“Experience Authentic, Local Cuisine.” Their Path to Purchase



2021-2022 Destination Marketing Plan

The Visitor & Convention Bureau will continue to position Bluffton as the ultimate escape filled with genuine experiences to explore. For those looking to travel and immerse themselves in a new vacation experience, Bluffton is where they will find historical traditions, culture, Gullah heritage, natural beauty and culinary delights.

Bluffton is a safety-first focused destination. With the development and implementation of the Path Forward Readiness Plan, we provided a consistent and evidence-based approach to protecting the health of our residents, workforce and visitors. This initiative has become a staple in our marketing efforts and is woven throughout the plan for 2021-2022.

In partnership with the Town of Bluffton and with our extensive customer research and detailed insight we have identified these key areas of interest that define Bluffton:

- Area “District” Designations including History, Cultural and Arts
- National Historic Register Designations including the Church of the Cross and Campbell Chapel AME
- Martin Family Park, Wright Family Park, Garvin-Garvey House and the Bluffton Oyster Company
- Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor
- Palmetto Bluff / Montage
- Natural beauty / May River

Target Audience:

- Affluent consumers visiting Bluffton for cultural and arts experiences, historic tours, shopping and culinary activities.
- New and repeat overnights to Bluffton and the region.
- Group Tour planners and their customers with interest in Southeastern destinations, particularly as a central location for hub and spoke coastal, historic, shopping, cultural, heritage, cuisine and environmental tours.

The Visitor & Convention Bureau invests in destination digital content management, qualified staff, content managers/editors and a professional, well-executed public relations and digital promotions program. These investments are key to operating a robust destination marketing program in today’s competitive and cluttered travel communications environment. This aspect of our work has become increasingly important as new communications channels emerge and evolve to give consumers more choices, more channels and more content.

As the Town of Bluffton’s Designated Marketing Organization (DMO) we are committed to the following:

- Supporting the destination’s brand position throughout all marketing programs.
- Increasing overnight visitation within Bluffton
- Increasing visitor expenditures to Bluffton attractions, retail and dining facilities. Thus increasing Bluffton and Bluffton’s attraction, hospitality and sales taxes collected.

In addition, we will continue to provide a powerful set of services and award-winning strategic marketing solutions that will drive measurable results.

Digital Marketing Plan

During 2020, Bluffton remained top of mind due to early on strategic adjustments to our media efforts with a “heavy up” approach to immersive content and recall of favorite memories. During COVID-19, while lockdown and quarantines varied state to state and beyond, our content served as a source of inspiration, enabling people to dream about their next getaway and reminisce fondly on past experiences. As people become more positive about and eager to travel again this year, Bluffton is perfectly positioned to appeal to leisure travelers. Continuing to build on the strong digital connection we have established and focusing on health and safety, Bluffton is an ideal destination for people planning a trip.

By examining trends for our key audience personas, we are able to deliver targeted, strategic messaging that answers the questions travelers are asking and responds to their needs, concerns, and priorities. Continuing to focus on and optimize high-quality content—copy, photography, user-generated content (UGC) and also incorporating new videos—will result in more partner referrals, higher engagement metrics, better brand awareness, positive sentiment, and increased conversions.

Paid digital media and social will drive our content initiatives this coming fiscal year, amplifying our content and delivering it to captive audiences. Strategic Search Engine Optimization (SEO) ensures our product features prominently in search results, with each element optimized based on best practices and search data.

Placement Strategies

Given its ability to offer cost-efficient messaging across geographic and lifestyle-focused segments, digital media will continue to be the primary channel for Bluffton’s 2021-2022 strategy. With a key objective of growing partner referrals, preference will be given to Search Engine Marketing (SEM) and placements that skew towards our primary audience: the decision makers and vacation planners of the household. When planning 2021-2022 placements, previous performance will be considered to ensure optimal reach, relevancy, and results.



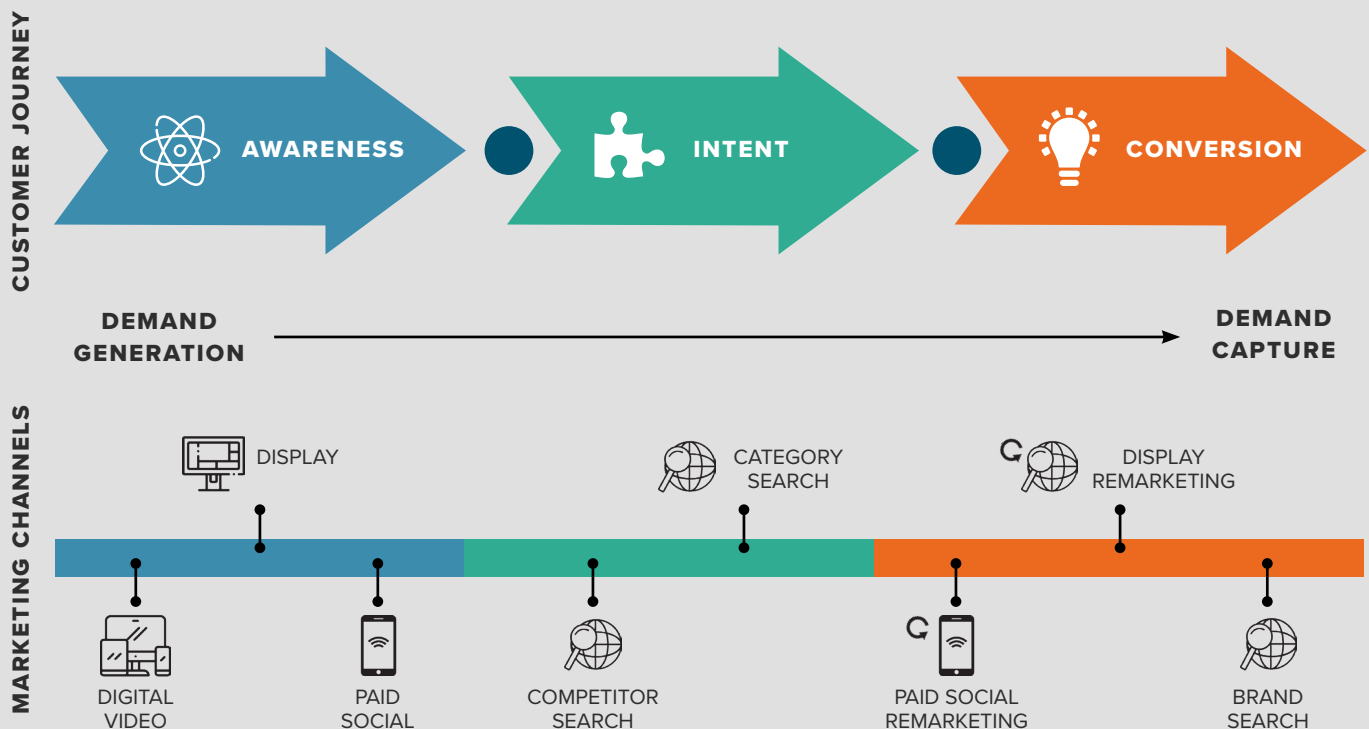


Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

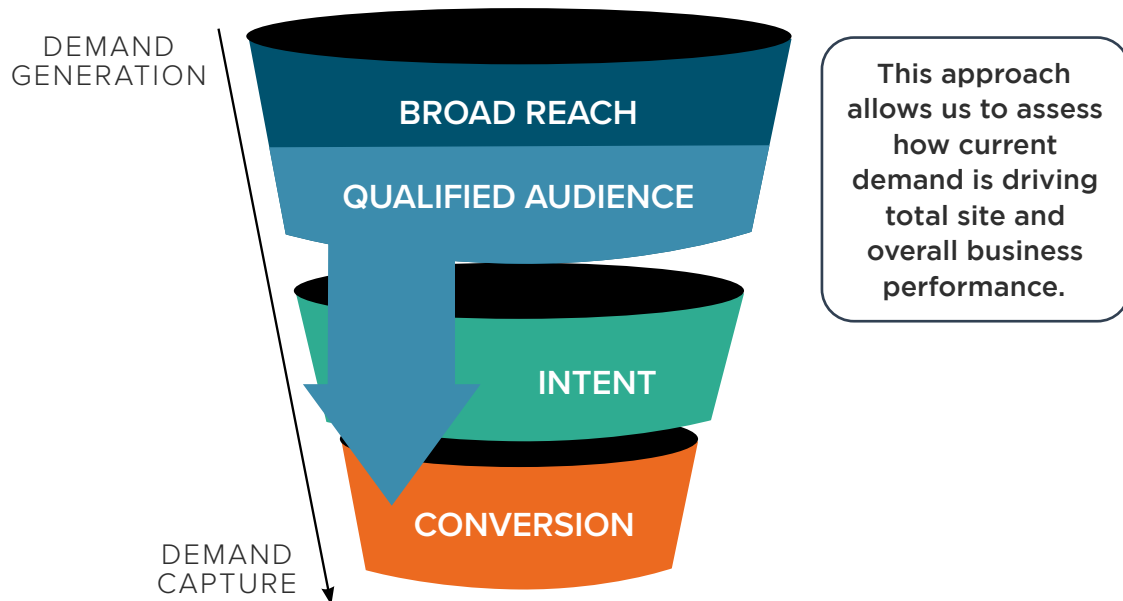
In order to capitalize on its ability to help expand and broaden organic keyword rankings, the Visitor & Convention Bureau will continue to build on the strategic SEM program into 2021-2022 for Bluffton. This will include a list of keywords that best align with Bluffton's target visitor and experiences.



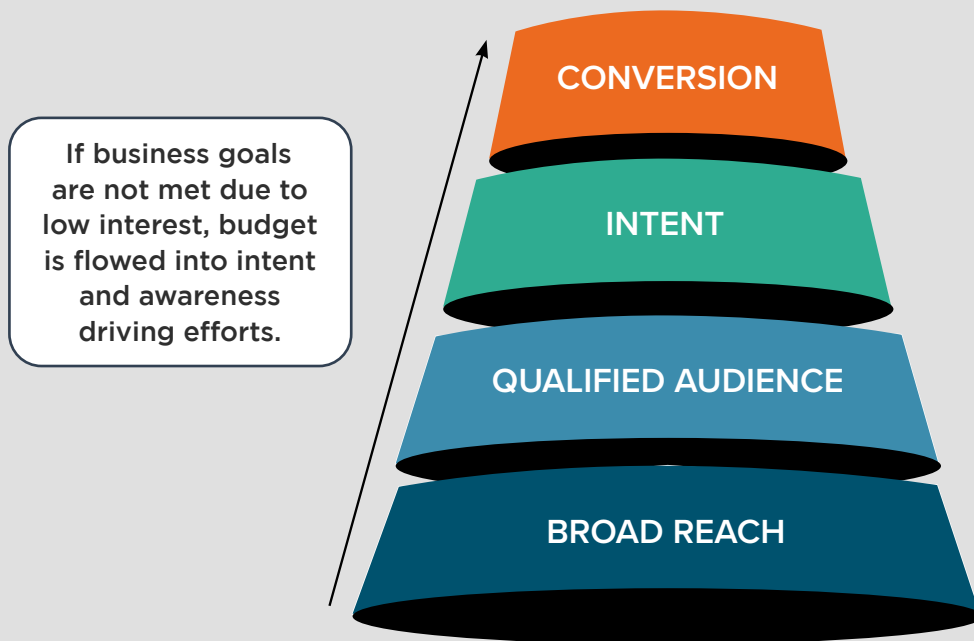
Audience Targeting with Digital Media



The Consumer Journey



Media Budget



Digital Media

The ultimate goal of the 2021-2022 digital marketing plan is to directly increase the demand to community businesses. To achieve this, marketing efforts will work to influence consumers to visit the new independent Bluffton website.

Core goals will be aligned with the below tactics, targeted towards our key audiences. This approach will reach new users who are not yet aware of Bluffton and its unique offerings, as well as re-engage those who are already familiar with our marketing campaigns and website. With this strategic structure established, we will further refine the plan to clarify channels, key metrics, messaging, and consumer mindset against each phase of the consumer journey as seen below:

Targeting

Leveraging a strategic mix of targeting methods will assist in identifying and reaching the most qualified users. Bids will also be adjusted within search to ensure we serve ads to the same qualified users. Both first- and second-party data will be used in creating sophisticated targeting for Bluffton.

Awareness Phase

Digital video continues to be an integral tool in attracting and connecting with our audiences while showcasing the beauty and amenities of Bluffton. We will focus on our key areas of interest for Bluffton capturing details of each and sharing these across our channels including nature, historic, cultural and arts districts and assets in those areas.

To build awareness at the top of the funnel in 2021-2022, the Explore Bluffton video series, will be implemented predominantly across YouTube—the second-largest search engine in the world, with a network that reaches more than 90% of total internet users. To increase reach, video will also be utilized across Facebook Video, Instagram, and Instagram Stories. In addition, prospecting display ads will be used within the Google Display Network (GDN), to entice users to visit the website.





TrueView Video Ads

YouTube Advertising

Utilized via YouTube Advertising as video pre-roll

- Video is skippable after the first 5 seconds and you are only charged if the user watches the complete video (>30 seconds) or clicks through to the website, whichever occurs first.
- Cost per view (CPV) to a targeted audience is typically between \$0.02 to \$0.04 making this channel wide-reaching and cost-effective.



Instagram Stories:

15 Seconds or Less Videos

Utilize unique assets

- Plays within feed, along with images and videos shared by consumers' friends, family, and other Instagram accounts they follow.
- Stories' ads provide a full-screen immersive experience with the goal to drive interest and traffic to the website.



Facebook Network

(Including Instagram):

15 Seconds or Less Videos

- Utilized via Facebook.
- Auto plays as users scroll through their newsfeeds.
- Can be purchased on a cost-per-click basis at an efficient price (around \$1), or on a cost-per-10-second view.



Awareness Key Metrics

When determining the success of the Awareness Phase, metrics indicating an increase in demand and interest will be monitored. Over a longer period, we expect to see increases in volume and performance in lower funnel initiatives. Awareness efforts will target all devices with a mobile prioritization as the majority of consumers are in this phase.

Prospecting Display

Utilized via the Google Display Network

- Appears within web content to qualified users.
- Purchased on a cost-per-click basis at an efficient price to drive interest and users to the website for future remarketing.



Intent Phase

The primary goal of the Intent Phase is to foster consumers who have previously expressed an interest in visiting Bluffton.

Along with display ads we will extend reach through paid social within Facebook and Instagram. We only purchase media based on a cost-per-click basis to help mitigate fraud and limited viewability often seen in the industry.

Prospecting and Native Display Banners Partners:



Audience Targeting

- Affinity Audiences
- In-Market Audiences
- Custom Affinity
- Custom Intent
- Similar to/Lookalike Audiences
- Demographics
- Geography

WHAT IS THE Google Display Network?



Text Ads on websites



Image Ads on websites



Video Ads on websites



Ads on Mobile Websites

Non-Branded Search

When cultivating consumer interest, non-branded search targeting category and competitor keywords allow us to raise our hand as a viable option. Similar to display, all search media is purchased on a cost-per-click basis which allows us to cost-effectively serve ads to drive future return on our search media spend.

	OVERVIEW	SAMPLE AD GROUPS
CATEGORY SEARCH	Themed ad groups and keywords around categories that target a consumer researching related types of vacations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family vacation• History, arts, cultural vacation• Couples vacation• Weekend getaway
COMPETITOR SEARCH	To drive purely incremental traffic, we will create competitor targeted campaigns to help capture demand from those researching competition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Savannah• Beaufort• Charleston



Intent Key Metrics

Intent advertising is also measured against awareness and demand to capture specific metrics that indicate success at both the top and bottom of the funnel.

- Website visitation and engagement
- Percentage of returning users
- Assisted conversions
- Link-outs to partners

Conversion Phase

To capture the demand generated and cultivated through awareness and engagement, digital efforts will rely on the proven tactics of Remarketing and Branded Search.

Remarketing

Remarketing is used to reinforce Bluffton as the perfect vacation destination by serving ads to those who have visited the Bluffton website.

For increased relevance, people who have visited the landing pages from all sources can be sorted into lists so that secondary messaging can be shown to them based on their interest on the page, and where they navigate to next. They can be shown applicable display ads from that original visit to entice them to return for more information or to click on partner links. Users to the website will also be shown display ads for seasonal events.

Branded Search

Branded search is the most fundamental digital channel and provides a foundation for nearly all digital marketing initiatives.

Key Benefit

Brand Search ensures consumers are exposed to the most current offer. It also helps capture all demand and limits erosion to competitors. With branded search ads, you can control the message and highlight attributes seasonally, geographically and by keywords.



Search Engine Optimization

In 2020, organic traffic for the Bluffton microsite of hiltonheadisland.org accumulated over 37,000 organic visitors, which was 42% of all traffic to Bluffton pages in 2020. Organic traffic to the /Bluffton page increased by 36% when compared to 2019. Search engines continued to drive qualified visitors to the site as indicated by high engagement metrics including 5% more time spent on website, and the second highest goal conversion rate at 24%.

All SEO strategies for 2021-2022 will focus both on improving the visibility of the Bluffton website within both search engines and social networks for branded key phrases and emerging search queries, with the intention of increasing awareness of Bluffton as a vacation destination.

37K+ = **42%**
organic visitors of all traffic

↑ 36%
compared to 2019

The SEO strategy can be broken down into five core areas:

- 1. Technical SEO:** Ongoing technical audits and comprehensive reviews of the website to ensure content on the website remains crawlable and indexable by search engines.
- 2. Content Creation and Optimization:** Identify target keywords for content and blog production, and regularly highlight optimization opportunities for existing content to ensure relevance for search engines.

With the growing popularity of voice search, search engines are becoming better at matching a searcher's intent to the content they show in search results. In 2021-2022, an SEO focus will include strengthening contextual signals sent to search engines for the content on the website through:

- Internal links that create content clusters
- External links
- Structured data (schema)
- Ensuring existing and new content answers questions and solves problems

- 3. Building a Foundation of Authoritative Referrals:** Links to a site and citations continue to send strong signals to search engines that a website is authoritative on a particular topic and should rank well for searches. There will be campaigns to identify and attract high quality links from high authority sites, along with sharing of content through influencer outreach and a targeted social media strategy.



4. Local SEO: Google My Business (GMB) continues to influence user behavior in organic search results with additional service categories, offers, products and additional features that enable users to interact with business information outside the website. In 2021-2022, optimizing and taking advantage of new GMB features where relevant will ensure users interest is captured both on and off site.

5. Identifying New Opportunities: A significant component of the SEO program will be research to find new opportunities for content that, once indexed by search engines, will drive qualified searchers to the website. This research will focus on finding popular search queries that people perform when considering a vacation, trip or activity, and where Bluffton would meet the needs of those travelers. This research will be applied to new content creation and to existing content where optimizations can be implemented.



Social Media

The social media landscape continues to be a “pay to play” space. Each newsfeed prioritizes paid advertisements and boosted content over organic content posted by brands. This means our approach to Bluffton’s content creation and measurements needs to adjust.

Strategically, this means:

- Placing a higher value on the quality of the traffic we create for the Bluffton website, in addition to the quantity.
- Continuing a paid social strategy for Bluffton-specific posts driving traffic to the Bluffton website.
- Integrating our paid and organic social efforts, ensuring content boosting on Facebook when budget permits.

These are the channels that best support Bluffton’s goals and will continue to be our focus for 2021-2022:



With different video messages and varying lengths, the videos can be targeted at specific audiences to increase awareness and drive traffic to the site using a Trueview for Action Overlay.



Facebook is our primary traffic source and we do not see this changing. Our approach to Facebook is to incorporate a range of content, focusing on Bluffton-specific blog articles, user-generated content shared by our locals and guests, co-op partnerships, one-off and on-going events and planned activities like tours in the Bluffton. In 2021-2022, we will focus on sharing partner content directly from the partner’s Facebook page, pushing traffic to their social accounts, as well as pages on the Bluffton website that link directly to the partner’s page.



Instagram’s strategy will continue to focus on curating user-generated content from talented guests and locals to support Bluffton’s messaging. Our biggest push on this channel will be to engage in two way conversations with our followers, to encourage them to mention our channel in their owned content, and to promote our #LoveBlufftonSC hashtag. We will also focus on curating a more aesthetically-consistent feed, using warm photo filters that portray the sunny, Southern vibe of the Lowcountry.



Our 2021-2022 Twitter strategy continues to focus on channel growth and maintaining our higher-than-average engagement rate. Content shared on this channel will be a mix of user-generated content, blog posts, links to the website, as well as local news, accolades, and events.



With the launch of the independent website, VisitBluffton.org, we can create our Pinterest channel to house relevant information linked back to our website content and blogs (which will push partner content).

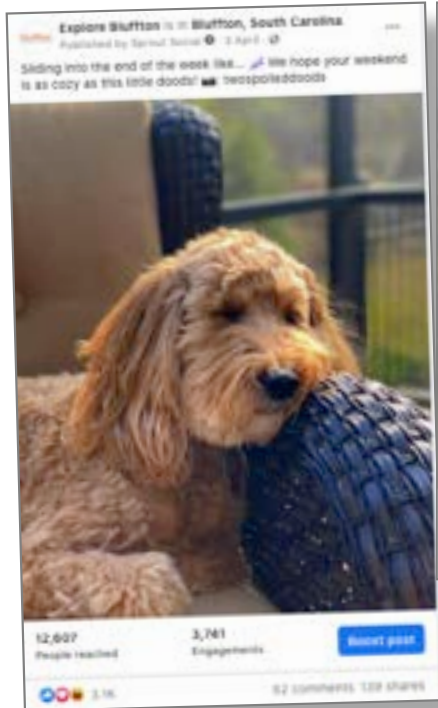


Spotify is a new terrain for Bluffton we will explore in 2021-2022. We will create tailored scripts written to pique the interest of our core audiences. Podcasts are selected based on relevant interests and read by the podcast hosts to reach our audio-inclined audiences.



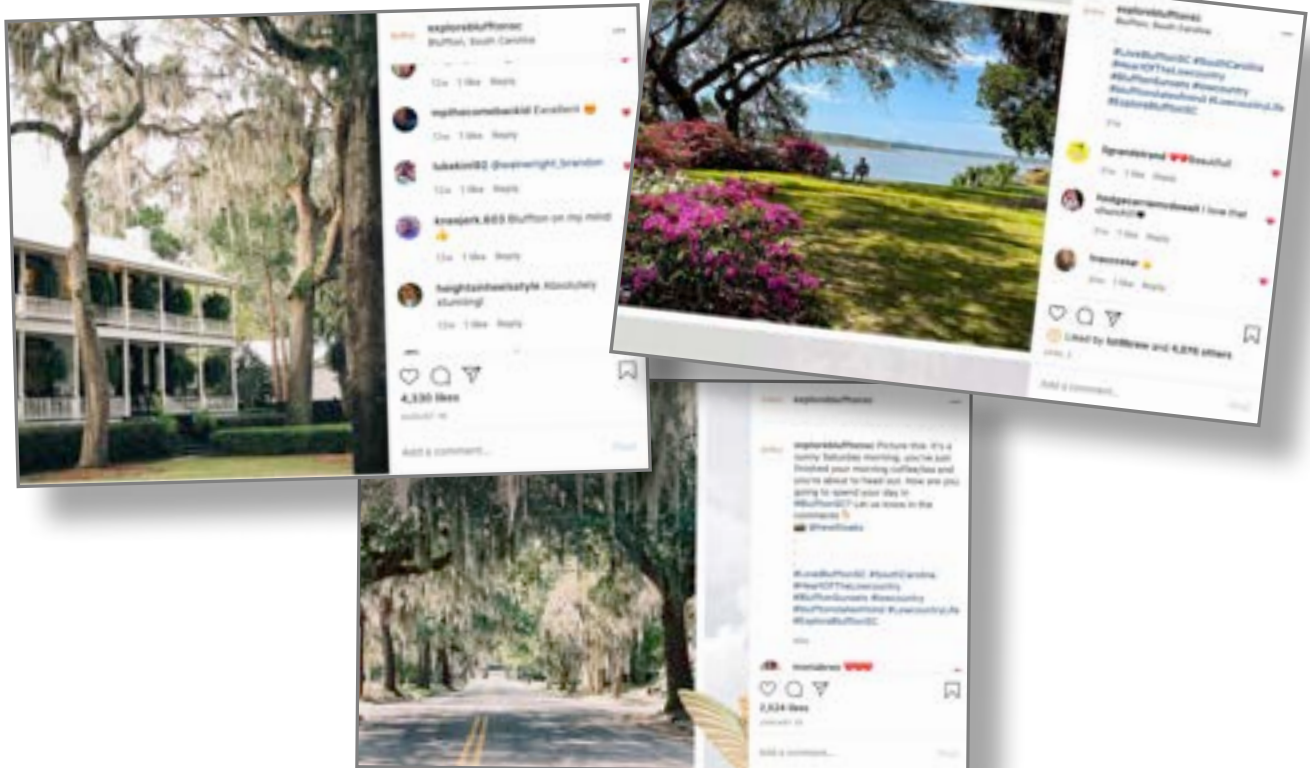
Top Social Posts for 2020

facebook



twitter





Blog

We will look to continually evaluate our content calendar throughout the year to adjust as needed based on travel trends and sentiment. This will ensure that we are consistently writing about the most in-demand, trending, and searchable topics, informed by the domestic and international landscape. After experimenting with user-informed blog posts in 2020 with great success, we will also ensure to offer ample opportunities for our audience to weigh in on what they want to see and also contribute their own thoughts to our blogs. Our followers love to see themselves recognized in our content and we will lean into that as a tactic to increase readership, continue to build rapport and to entice new visitors by sharing perspectives of our most engaged fans.

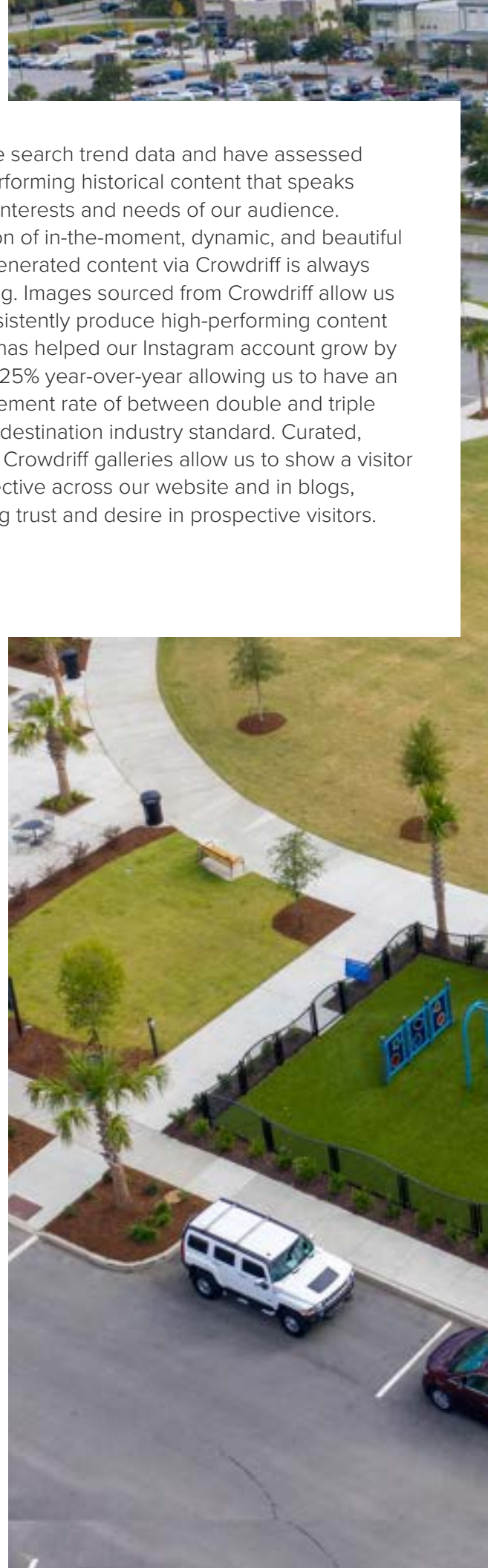
In 2020 we developed a strong bank of evergreen content for our audience. In 2021-2022 we will focus on topical content for specific audiences. Formats we will create and test include:

- Long-form, editorial pieces
- Recipes and “insider tips” from partner restaurants, hotels and attractions
- Quizzes
- Persona-specific itineraries
- Top listicles which can be repurposed across social, in bite-sized pieces
- Pop-culture related content that will perform well via search and directly ties back to the destination

Crowdriff

We have informed our content calendar with

Google search trend data and have assessed top-performing historical content that speaks to the interests and needs of our audience. Curation of in-the-moment, dynamic, and beautiful user-generated content via Crowdriff is always ongoing. Images sourced from Crowdriff allow us to consistently produce high-performing content which has helped our Instagram account grow by nearly 25% year-over-year allowing us to have an engagement rate of between double and triple that of destination industry standard. Curated, topical Crowdriff galleries allow us to show a visitor perspective across our website and in blogs, instilling trust and desire in prospective visitors.





Paid Social Media Strategy

To continue supporting our goal of establishing the credibility of our Facebook and Instagram pages, as well as our website, the paid social media strategy will focus on driving this momentum forward. To do this, paid social tactics will be implemented:

- Facebook/Instagram Traffic Campaigns (25%)
- Facebook Boosted Posts (15%)
- Instagram Boosted Posts (15%)
- Facebook Page Growth (25%)
- Instagram Follower Growth (10%)
- Twitter Follower Growth (10%)

Targeting

The paid tactics and targeting will vary depending on what part of the funnel the user is in.

Awareness Phase

When determining success for awareness-based campaigns, we will look at metrics indicating that interest and social media presence is increasing. Over a longer period, we expect to see increases in volume and performance in lower funnel initiatives.

- Reach / Frequency
- View-Influenced Visits
- Social Media Platform Growth
- Engagement Rates

Intent Phase

During the intent phase, we will engage users who are more likely to follow Bluffton's Facebook, Instagram or Twitter accounts, as well as drive qualified traffic to the website.

These planning-stage audiences will be created utilizing retargeting efforts based on consumers who have engaged with our awareness phase advertising initiatives, and those who have visited the website. We will additionally continue to target users based off of their interests, behaviors, demographics, and geographics.

Generating Facebook likes, Instagram followers, Twitter followers and driving traffic to content-rich pages of the website will be the focus of this stage of the customer journey and tactics will include:

- Facebook Page Like/Growth Ads
- Instagram Followers/Growth Ads
- Twitter Followers/Growth Ads
- Traffic/Always On Ads



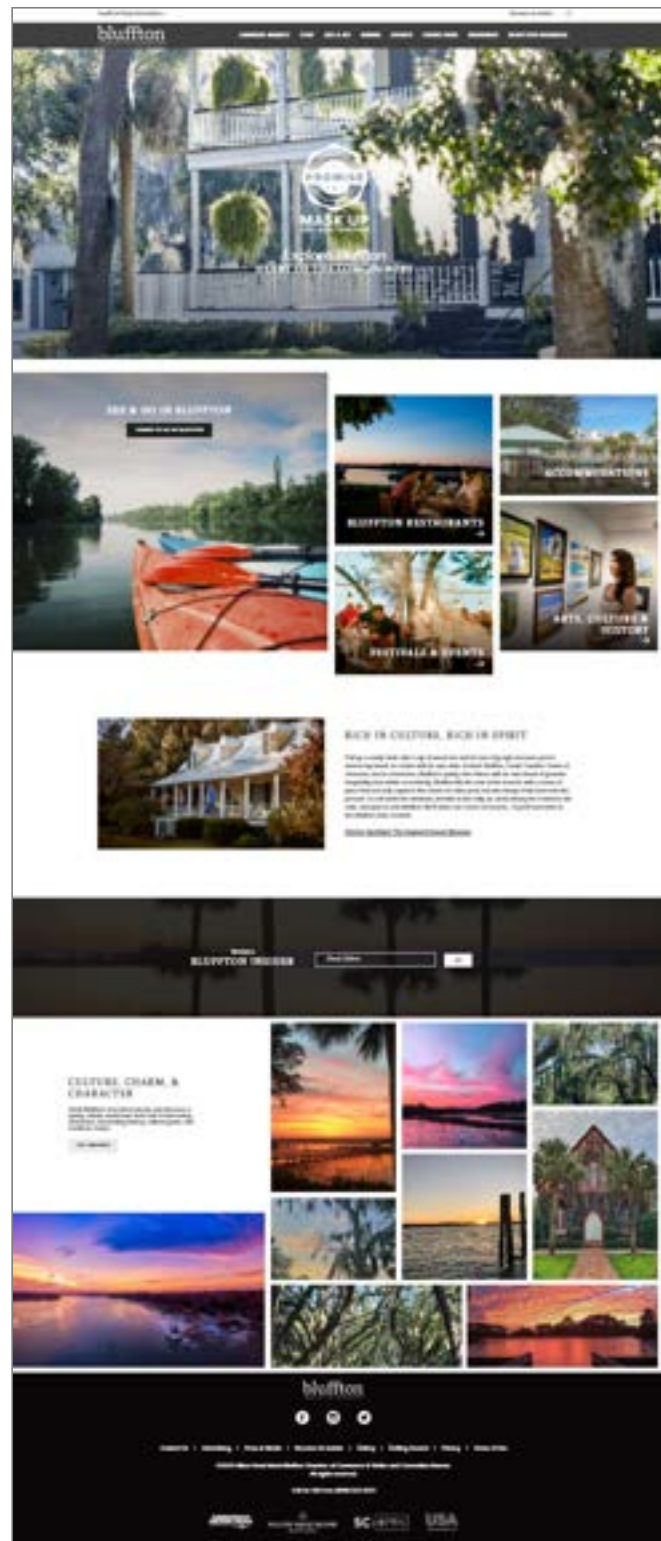
Destination Website

When appropriate, traffic will be driven back to Bluffton's new, independent website. This standalone site will help us achieve stronger results and higher conversion rates.

The VisitBluffton.org website is the single most important touchpoint next to the destination experience itself. A responsive web platform, engaging content and overall creative should virtually transport a visitor to Bluffton.

In 2021-2022, Bluffton's digital marketing plan and website initiatives will continue to build on the solid foundation established to further enhance the visitor experience. By utilizing our key personas, we are able to deliver targeted, strategic messaging to more niche groups of new and repeat visitors. Continuing to focus on and optimizing high-quality content copy, photography and videos that are engaging, entertaining and conversion-driven will result in increased partner referrals, higher engagement metrics and overall conversions.

Evolving our content and social efforts to include more "insider" content - Q&As with prominent Bluffton business owners and locals and implementing richer user-generated content, offers visitors a more intimate glimpse at a Bluffton getaway. Using paid media and social media to help drive our content will amplify our message and ensure it is being seen by the right people at the right time, across the board, while SEO will ensure that visitors are able to find the information they need quickly and efficiently.



Group Sales & Tradeshows

Bluffton continues to grow and position itself as a group destination more so now than at any point in the last decade. The variety and quality of experiences for group visitors has never been more diverse, offering a robust arts, historical and cultural scene, with growing culinary experiences. The Visitor & Convention Bureau will continue to promote Bluffton while attending travel tradeshows virtually and in-person.

Military continues to be a focus for the Bluffton region. With close proximity to Parris Island, hosting out of town families and guests remains the ideal market for our focused service hotels. We will continue to build awareness of the Bluffton region inspiring these families to extend their visit or celebration, creating lasting, special memories.

Group Tour

Group Tour remains an important market to maintain current and new relationships. Bluffton continues to be an attractive destination for a hub and spoke opportunity. With Savannah 40 miles away, Beaufort 30 miles and Charleston just under 2 hours, the Bluffton region is ideal for groups to stay in one location for up to a week and focus on day trips from one central area. We intend to draw group tour visitors by:

- Building relationships with tour operators through American Bus Association (ABA).
- Leveraging group tour.
- Expanding promotion of group experiences on our website.

American Bus Association (ABA)

Tour operators, suppliers and exhibitors come together at the American Bus Association (ABA) Marketplace - the industry's premier business event. Marketplace is an active, vibrant forum for buyers and sellers. Marketplace offers a year's worth of sales meetings in one week and with legendary networking and social events, attendees turn conversations from the conference floor into long-term business relationships.

We will attend the ABA Marketplace and take advantage of up to 60 pre-scheduled appointments with pre-qualified operators to promote and sell the region.

IMEX America

IMEX America hosts over 3,000 corporate, incentive, association and third-party planners.

The largest in the industry in North America, this Hosted Buyer Program qualifies and brings key buyers to the show covering travel and accommodations. This program guarantees thousands of highly qualified buyers from the association, corporate and agency sectors.

South Carolina Society of Association Executives (SCSAE)

SCSAE's tradeshow is a one stop location for meeting and greeting with association CEOs/Executive Directors, Meeting Planners, Membership Directors, Communication Directors and Corporate Meeting Planners. Association professionals can meet with more than 70 exhibitors including hoteliers, convention centers, technology vendors and more.

SportsTravel Magazine's TEAMS

TEAMS: Travel, Events and Management in Sports, is the world's leading conference and expo for the sports-event industry. TEAMS attracts more than 1,000 attendees including CEOs, executive directors and event managers from sports organizations as well as representatives from sports commissions and convention bureaus, corporate sponsors, event suppliers and other hospitality industry opinion leaders. TEAMS has helped define the sports-event and appointment-based tradeshow industries.



TRADESHOW	MARKET	DATES	LOCATION
SPORTS TRAVEL'S TEAMS EXPO	Sports	Sept. 27-30, 2021	Atlantic City, NJ
IMEX AMERICA	Corporate	Nov. 9-11, 2021	Las Vegas, NV
AMERICAN BUS ASSN.	Group Tour	Jan. 8-11, 2022	Grapevine, TX
SCSAE	State Assn	Jan. 20, 2022	Columbia, SC

**The following are examples of tradeshow we will look to attend in 2021-2022. As the landscape of meetings and groups continues to evolve we will look to evaluate these opportunities in real time and potentially add others if they are beneficial to the overall meetings and groups strategy.*

Photography/Videography

As storytelling becomes increasingly important when promoting the destination, we will look to continue to build our asset library with photography and videos supporting the main pillars for marketing Bluffton. We will take a more seasonal approach to capturing content throughout the year as the seasons change. Building the asset library will provide us with additional content for use across all marketing efforts.

Strategy:

- Capture Bluffton's new products and amenities including parks, cultural district and new neighborhoods
- Expand on the Explore Bluffton video series to use across website, social and digital channels
- Shoot in a high-level DPI format to create high quality images that will translate well into a variety of formats
- Capture engaging drone footage seasonally throughout the year





Collateral & Fulfillment

The Visitor & Convention Bureau will develop and produce an Official Bluffton Vacation Planner. This print and digital publication will be our primary fulfillment piece and a comprehensive guide to what to see and do within Bluffton. It will be distributed via online and phone inquiries, to local businesses and to the Town of Bluffton.

In today's more visual world, telling a story through stunning photography and compelling content is an imperative component to the travel journey process. This "coffee table" piece allows our visitors to visualize their vacation and discover the destination, through this first touchpoint, the reason for our many accolades, ultimately imagining themselves here on vacation. In addition to working with a publisher, our in-house marketing staff provides the business directory, local photography, editorial content management, editorial review and proofreading for this asset.



Research & Analytics

Research provides powerful information to evolve and perfect the Visitor & Convention Bureau's marketing strategy. Throughout the year we will continue to extract detailed reports and information that guides us in understanding our visitors. These research programs will lead to marketing and advertising initiatives aimed at growing the tourism industry for Bluffton. The following programs will be ongoing:

- Maintenance of ThinkBluffton.org, the Chamber's online economic metrics portal.
- Smith Travel Research (STR) weekly and monthly reports which measures lodging occupancy, average room rates, room demand and RevPAR for hotels only. Includes monthly comparative report with competitive destinations.
- DestiMetrics monthly Home & Villa lodging reports on occupancy, average room rates, RevPAR and six month forward booking pace reports. Two-source DestiMetrics report crunches backend STR hotel data with DestiMetrics backend home and villa data to produce a monthly destination report on total destination accommodations tax paying occupancy, average room rates and RevPAR.
- Collaborate with College of Charleston Office of Tourism Analysis and the University of South Carolina Beaufort along with ensure details of our Google Analytics and social media metrics to provide regular performance updates.
- Subscription to the U.S. Travel Association's (USTA) Travel Monitor Program and related reports.

These consistent research details will provide insights to produce quarterly and annual reports that provide a health check into tourism for the Town of Bluffton*.

On a quarterly basis the DMO will provide the Town with,

- Number of website visits
- Number of clicks throughs made to area businesses (conversions)
- Occupancy rate
- Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR)
- Number related to mail fulfillment
- Industry awards received for marketing and public relations
- Events held and participation in events by Chamber members
- Update on public relations efforts to include; number of media impressions/ dollar equivalent
- Social Media Reports

Working toward annual insights related to tourism provided through the following reports,

- Visitor Profile Study
- Economic Impact Study

*All metrics and reports mentioned above are based upon information available. Reporting will flex and grow as more information is gathered and/ or becomes available.

Appendix Reports

Bluffton Social Report 2020

Bluffton Website & Online
Marketing Performance 2020



2020 Overview

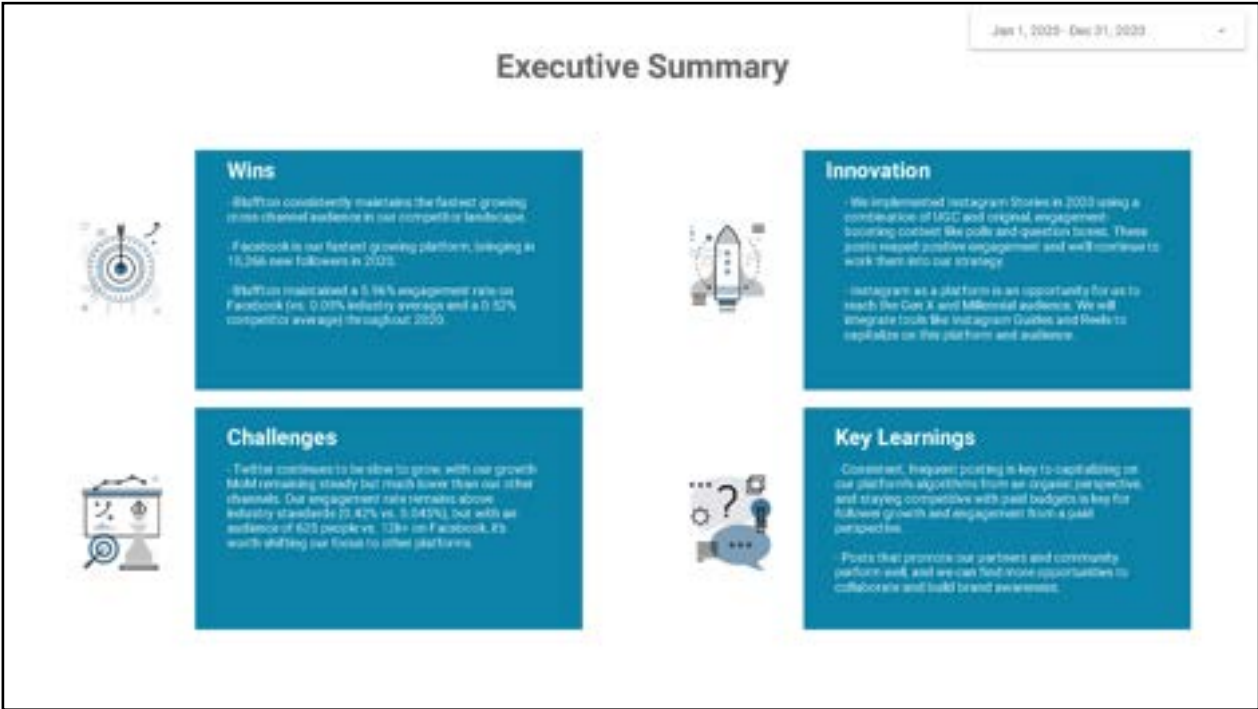
Bluffton, SC launched its own social-media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter in July of 2019. In 2020, we built on 2019's launch success by focusing on increasing impressions for brand awareness and follower growth, as well as fostering engagement among our audience.

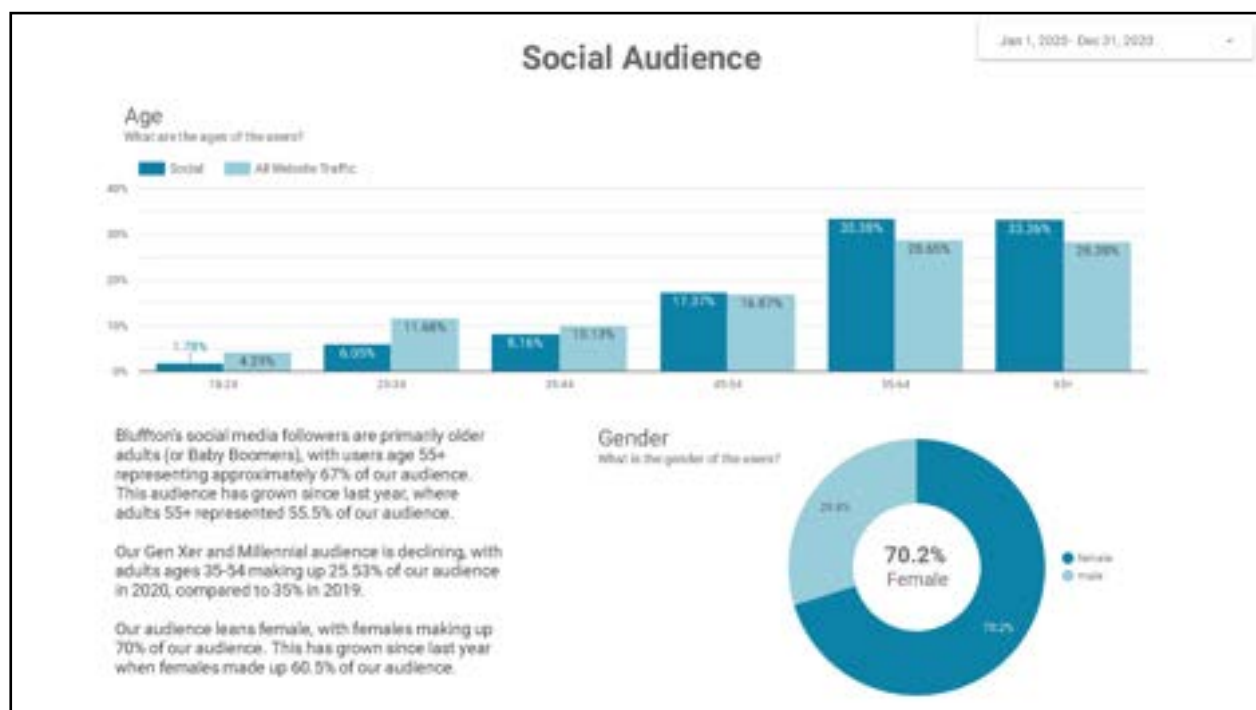
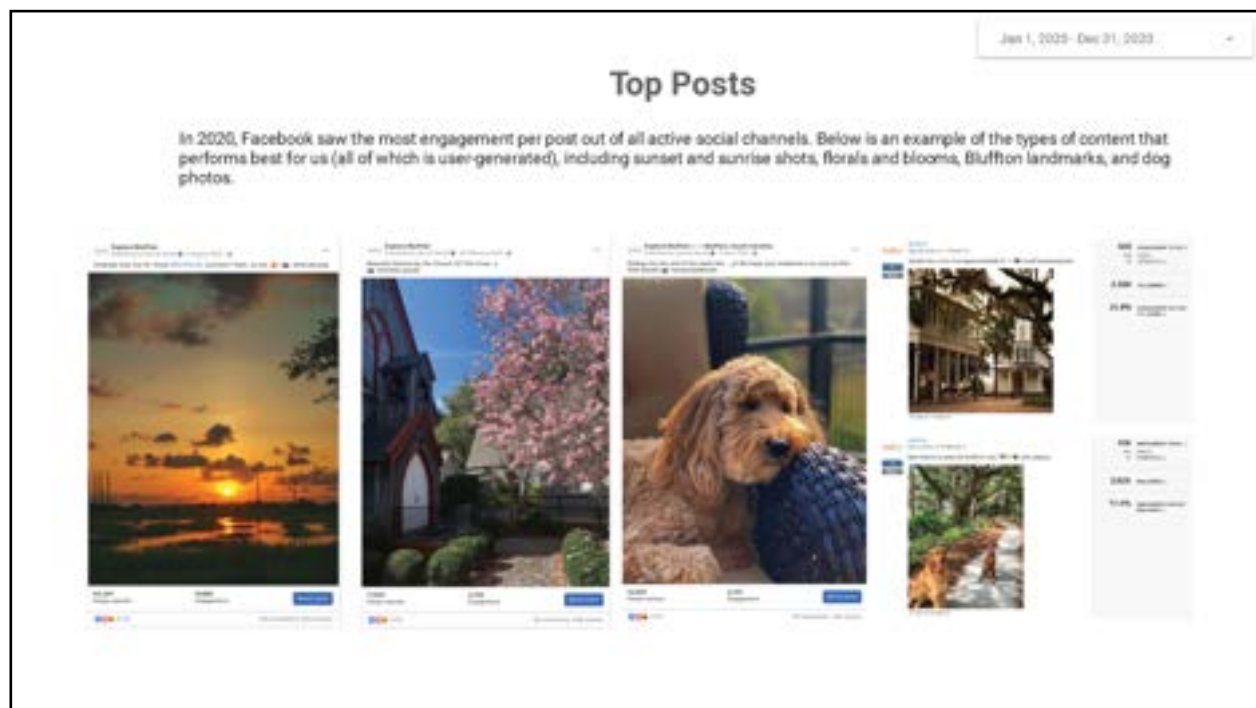
We also made strides to better align with Bluffton, SC's content pillars: History, Arts, Cultural, May River, Culinary, and Natural Beauty. We found natural beauty photography outperforms any other kind of content, and are continuously finding ways to showcase our culinary scene, historic landmarks, art scene, and culture in ways that resonate with our audience (i.e. by sharing photos that also feature natural beauty alongside other pillars or by using UGC).

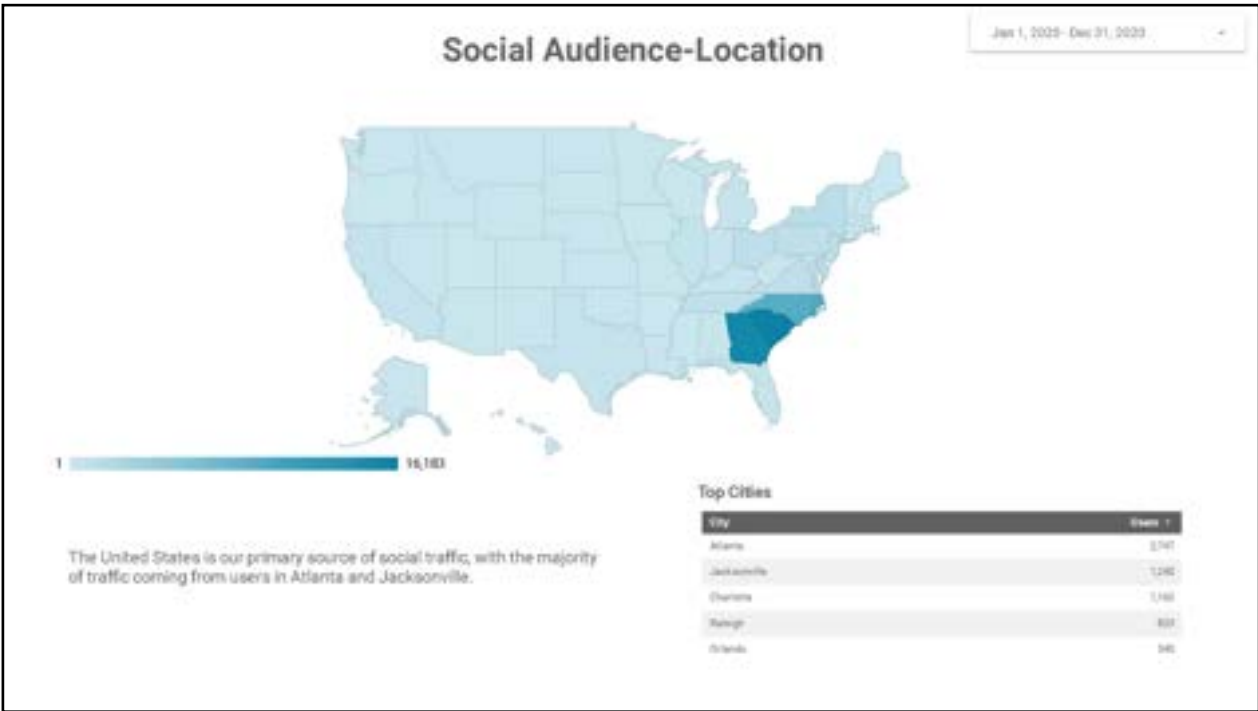
In Q3 and particularly Q4 of 2020, as Covid-19 restrictions loosened, we also implemented new tactics like using more direct CTAs to book your Bluffton getaway and posting Instagram Stories with CTAs to click the link in our bio. We will continue to capitalize on these engagement-boosting tactics in 2021.

2020 saw impressive growth for our channels, with Bluffton remaining #1 for audience growth throughout the year.









Paid Facebook

Jan 1, 2020 - Dec 31, 2020

Monthly Ad Spend

How did our paid campaigns perform in 2020?

Campaign name	Campaign objective	Cost	Impressions	Total Reach	Results
Visit Bluffton - Page Likes 2020	PAGE_LIKES	\$4,126	702,349	677,719	
Visit Bluffton - Always On 2020	LINK_CLICKS	\$4,000	975,946	933,589	
Visit Bluffton Instagram Engagement 2020	POST_ENGAGEMENT	\$1,100	732,554	726,945	
Visit Bluffton - Facebook Engagement 2020	POST_ENGAGEMENT	\$4,800	1,684,706	1,667,838	
Grand total		\$22,026	4,095,555	4,006,091	

Total Cost (USD)
\$22,026.00

Paid Sessions
29,094

Post Engagements
306,590

Partner Clicks
3,172

Spend

How was the actual spend split between Campaigns?



Insights

In 2020, we focused our efforts on Engagement, as well as boosting UGC user created content. This initiative resulted in 306,590 Post Engagements from paid, and an overall **Engagement Rate of 3.87%** (vs our competitor average of 3.52%).

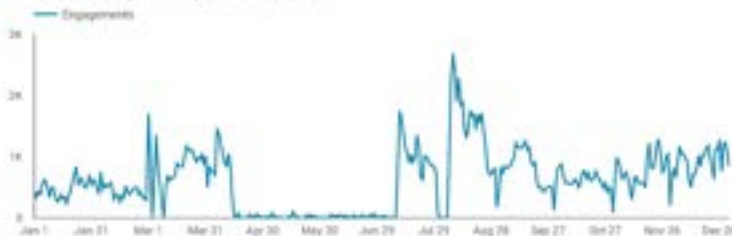
We gained 7,225 new followers, meaning 59.7% of our new followers came from paid ads.

Facebook

Jan 1, 2020 - Dec 31, 2020

Facebook Engagement

When are people liking, commenting on, and sharing our posts?



Total Fans 12,135	Message Sent 194	Organic Impressions 615.2K	Likes 101,780	Comments 3,161
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Insights

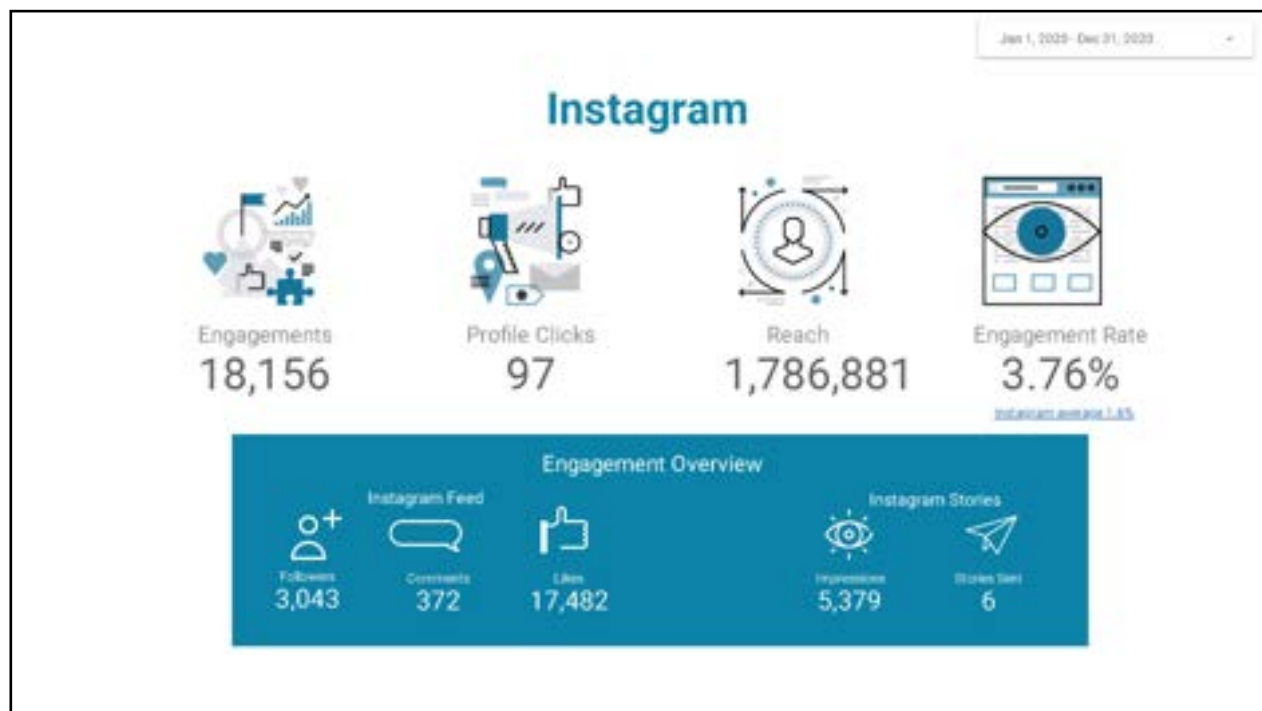
In 2020, our engagement fluctuated with our Paid Social spend, particularly in May and June when Paid Ads were turned off. Our Engagements peaked in August, our biggest spend month of the year with the exception of March (which proved challenging due to Covid-19 restrictions starting).

UGC is a top performer on Facebook, with natural beauty shots featuring sunsets, sunrises, blooms, palm trees, and Spanish Moss consistently reaping the best results. Dog content also performs well, so we should continue to prioritize it when we receive UGC featuring dogs that aligns with our pillars.

Our spike in engagement in August can be attributed to our higher spend on paid ads.

Published At	Image	Message	Engagement Total
Aug 5, 2020, 9 PM		Anybody else live for these beautiful sunset/sunrise shots? 🌅 #bluffton #sunset	7,529
Feb 26, 2020, 2 PM		Beautiful blooms by the Church of the Christ 🌸 #bluffton #flowers	3,896
Apr 5, 2020, 3 PM		Snoring into the end of the week like... go! We hope your weekend is as close as this. 🐕 #dogsofinstagram #weekend	3,344
Jul 5, 2020, 9 PM		Bluffton - where even the trees love sunny days ☀️ #bluffton #sunny	3,827

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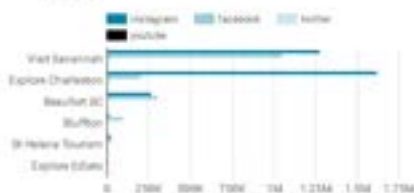


Competitor Landscape

Jan 1, 2020 - Dec 31, 2020

Cross Channel Engagement Total

What was the total amplification, applause, and conversation across social channels?



Amplification

What was the total share across social channels?



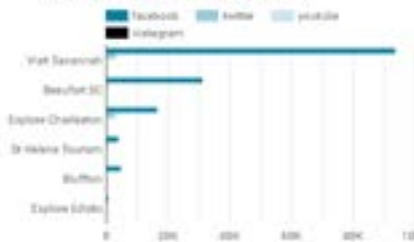
Cross Channel Audience Growth

Visit Savannah	450,016	Explore Charleston	387,440
▲ 2.4%	▲ 4.3%		
*St. Helena	0	*Explore Edisto	9,040
0	▲ 1.4%		
Bluffton	3,485	*Bluffton SC	153,578
▲ 286.1%	▲ 9.3%		

*September-December (no data available prior to Sept.)
*Bluffton has no data prior to November

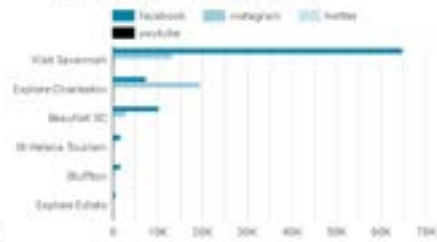
Applause

What was the total reactions across social channels?



Conversation

What was the total comments across social channels?



Insights

- Bluffton saw far more audience growth in 2020 than our competitors (1.63% average growth).
- As our first full year as Bluffton, SC on social media, 2020 was focused on audience growth. We saw the biggest gains on Facebook while our competitor saw the most growth on Instagram.

Heading into 2021

2020 was a successful year for Bluffton SC's social accounts, with the brand consistently showing the most cross-channel growth in our competitor landscape. In 2021, there are opportunities to grow our Gen X and Millennial audience while still catering to our Baby Boomer audience, particularly by using our individual platforms more strategically to reach top demographics. With the launch of our new website, we will focus on CTAs that lead to our website (while still promoting partner links).

Opportunities:

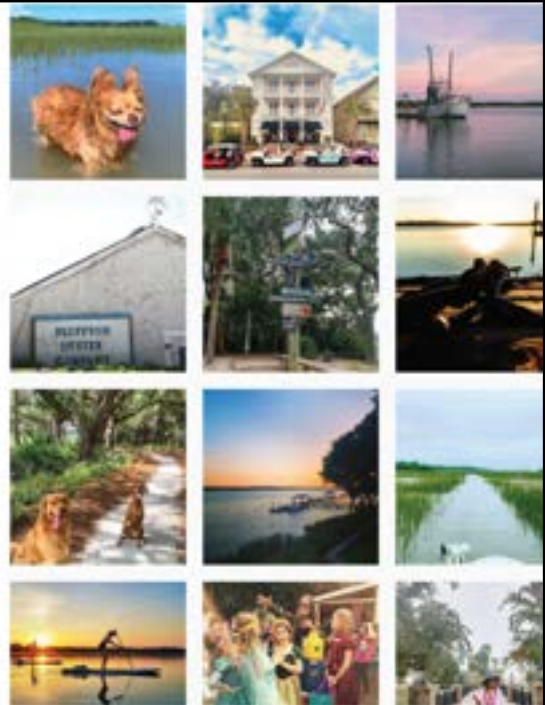
- With the new website launching, we should create content like blogs and itineraries to bring people to the website from social.
- Twitter remains a slow-growing channel, so we should shift efforts away from it to develop a Pinterest strategy for the website launch. This will require content on our website like blogs and itineraries to lead users to. Twitter can remain active for press hits, award acknowledgement, Bluffton business news, and the occasional May River / sunset and sunrise shots.

Our 2021 Strategic Objectives & KPI's*:

820 Facebook Likes / Month = 17,055 Followers by end of Q2 (June)

200 Instagram Followers / Month = 4,243 Followers by end of Q2 (June)

*KPIs are based on planned media spend for the rest of the fiscal year, and are subject to change/review if any changes are made to the budgets.



Glossary

Term	Definition	Number
Backlinks	Links from other domains pointing back to our own, ultimately improving SEO.	1
Buying Funnel	Illustrates the customer journey towards the purchase of a good or service.	2
Bounce	When a user leaves your website from the landing page without visiting any other pages.	3
Bounce Rate	The percentage of sessions on your website with only one page view.	4
Conversion	A measured and tracked pre-determined goal, for example obtaining email newsletter subscribers.	5
Conversion Rate%	The percentage of users who take a desired action, aligned with the conversion goal.	6
CPC	Cost per click. The cost of the media spend divided by the number of clicks.	7
CTR	Click through rate. The percentage of impressions that resulted in a click.	8
Direct Traffic	Users that comes to your website via typing the URL directly in a browser.	9
Display Ads	Graphic advertising on website media through banners or other advertising formats made of text...	10
Domain Authority / Rank...	An estimate of how well any given domain will perform in search.	11
E-commerce Conversion...	The ratio of transactions to sessions, expressed as a percentage.	12
Engagement Rate	Measures the level of engagement that content is receiving from an audience. It shows how much...	13
Exit %	Percentage of users who viewed the page and exited the site.	14
Exit Page	The page where a user exits your website.	15
Impressions	The number of times an ad, search result or a social post is viewed.	16
Key Performance Indica...	Used to evaluate the success of a brand or campaign in meeting the objectives for performance.	17

1 of 17

https://www.visitbluffton.org/visitbluffton.org/visitbluffton.org/

1 of 17



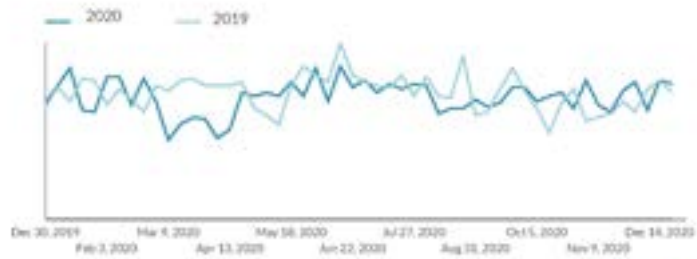
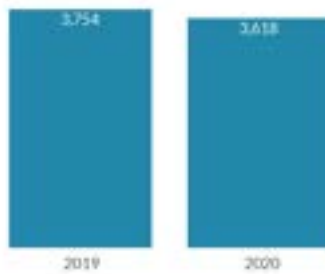
Thank You



BLUFFTON

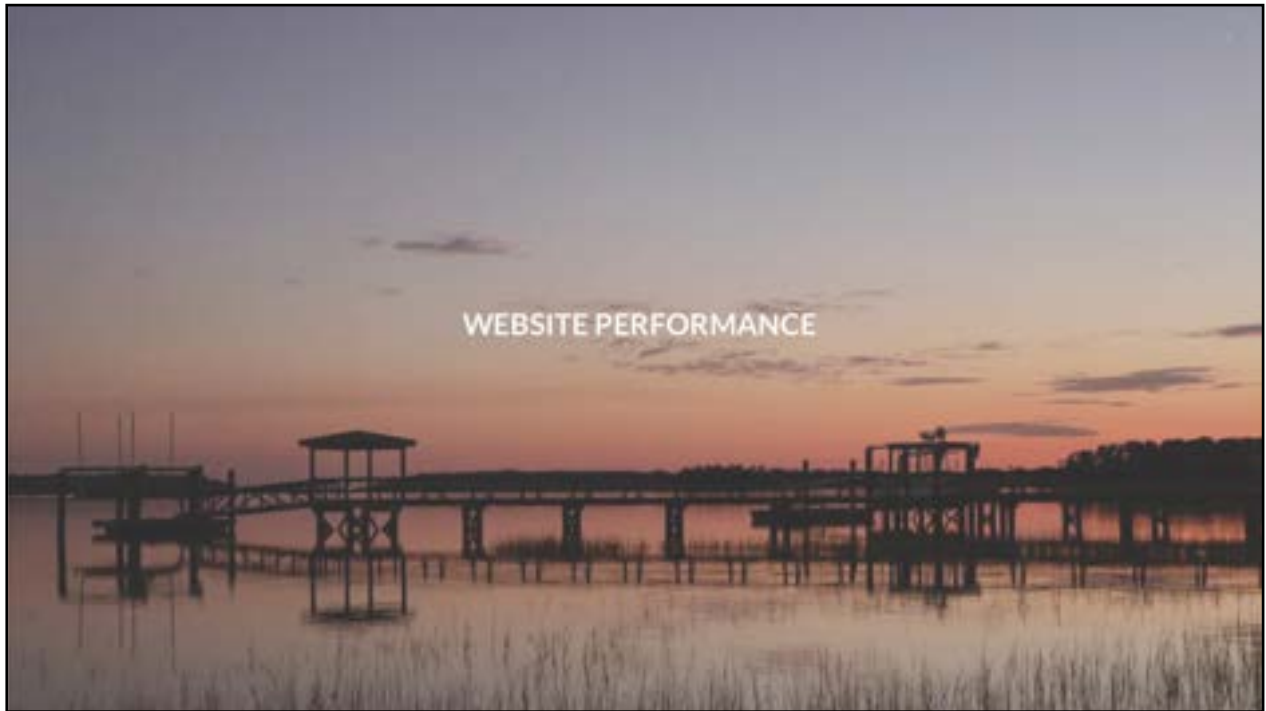
SEARCH INTEREST

- In 2020, Search Interest decreased 3% vs PY. Outside of South Carolina, the top Brand interest markets were North Carolina, Georgia, Connecticut, and Delaware, which replaced Tennessee as the fourth-highest search interest market in 2020 outside South Carolina.
- Top terms used to search for Hilton Head Island Bluffton were bluffton sc, bluffton south carolina, things to do in bluffton sc, bluffton events, bluffton arts and seafood festival, bluffton south carolina upcoming events, bluffton, bluffton sc events, bluffton restaurants, bluffton library, hotels in bluffton and things to do bluffton sc.



bluffton
Heart of the Lowcountry

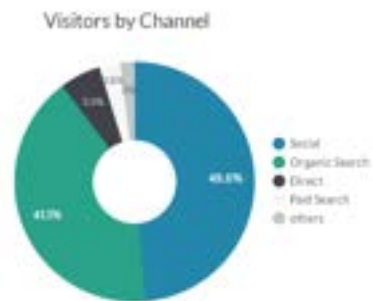
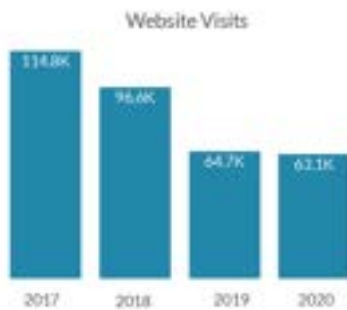
WEBSITE PERFORMANCE



BLUFFTON

TOTAL WEBSITE VISITATION

- There have been 63K visits to the Bluffton sections of the website, predominantly by search traffic (social and organic). Traffic is down 4% vs PY, driven by all traffic sources, but the biggest decline came as a result of a decrease in paid search and display traffic.
- Mobile traffic increased 173% vs. PY and desktop traffic increased 32% vs. PY.
- Social and organic search drove the majority of traffic to the site, accounting for over 89% of traffic.

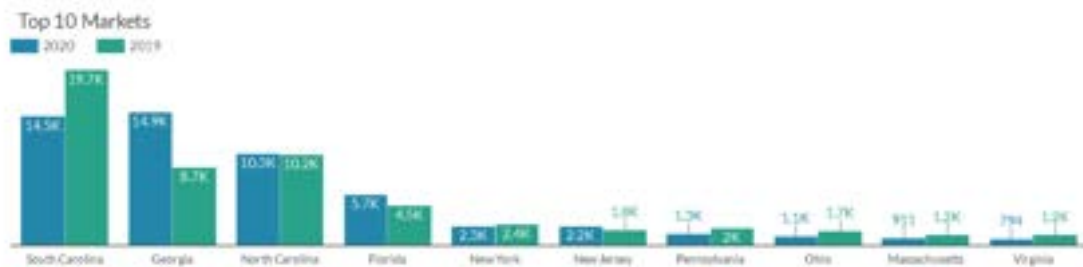


bluffton
INSIGHT INTO THE COMMUNITY

BLUFFTON

DMAs

- In 2020, the top 10 DMA traffic declined by 2% compared to the PY. The top 10 DMAs drive 86% of all traffic to the website. South Carolina continued as a top DMA in 2020, but Georgia outperformed North Carolina in traffic, making Georgia the second most popular destination.



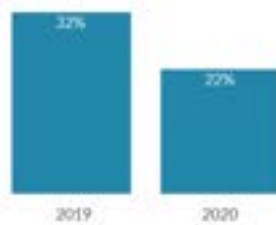
bluffton
INSIGHT INTO THE COMMUNITY

BLUFFTON

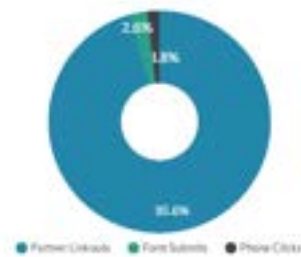
CONVERSION RATE OVERVIEW

- In 2020, the HHH Bluffton conversion rate was down 31% compared to the PY. This was due largely to decreased paid search and display spend.
- The majority of conversions were Outgoing Partner Links (95%).
- There were also 533 phone clicks and 374 forms submitted.

Conversion Rate



Conversion Breakdown





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