

DON RYAN  
Center for Innovation  
← 4 MILES

FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022

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# SOUTHERN BEAUFORT COUNTY

## DESTINATION MARKETING PLAN







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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***

**Daufuskie Island featured as the “Top Day-trip in South Carolina”  
in *Reader’s Digest***

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

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

**Daufuskie Island named the  
“Best Place to Visit in the State” by *Condé Nast Traveler***

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

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

**Montage Palmetto Bluff 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”**



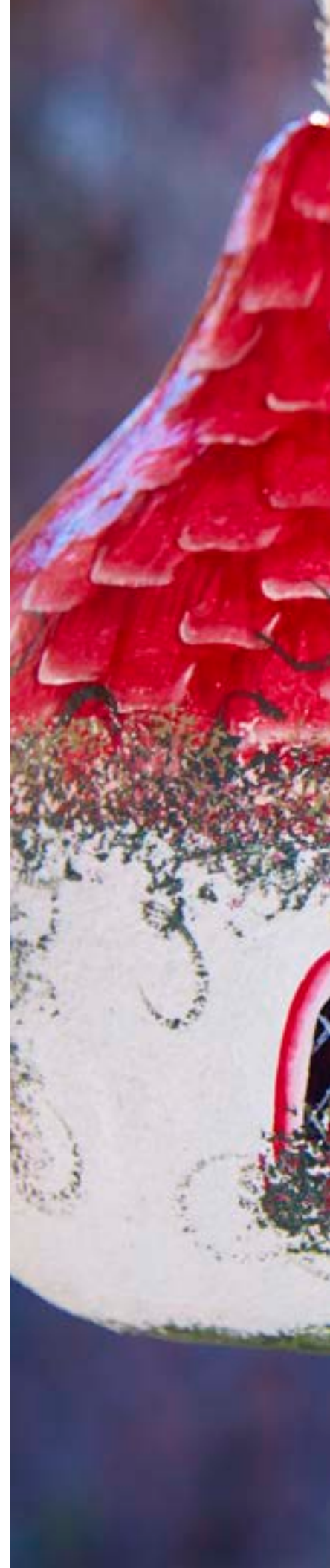


# Executive Summary

The Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce/Visitor & Convention Bureau continues to be the leader in promoting tourism within Southern Beaufort County. The organization as a whole utilizes national economic and tourism trends, consumer research, prior program performance, demographics and takes into consideration the needs of the 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:

- Developed and implemented 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.
- Integrated Zoom technology for the organization to be able to adapt and continue operating seamlessly.
- Developed the 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.
- Launched the VisitBluffton.org as an independent website.
- Expanded air-service and air-carriers at both airports serving the region.







## 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.

## Bluffton's 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

## Daufuskie Island's Brand Commitment

As an extension of Hilton Head Island and Bluffton, Daufuskie Island provides a more remote escape to the visitors of Southern Beaufort County, one that's even closer to nature and "off the beaten path." The elements of the brand personality related to tranquility and nature are strong with identity and expression.

# 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 Southern Beaufort County-specific posts driving traffic to the website.
- ☐ Integrate the paid and organic social efforts, ensuring content boosting on social 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 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 Southern Beaufort County.
- ☐ Procure industry reporting with Smith Travel Research (STR) and DestiMetrics on a regular basis for measuring lodging occupancy, average room rates, room demand and RevPAR.
- ☐ Collaborate with the College of Charleston Office of Tourism Analysis along with ensure details of our Google Analytics and social platforms to provide 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 Southern Beaufort County throughout the year to make adjustments as needed.

<b>SEO / Social Media (Organic)</b>	<b>\$23,100</b>
<b>Digital Promotions</b>	<b>\$55,850</b>
<b>Media Management &amp; Reporting</b>	<b>\$6,300</b>
<b>Website &amp; Campaign Maintenance</b>	<b>\$17,400</b>
<b>Insiders (enews)</b>	<b>\$5,950</b>
<b>Southern Beaufort County Vacation Planner</b>	<b>\$27,500</b>
<b>Regional Vacation Planner</b>	<b>\$14,850</b>
<b>Group Tour</b>	<b>\$1,100</b>
<b>Photography / Videography</b>	<b>\$16,500</b>
<b>Research &amp; Planning</b>	<b>\$5,500</b>
<b>Contingency</b>	<b>\$5,500</b>
<b>Ops &amp; Management</b>	<b>\$105,450</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$285,000</b>

# Demographics & Personas





## Demographics & Personas

We use multiple primary and secondary data sources to understand who our visitors are and what motivates them to visit Southern Beaufort County. 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

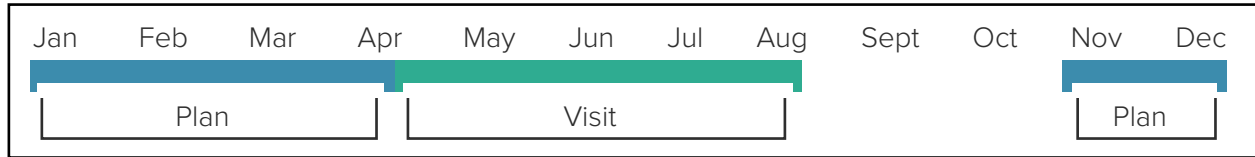
# Family



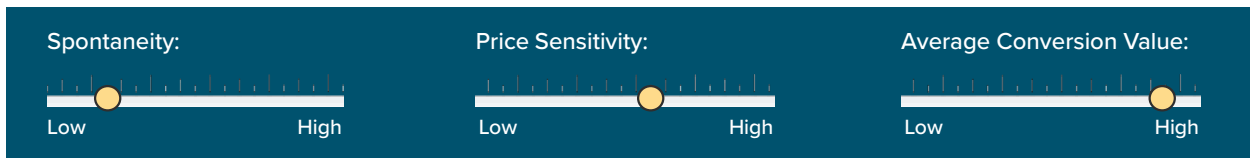


## Family Travel Objective

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

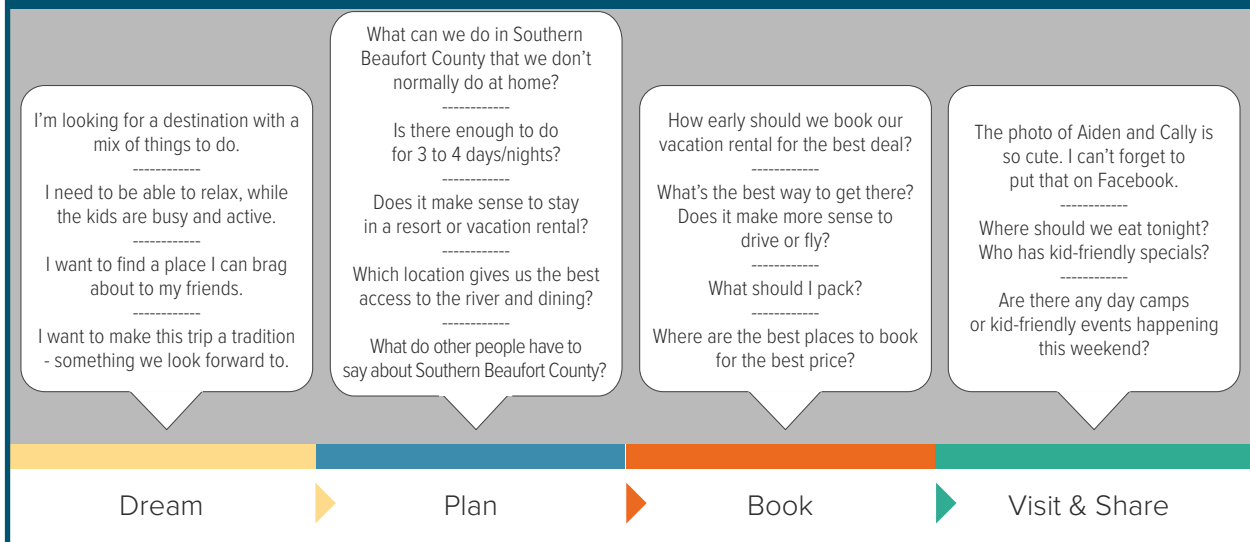
## Preferred Activities & Attractions

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



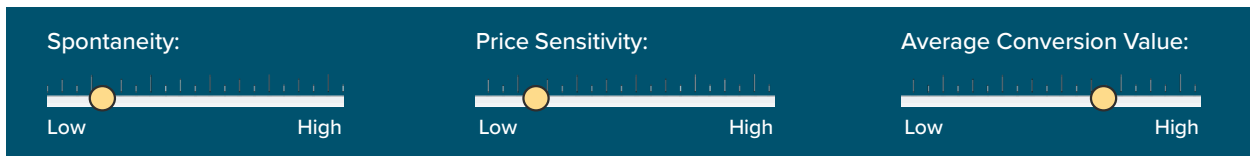


## Snowbirds Travel Objective

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

  
Traditional

  
Values  
Family Time

  
Enjoys the  
Finer Things

  
Active & Health  
Conscious

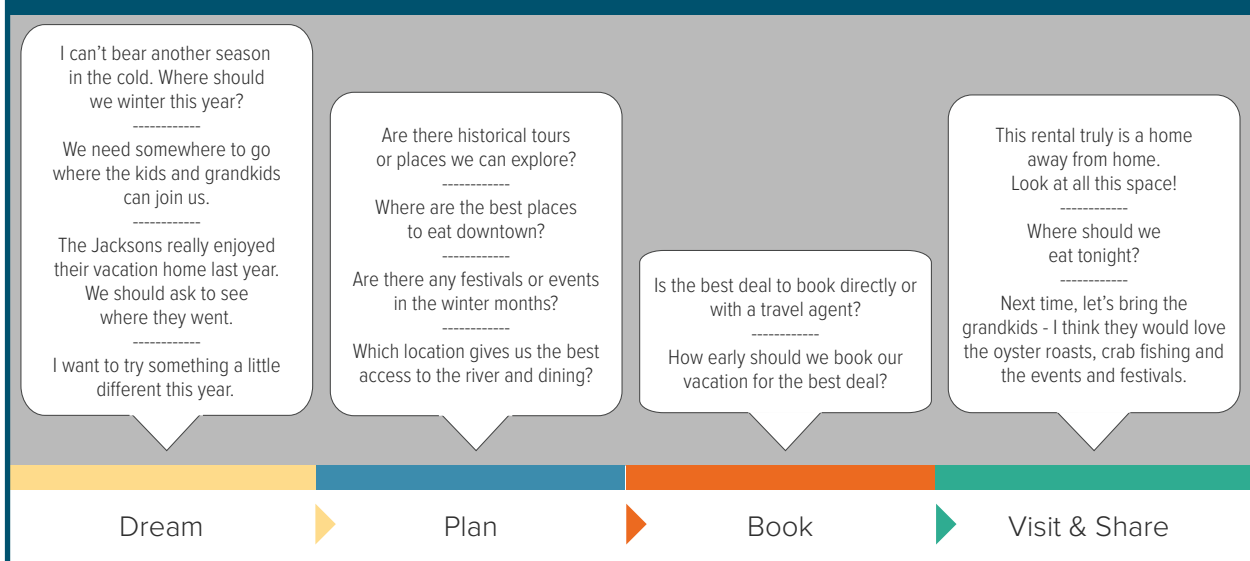
## Preferred Activities & Attractions

Vacation Rentals  
Dining  
Golf  
History / Culture  
Excursion / Tour  
Biking

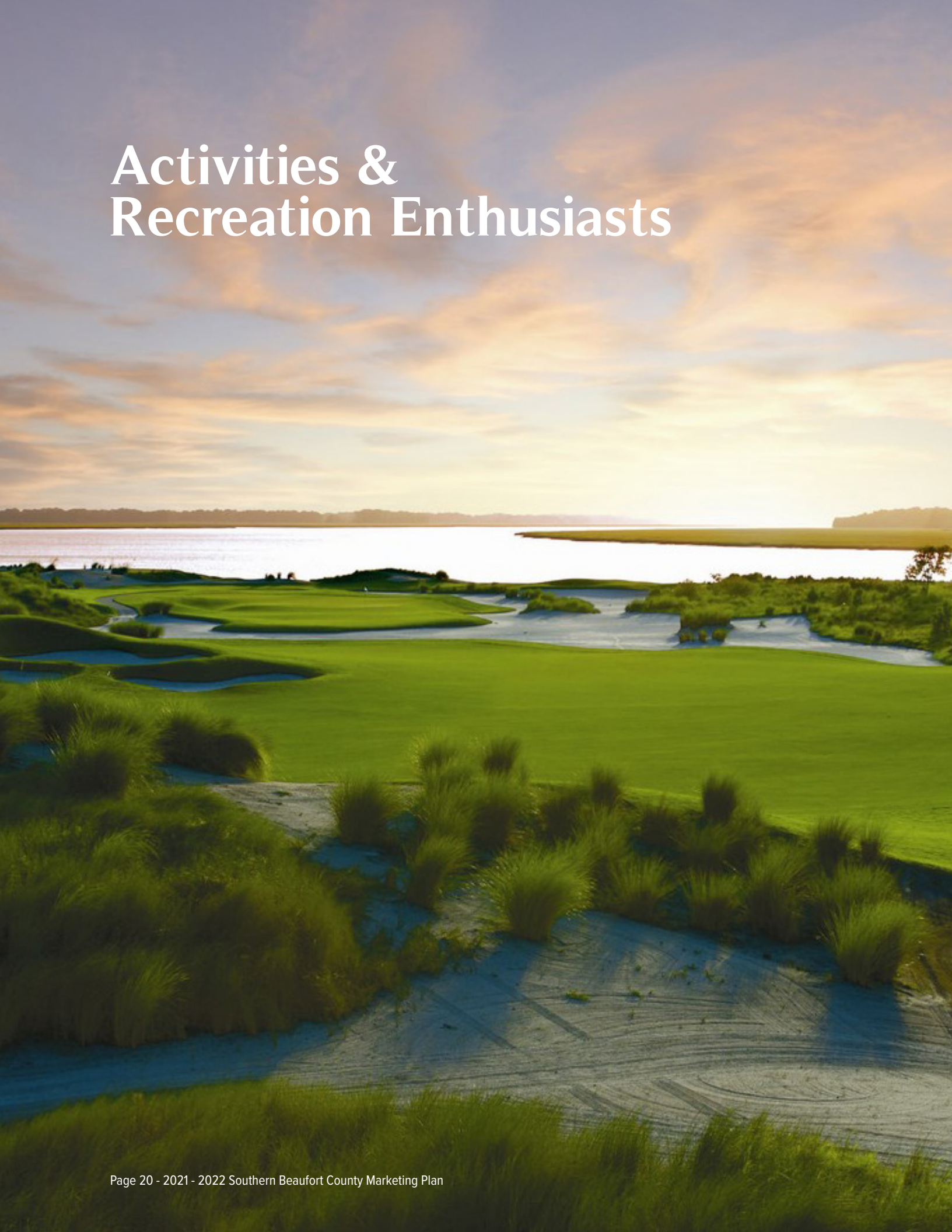
## Marketing Channels & Formats

Facebook  
Print  
TripAdvisor  
Radio  
TV  
Online Video

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



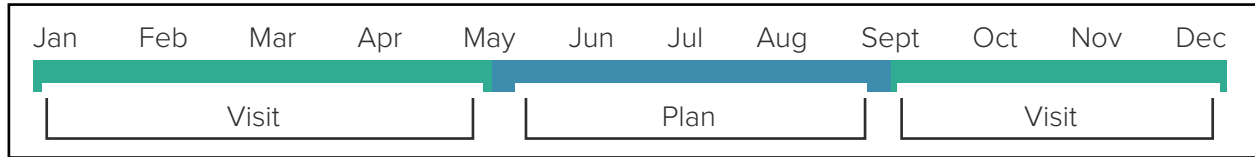
# Activities & Recreation Enthusiasts



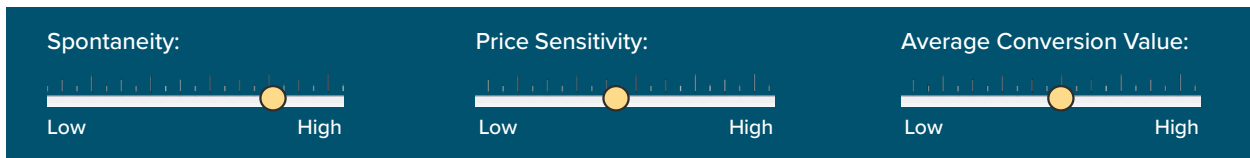


## Activities / Recreation Enthusiast Travel Objective

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



## Travel Habits



## Who They Are



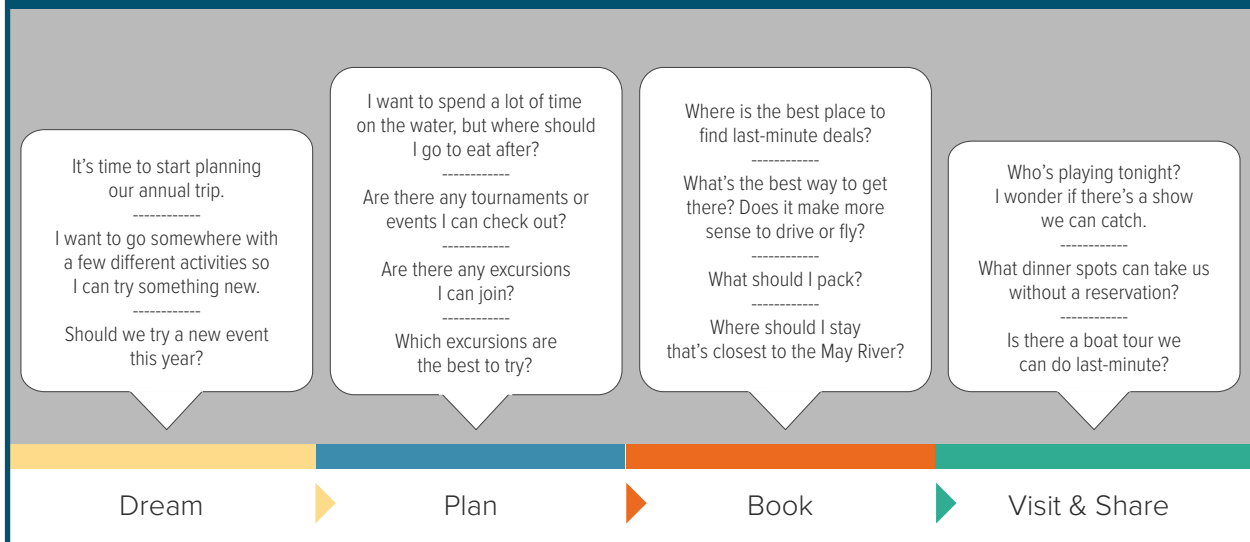
## Preferred Activities & Attractions

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



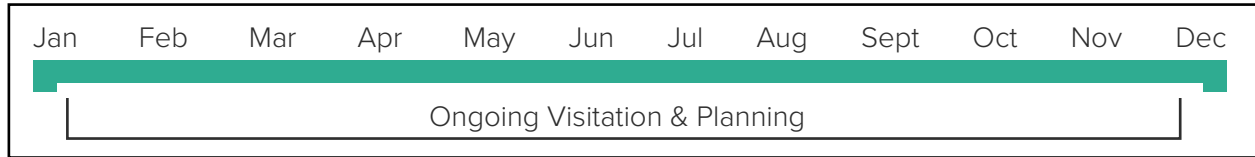
# The Weekender



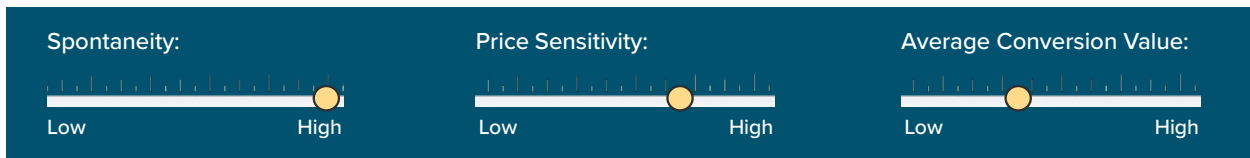


## The Weekender Travel Objective

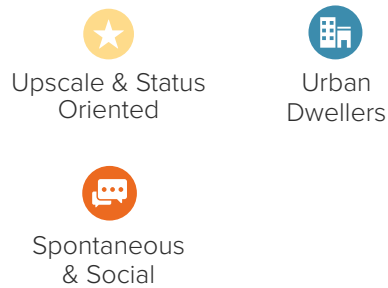
Find a fairweather weekend escape from work and city life.



## Travel Habits



## Who They Are



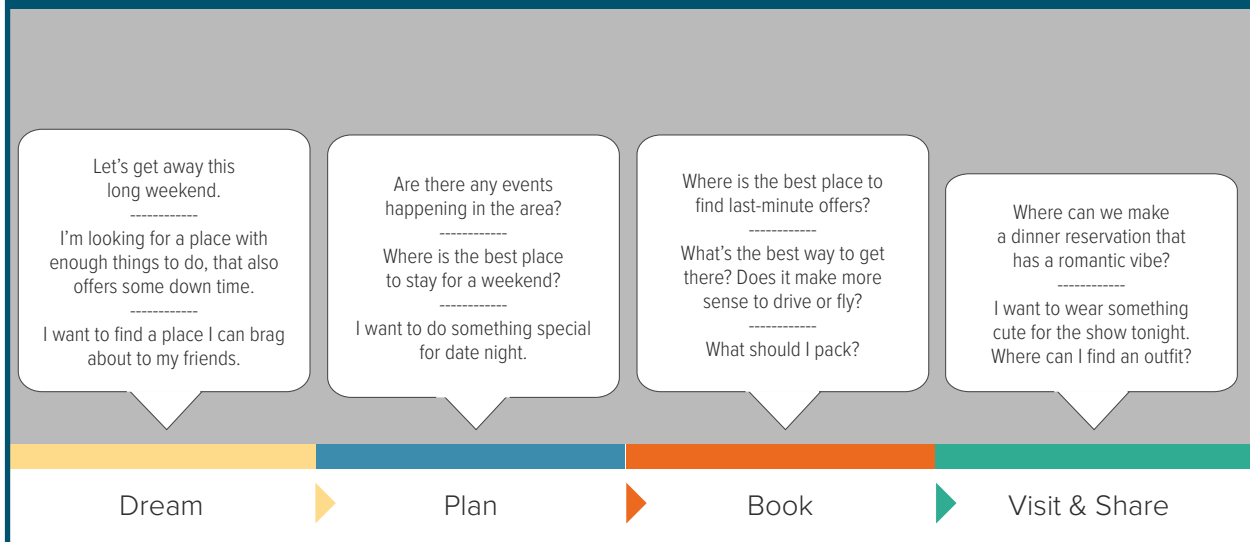
## Preferred Activities & Attractions

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





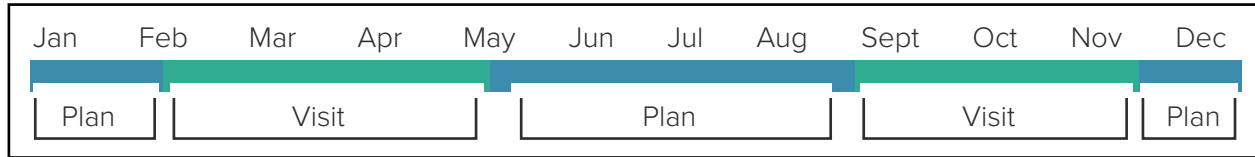
# Arts, Culture & History





## Arts, Culture & History Travel Objective

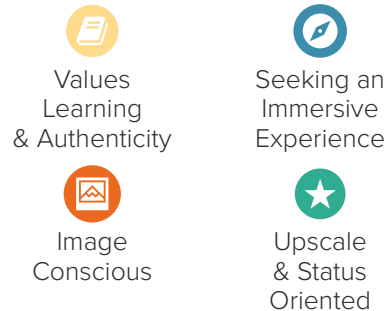
To explore cultural attractions, historical sites and the local arts scene.



## Travel Habits



## Who They Are



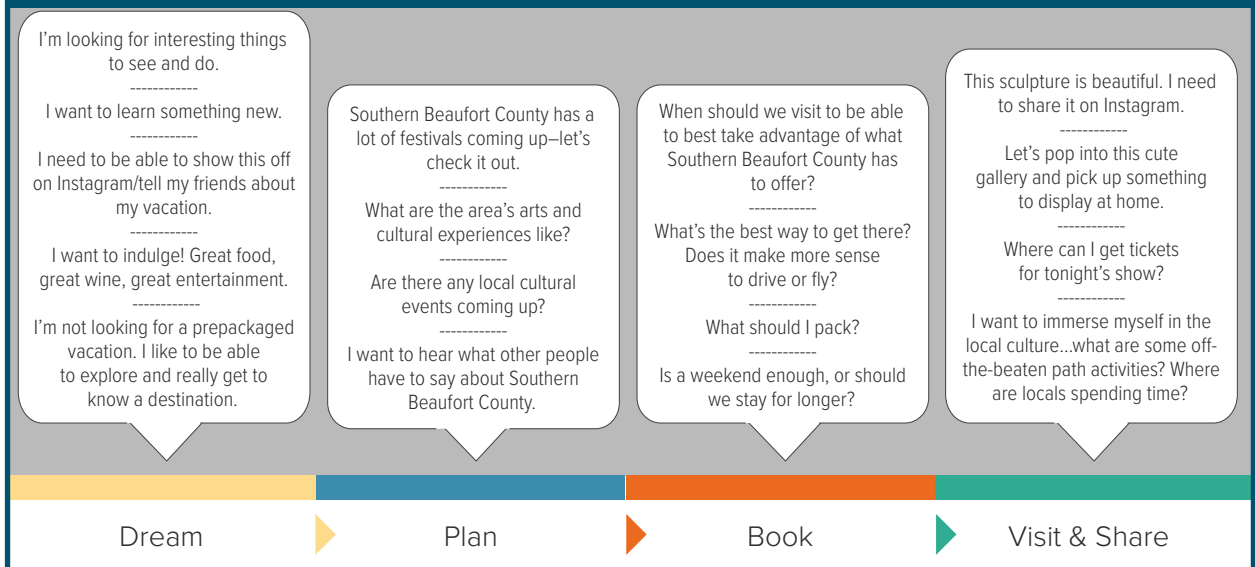
## Preferred Activities & Attractions

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



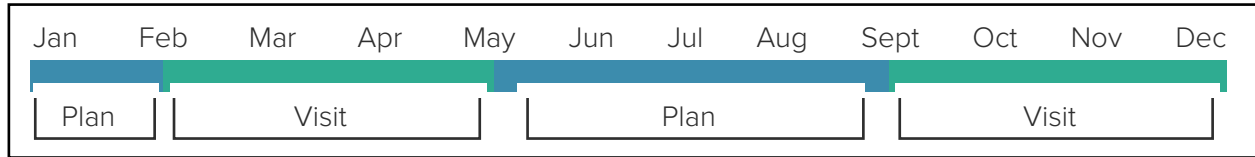
A close-up photograph of several oysters on ice with lemon wedges. The oysters are arranged on a bed of crushed ice, and several lemon wedges are scattered around them. The word "Culinary" is written in a white serif font in the upper left quadrant.

# Culinary

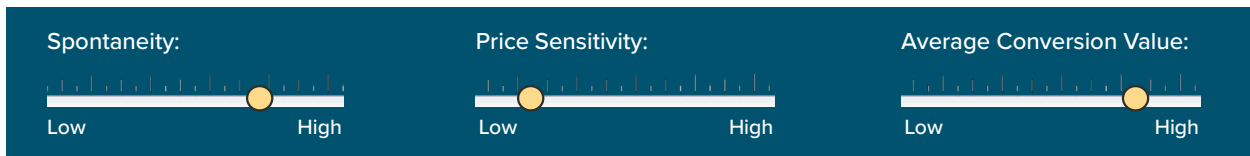


## Culinary Travel Objective:

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

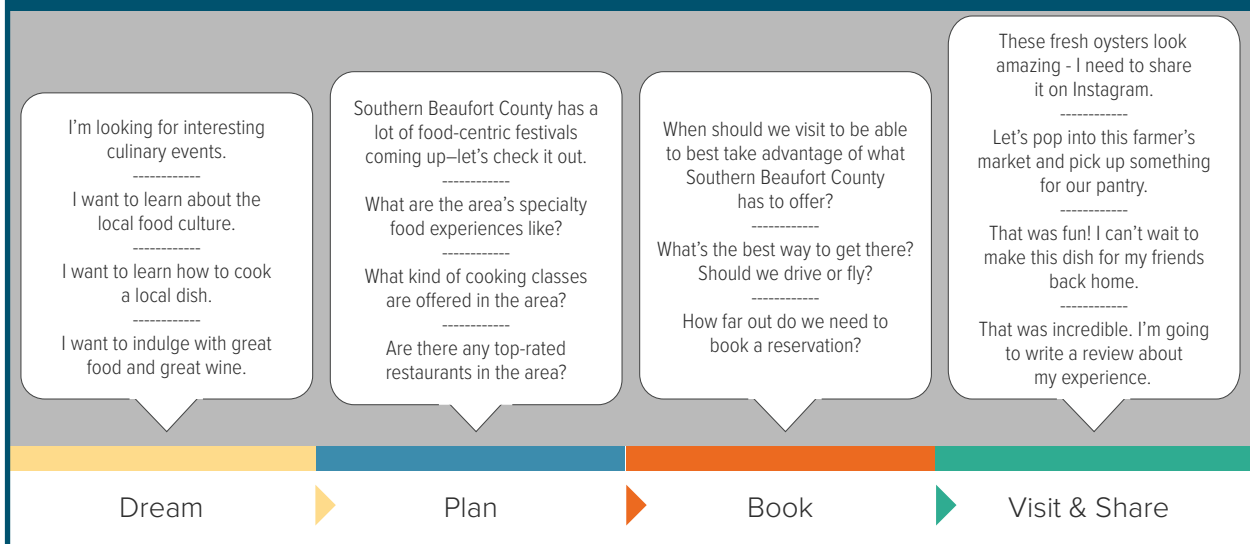
## Preferred Activities & Attractions

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



A large white fishing boat with a blue hull is docked at a wooden pier. The boat has "DADDY'S GIRLS" written in blue letters on its side. A smaller boat is visible in the foreground. The background shows a calm body of water and a clear sky.

# 2021-2022 Destination Marketing Plan



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

Southern Beaufort County 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.

With local tourism leaders, the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce/Visitor & Convention Bureau did extensive customer research and garnered detailed insight into these key areas of interest that define Bluffton and Daufuskie Island:

- Area “District” Designations including History, Cultural and Arts
- National Historic Register Designations including The Church of the Cross and Campbell Chapel AME Church
- 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
- Unspoiled with palm trees and live oaks, lining sandy roads
- Slower, laid back pace with bikes, horses and golf carts for transportation
- Local culture, artists enclaves and historic sites
- Haig Point and the Haig Point Lighthouse

### Target Audience:

- Affluent consumers visiting Southern Beaufort County for cultural and arts experiences, historic tours, shopping and culinary activities.
- New and repeat overnights to Southern Beaufort County 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 Southern Beaufort County’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 Southern Beaufort County.
- Increasing visitor expenditures to Southern Beaufort County attractions, retail and dining facilities. Thus increasing Bluffton and Southern Beaufort County’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

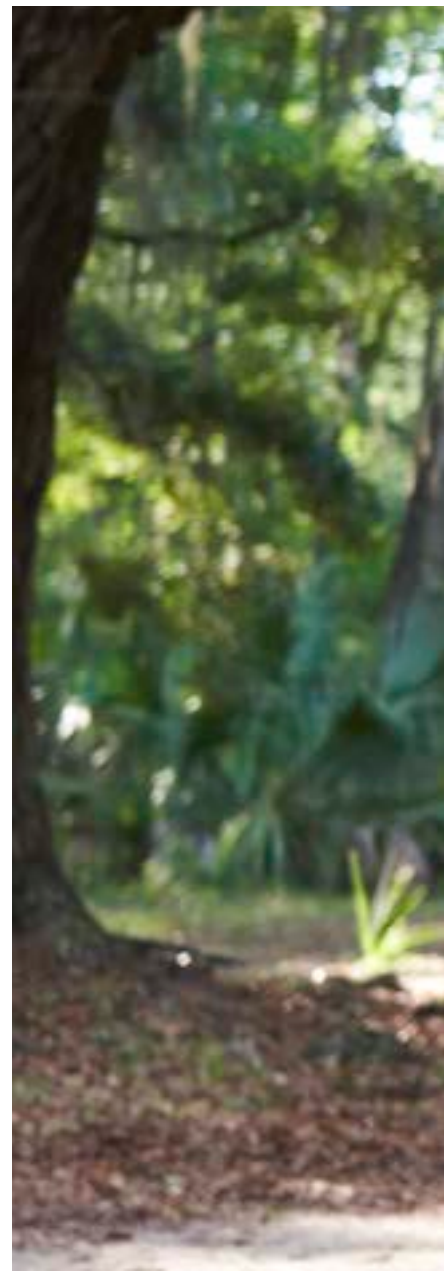
During 2020 and into 2021, Southern Beaufort County remained top of mind due to early strategic adjustments to our media efforts with a “heavy up” approach to immersive content and recall of favorite memories. During COVID-19, while lockdown and quarantines varied state to state and beyond, our content 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, Southern Beaufort County 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, Southern Beaufort County 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 Southern Beaufort County’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.





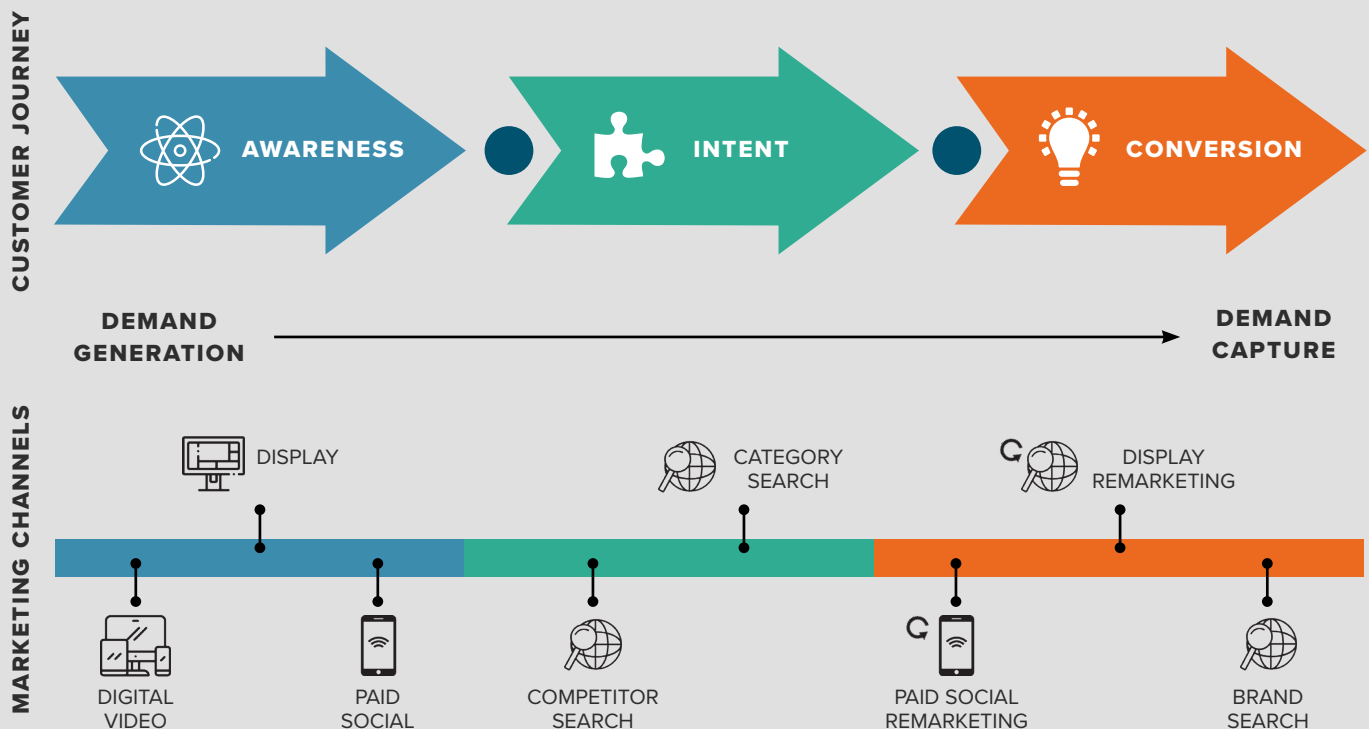


# Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

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. This will include a list of keywords that best align with Southern Beaufort County's target visitor and experiences.

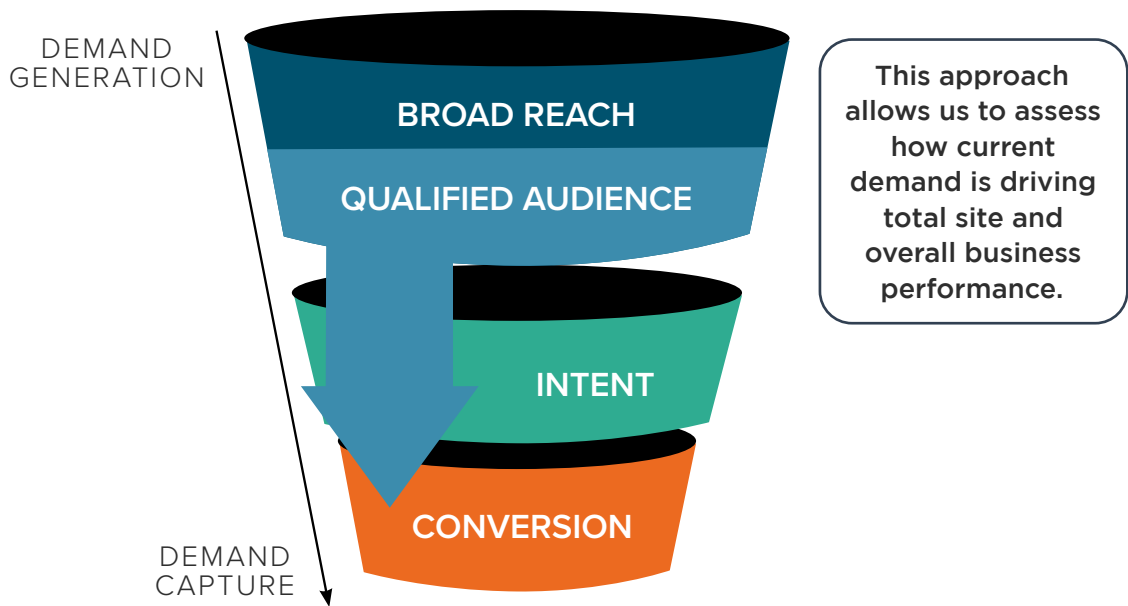


## Audience Targeting with Digital Media

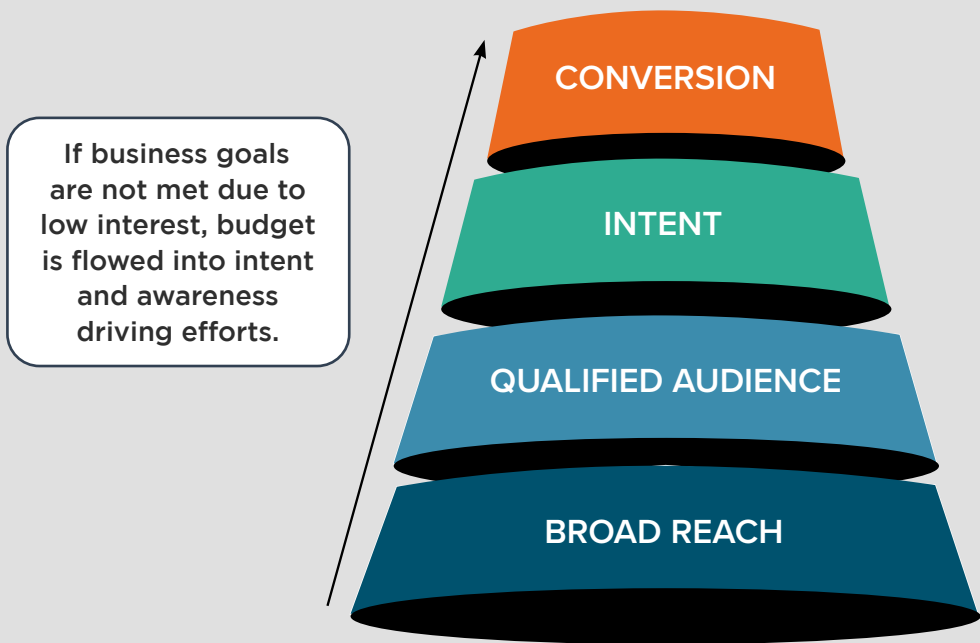




# The Consumer Journey



# 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, our marketing efforts will work to influence consumers to visit the new independent Bluffton website and the Daufuskie Island microsite.

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 Southern Beaufort County 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:

## 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 the destination.

## Awareness Phase

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

To build awareness at the top of the funnel in 2021-2022, the video assets, 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 Southern Beaufort County.

Along with display ads we will extend reach through paid social within Facebook and Instagram. Media is only purchased 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





## 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
<b>CATEGORY SEARCH</b>	Themed ad groups and keywords around categories that target a consumer researching related types of vacations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family vacation</li> <li>• History, arts, cultural vacation</li> <li>• Couples vacation</li> <li>• Weekend getaway</li> </ul>
<b>COMPETITOR SEARCH</b>	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"> <li>• Savannah</li> <li>• Beaufort</li> <li>• Charleston</li> </ul>



### 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 Southern Beaufort County as the perfect vacation destination by serving ads to those who have visited the 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

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



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 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 Southern Beaufort County 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 Southern Beaufort County’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 website, in addition to the quantity.
- Continuing a paid social strategy for Southern Beaufort County-specific posts driving traffic to the website.
- Integrating our paid and organic social efforts, ensuring content boosting when budget permits.

These are the channels that best support Southern Beaufort County’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. The approach to Facebook is to incorporate a range of content, focusing on Southern Beaufort County-specific, 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 Southern Beaufort County. In 2021-2022, we will focus on sharing partner content directly from the partner’s social page, pushing traffic to their accounts, as well as pages on our website that link directly to the partner’s website.



Instagram’s strategy will continue to focus on curating user-generated content from talented guests and locals to support Southern Beaufort County’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 hashtags. 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, 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 (which will push partner content).



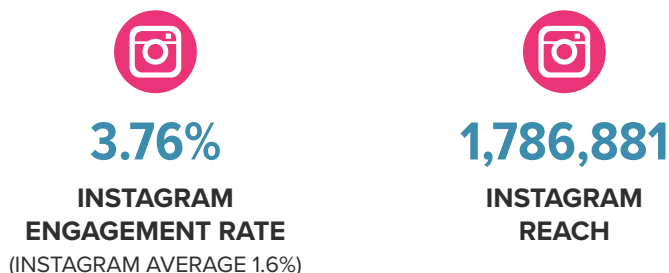
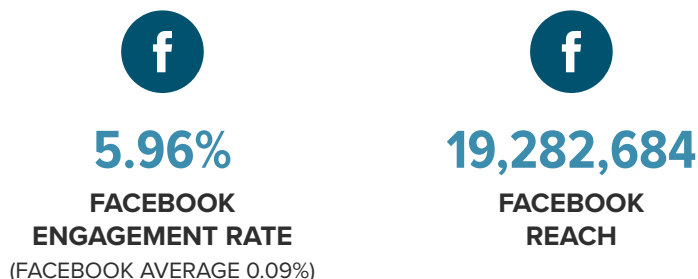
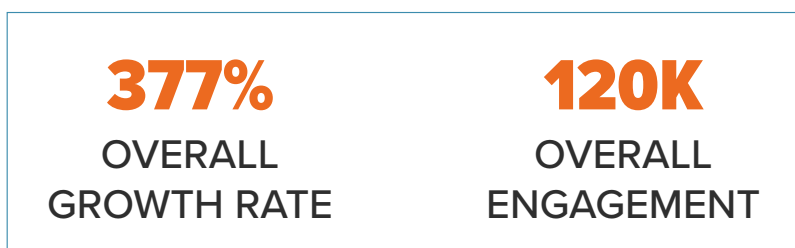
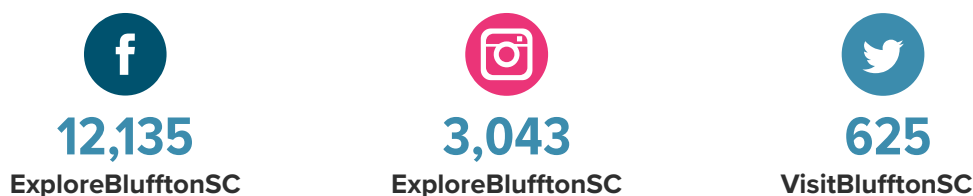
Spotify is a new terrain for our brand that we will explore in 2021-2022. We will create tailored scripts written to pique the interest of our core audiences. Podcasts are selected based on relevant interests and read by the podcast hosts to reach our audio-inclined audiences.

# 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 outperformed 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 advancements were made with vaccinations, restrictions lessened and travelers felt more inclined to travel. Therefore, we implemented new tactics with more direct CTAs to book a Southern Beaufort County getaway as well as posted Instagram Stories with CTAs to click the link in our bio. These efforts proved successful for us.

## Bluffton Channel Growth



Note: Metrics are specific to Bluffton social channels.



## Daufuskie Island Social Posts

**9,711**

SOCIAL  
SESSIONS

**15,241**

OVERALL  
ENGAGEMENT

**504**

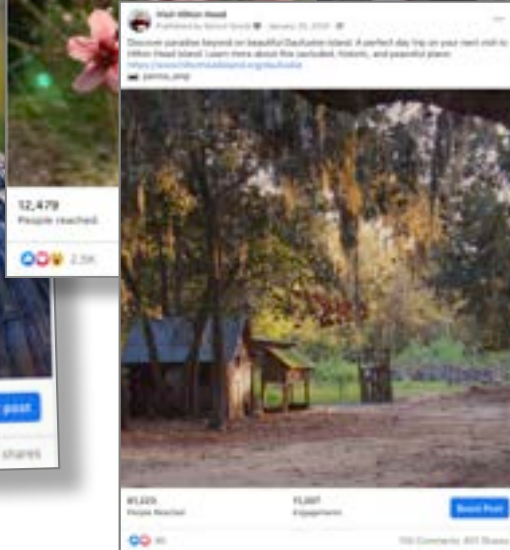
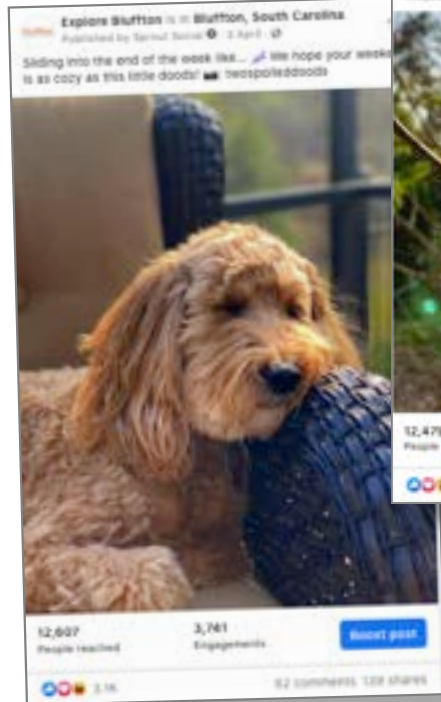
OUTGOING LINKS  
TO PARTNERS





# Top Social Posts for 2020

facebook



twitter







# Paid Social Media Strategy

To continue supporting our goal of establishing the credibility of our social channels, as well as the website, the paid social media strategy will focus on driving this momentum forward. To do this, the following 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 the destination's social 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





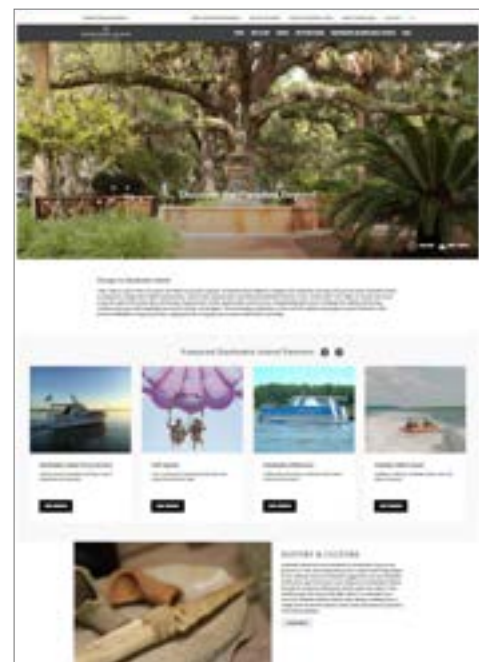
## Destination Website

When appropriate, traffic will be driven back to Bluffton's new, independent website as well as the Daufuskie Island microsite. This strategy will help us achieve stronger results and higher conversion rates.

The 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 Southern Beaufort County.

In 2021-2022, Southern Beaufort County'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 Southern Beaufort County business owners and locals and implementing richer user-generated content, offers visitors a more intimate glimpse at a Southern Beaufort County 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

Southern Beaufort County 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 Southern Beaufort County while attending travel tradeshows virtually and in-person.

Military continues to be a focus for the Southern Beaufort County 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 destination, 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. Southern Beaufort County 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 Southern Beaufort County 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.

In year's past, we have attended tradeshows such as American Bus Association (ABA), IMEX America, Sports Travel's TEAMS Expo, SCSAE and more. Throughout 2021-2022, we will flex and be nimble to our tradeshow commitments. As the landscape of meetings and groups continues to evolve, we will look to evaluate opportunities in real time to see 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 Southern Beaufort County. We will take a more year round approach to capturing content as the seasons change. Building the asset library will provide us with additional content for use across all marketing efforts.

## Strategy:

- Capture Southern Beaufort County's new products and amenities including parks, cultural district activities, culinary and more.
- Expand on video 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

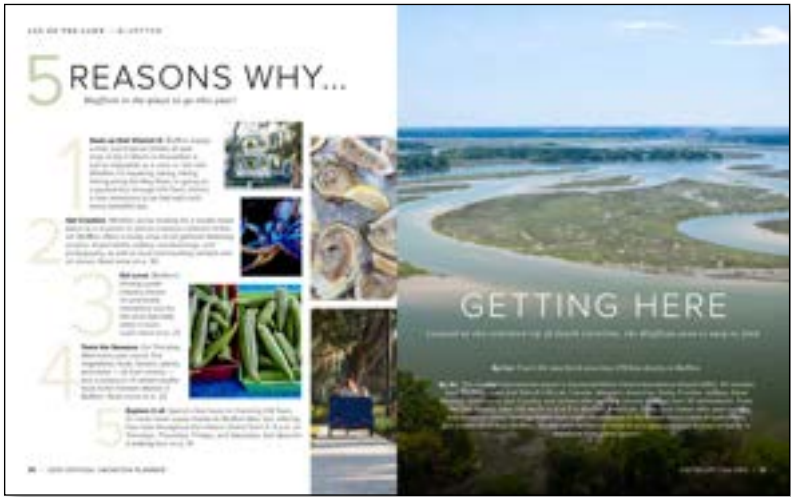
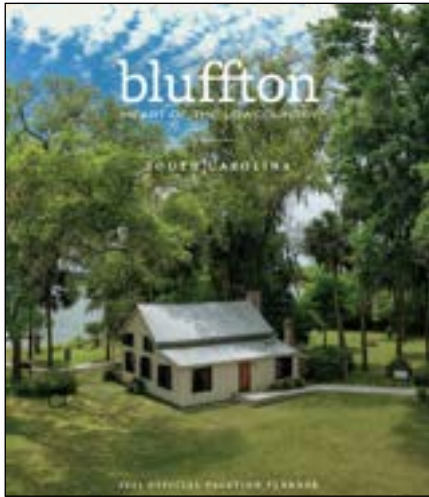
In addition to the Official Hilton Head Island Vacation Planner that includes Bluffton and Daufuskie Island, the Visitor & Convention Bureau will develop and produce the Official Bluffton Vacation Planner which will include sections on Daufuskie Island and unincorporated Town of Bluffton. These print and digital publications will be our primary fulfillment pieces and a comprehensive guides to what to see and do within Southern Beaufort County. They will be distributed via online and phone inquiries, as well as to businesses within Southern Beaufort County.

In today's more visual world, telling a story through stunning photography and compelling content is an imperative component to the travel journey process. These "coffee table" pieces allow 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.





Official Bluffton Vacation Planner Spreads



Official Hilton Head Island Vacation Planner Daufuskie Island Spreads



# 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 Southern Beaufort County. The following programs will be ongoing:

- Maintain and update 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 STR hotel data with DestiMetrics home and villa data to produce a monthly destination report on total destination accommodations tax paying occupancy, average room rates and RevPAR.
- Collaborate with the 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.
- Subscribe to the U.S. Travel Association's (USTA) travel reports for insights and research.











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