



HILTON HEAD ISLAND-BLUFFTON  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

.....

bluffton

HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

**2017 - 2018**  
**BLUFFTON MARKETING PLAN**



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2017-2018

## Bluffton Marketing Plan

### Mission & Brand Commitment

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#### **Mission**

Mutually lead our membership and travel and tourism industry by marketing and guiding the Hilton Head Island, Bluffton, Daufuskie Island and Southern Beaufort County destination brand experience to generate sustainable economic vitality.

#### **Brand Commitment**

The Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce and Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB), in partnership with the Town of Bluffton, began working with research partners from the University of South Carolina Beaufort and USC as well as marketing firm Rawle Murdy Associates in May of 2013. Since February 2014, the new brand revealed: Bluffton Heart of the Lowcountry, continues to reflect the deep emotional connection shared by Bluffton residents and the burgeoning business community. Bluffton is the heart of the Lowcountry. It speaks to the town's central location, its lovable characteristics, and Bluffton is the pumping, economic life force of the Lowcountry. Most importantly, it's a tone and a feeling. When you're in 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 in Bluffton.

Town of Bluffton's core distinctions:

- Old Town Charm
- Bluffton Attitude
  - Authentic/Realness
  - Eclectic/Expressive
  - Unique/Pride
  - Town on the Move/Progressive

- Nature
- May River
- Cultural District
- Location
- Experiential Events
- Art and Design
- Thriving Restaurant Scene
- Growing Artisan Community

## Guiding Principles

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- Serve as a voice and advocate for the business community
- Maintain the highest ethical standards in all we do
- Work to preserve and enhance the prudent growth, quality of life and character of our region
- Develop collaborative partnerships only in areas where the partnership can accomplish that which our organization cannot do alone
- Develop and implement programs and services that benefit the economic well-being and common interests of our members
- Initiate programs for which there is funding and staffing resources
- Make decisions based on long-term perspective

## State of the Economy

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### **Travel Industry, 30,000-Foot View**

Today's consumers are able and confident to spend on travel and business travel is still on the rise. A transition into a new administration has left the international traveler a bit hesitant however, the U.S. Travel Association (USTA) forecast anticipates a quick recovery in the coming months. In the economic snapshot below we outline travel trends and adjust them to apply to the marketing efforts for Southern Beaufort County. Identifying global travel trends gives the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) an advantage when courting visitors to stay and play in the destination.



The following sections outline the current state of the tourism industry, the needs and wants of our target demographics and how the Visitor & Convention Bureau plans to drive tourism with innovative partnerships and diverse marketing programs.

## Lay of the Land

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### **Current State of the U.S. Economy**

As we closed out 2016, many of the economic indicators reported growth within their segments. Looking at lodging specifically, Smith Travel Research (STR), the leading travel research firm that collects and tracks supply and demand data for the global hotel industry, reported positive year-over-year domestic results in the three key performance indicators for 2016:

- Occupancy +0.1% to 65.5%
- Average daily rate (ADR) rose 3.1% to U.S. \$123.97
- Revenue per available room (RevPAR) grew 3.2% to U.S. \$81.19

With the historic election behind us, there is still a great deal of uncertainty on the policy front as the new administration settles in. However, the underlying state of the U.S. economy is sound. Despite a durable downturn in exports that has persisted for two years, domestic demand remains on sure footing. Per the USTA, several segments are continuing to grow and improve including the labor market, wage growth and labor force participation rate. In addition, consumer confidence remains high, consumer spending is up and travel is top of mind. All great indicators for this coming year.

## Travel Trends

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Travel to and within the U.S. grew by 2.4% from December 2015 to December 2016. This year the USTA forecasts stable travel growth through the first half of 2017, sustained by both domestic leisure and business travel. This is the eighth consecutive year of travel increase for the travel industry.

## Leisure Travel

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United States residents continue to show interest in traveling domestically for the coming months per the USTA. In addition, USTA also states eight in 10 U.S. residents with near-term travel intent searched within the U.S. when searching for travel, travel offers and travel inspiration. This increase is being attributed to lower gasoline prices and affordable airfare.

In addition, a recent AAA survey states more than one-third of Americans, (35%) are planning to take a vacation of 50 miles or more away from home involving two or more immediate family members this year. The focus on family travel remains unchanged from 2015 to 2016, indicating that Americans continue to prioritize travel with family (multigenerational).

In addition to search and travel demand, leisure travel is amid a generational shift, boomers to millennials. Boomers are making the transition into retirement and millennials, the largest generation in U.S. history, now make up the largest share of today's U.S. workforce, and have the power to significantly alter the economy based upon their buying habits.

- Boomers: defined as 51-69 years of age/23% of total U.S. population as of 2016
- Millennials: defined as 18-36 years of age/26% of total U.S. population as of 2016

The largest trend to emerge from this generational shift is the "Sharing Economy". The term is defined as a socio-economic system built around the sharing of resources. How does this apply to the day-to-day traveler and the industry? The "Sharing Economy" can be seen and felt in the use of Uber, Lyft, Airbnb and HomeAway versus their traditional counterparts. The tourism industry is being forced to look closely at these emerging platforms and understand how they can fit into their existing offerings. The opportunity that arises from this generational shift in regards to travel is to find the "sweet spot" for both generations. Identifying what either generation is seeking for travel and deliver it within the platform or platforms they use regularly.

## Business Travel

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The USTA reports business travelers remain dedicated to staying on the road for work, with 64% of business travelers polled agreeing their employers feel business travel is very important to their organization's overall financial performance. In addition, nine out of 10 travelers polled (88%) say they would prefer to travel the same amount or more in the future for business.

Today's business traveler is also younger. The millennial business traveler is expected to drive the greatest year-over-year growth in business travel in the coming year by 12%. The millennials eagerness to travel directly contributes to the growth in the "Sharing Economy" trend.

- 50% of all corporate travel policies now include ride-sharing, with 21% of business travelers utilizing this option
- Use of home-sharing services increased 20% from June 2016, despite only 30% of companies allowing this stay option

Other key business travel needs identified by The Global Business Travel Association and American Express Global Business Travel are:

- Flexibility & Choice
  - ◊ Four-in-five business travelers said the flexibility to plan a business trip was their most satisfying booking experience
- Connectivity
  - ◊ 73% of business traveler polled connected to Wi-Fi or high-speed Internet in a hotel common area in the past year. Of those who went online in their room, 55% spent at least an hour a day using that connection for work
- Bleisure Travel
  - ◊ The term "Bleisure Travel" is defined as a leisure trip that has a business component. The percentage of leisure trips that have a business component jumped to 17% in 2016, compared to 14% in 2015

## International Travel

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Post-election years tend to weigh heavily on international travel, this year is no exception. The USTA report on international travel, covering through January 2017, showed that the United States' share of international lodging searches rose 12.7%. This was after three consecutive months of decline. The U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) projects international travel to the United States will continue experiencing growth through 2021, based on the National Travel and Tourism Office's 2016 Fall Travel Forecast. This year should produce a 2.4% increase and a new volume record of 78.6 million international visitors. Close eyes will be kept on this travel segment as we continue to move through the first quarter of the new U.S. Administration.

## Closer to Home

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The VCB's destination marketing plan recognizes the fact that major socio-political and economic forces on the macro/global level as well as changing consumer cultural and behavioral trends on the micro level have significantly impacted the travel and tourism industry, along with the entire business community – both globally, across the US and locally here in Beaufort County, South Carolina. Bluffton has become more than a place to visit, it has become a destination to experience and make new memories.

The local quirks keep travelers loyal to a destinations messaging. The VCB will be positioning Bluffton in the limelight as the ultimate escapes filled with genuine experiences of all kinds. For those looking to travel and immerse themselves in a new vacation experience, Bluffton is where they will find historical traditions, culinary and culture experiences are celebrated.

We have identified **four** pillars of our 2017-2018 marketing plan for Bluffton are:

- Arts
- Culture
- History
- Culinary



## **South Carolina Arts Commission: Bluffton As a State-Designated Cultural District**

Bluffton became the sixth community in South Carolina to earn the designation since state legislation was passed in June 2014, allowing the creation of such districts. It joins Rock Hill, Spartanburg, Columbia, Lancaster and Beaufort, which also recently gained approval.

The cultural district is a geographic area that has a concentration of cultural facilities, activities and assets. It is an area that is easily identifiable to visitors and residents and serves as a center of cultural, artistic and economic activity. A cultural district may contain galleries, live performance venues, theaters, artist studios, museums, arts centers, arts schools, and public art pieces. A cultural district may also contain businesses such as restaurants, banks or parks whose primary purpose is not arts, but that regularly make their spaces available to artists or create opportunities for the public to encounter the arts.

- Attract artists, creative entrepreneurs and cultural enterprises to communities
- Encourage economic development
- Foster local cultural development
- Provide a focal point for celebrating and strengthening local cultural identity

Additionally, cultural districts:

- Attract tourists
- Help preserve and reuse historic buildings
- Enhance the image and visibility of a place
- Foster a supportive environment for arts and culture

The newly awarded cultural designation will provide the structure and strategy for promoting Bluffton's annual events. The VCB will work with the Bluffton Cultural District Alliance (BCDA) to promote the Bluffton Cultural District. Together we will develop a strategic plan in conjunction with our on-going marketing efforts to promote the arts, history, events and culture of Bluffton to visitors.

Bluffton's cultural district spans from Bluffton Village south to the May River, and from Burnt Church Road west to Cahill's Market on May River Road. That area includes 120 cultural attractions and roughly three dozen annual festivals and events, per town documents.

## **Cultural Festivals & Events**

As we engage with visitors to promote the art and cultural experiences Bluffton has to offer, the VCB will continue our support for the special events held in Bluffton. We will continue to work with local partners who produce destination events to generate regional and national attention showcasing travel content, imagery and video around these opportunities.

There are many special events in Greater Bluffton including:

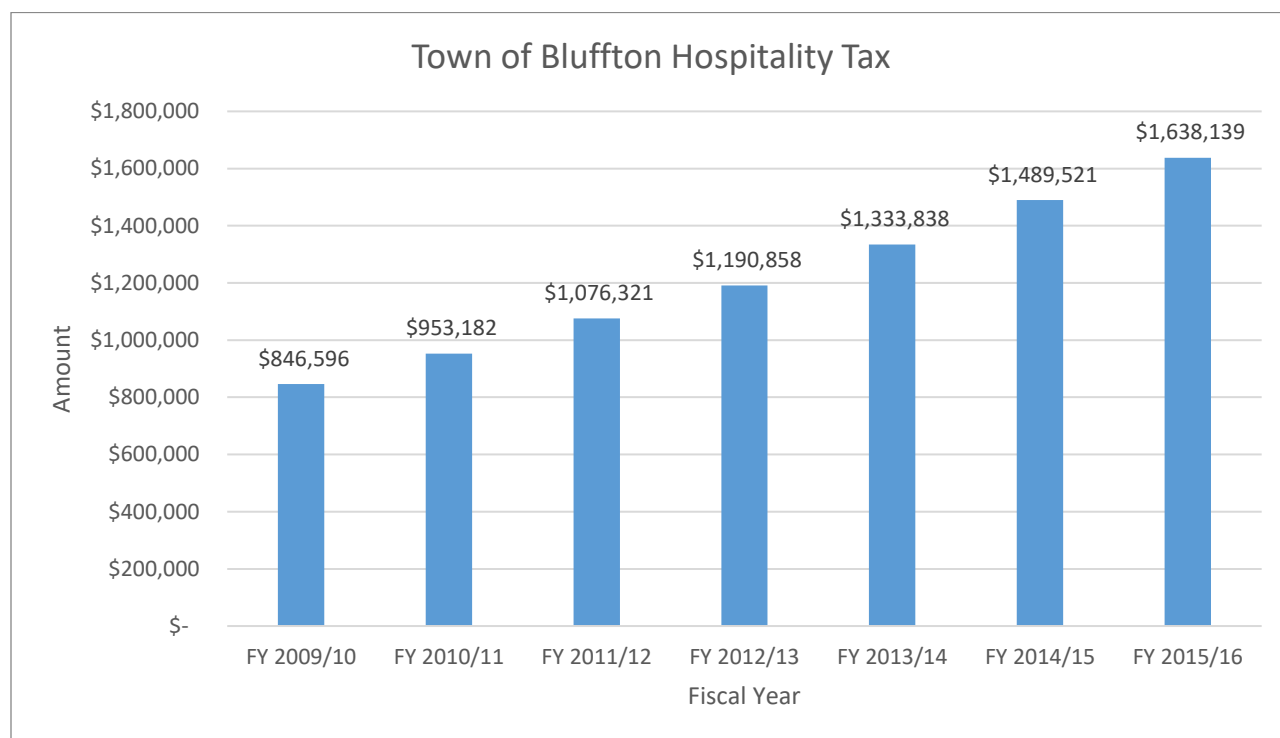
- Historic Bluffton Arts and Seafood Festival
- Bluffton International & Craft Beer Fest
- Bluffton Village Festival
- Bluffton Christmas Parade
- Bluffton Historical Preservation Society/Heyward House events
- Bluffton Farmers Market
- Bluffton Sunset Party at Oyster Factory Park
- Bluffton Earth Day Celebration
- Bluffton Duathlon
- Art Walks in Old Town Bluffton
- Children's Easter Celebration Calhoun Street
- Shuckin & Shagging in Old Town Bluffton
- Palmetto Bluff Music to your Mouth
- Palmetto Bluff Half Marathon
- Palmetto Bluff Summer Concert Series
- May River Shrimp Festival
- Beer & Brats/Oktoberfest
- Other opportunities that may develop throughout the year such as the Budweiser Clydesdales and Sunset Parties

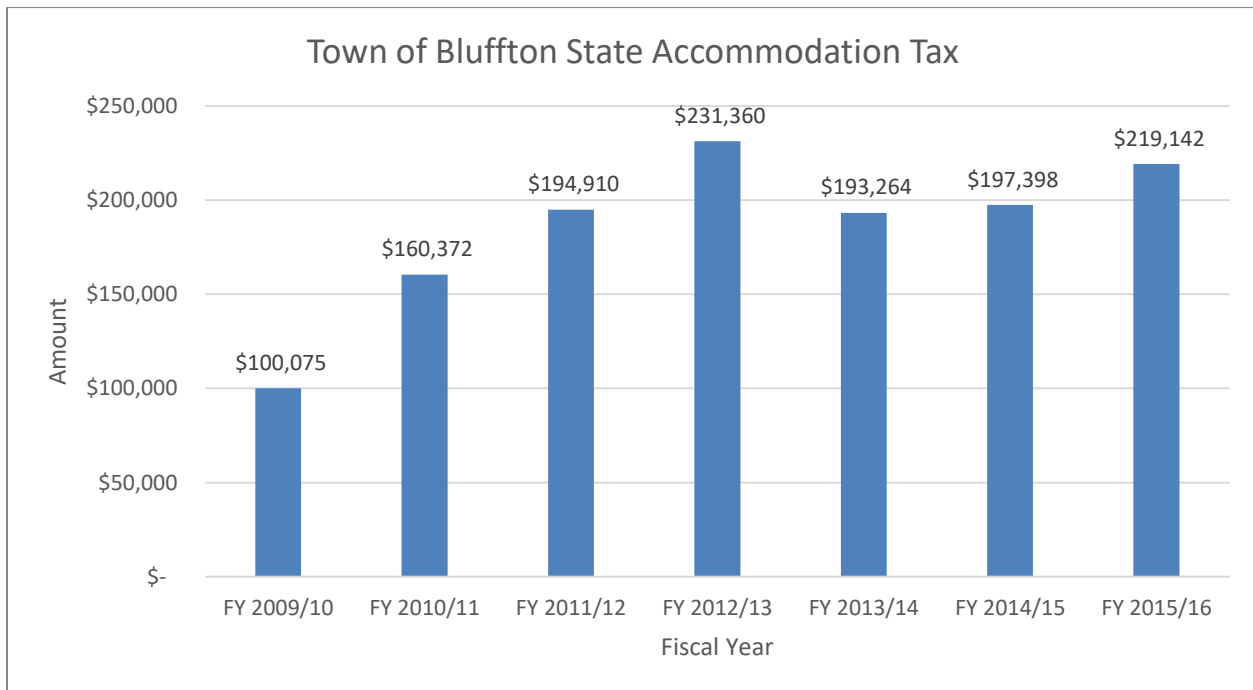
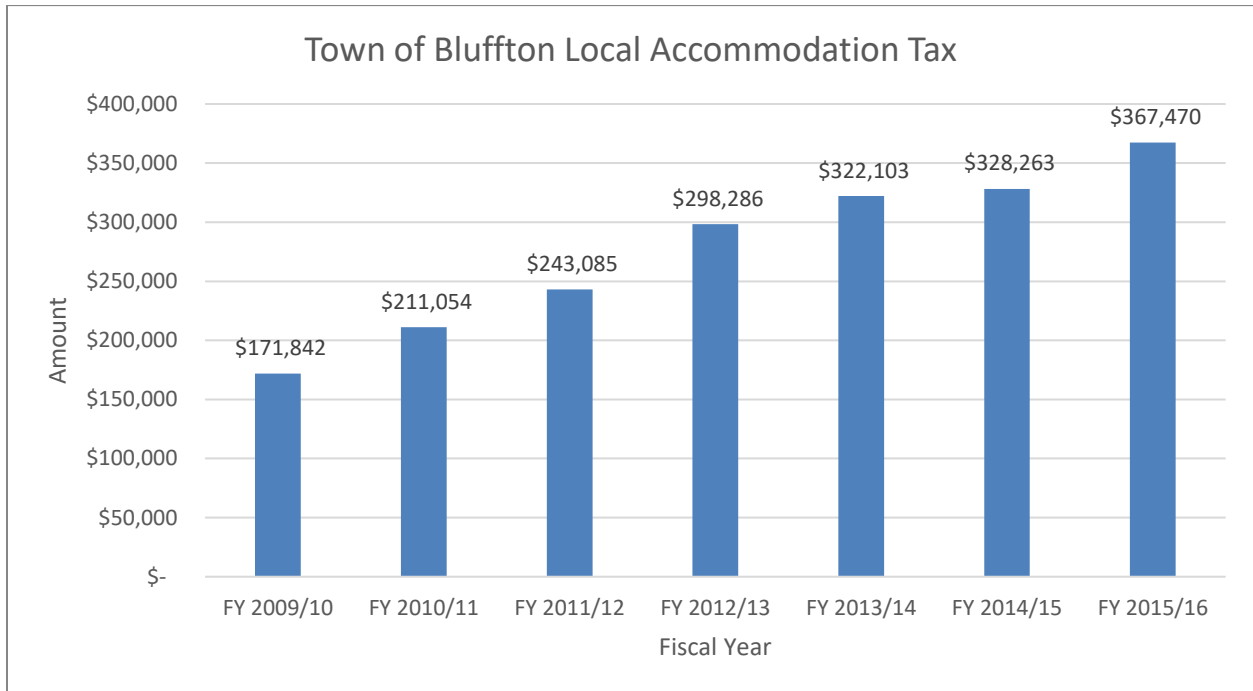
## Marketing Committee Goals

The Bluffton Marketing Committee became an official standing committee within the chamber in 2008 with two appointed co-chairs. The committee meets quarterly and reviews website performance, special projects and opportunities as put forward by the Visitor & Convention Bureau.

The group is committed to the following goals:

- Support the destination's brand position throughout all marketing programs.
- Increase overnight visitation in Southern Beaufort County.
- Increase visitor's expenditures at Beaufort County attractions, retail and dining facilities, particularly in Bluffton. Thus, increase Bluffton and Beaufort County's attraction, hospitality, and sales taxes collected.
- Goal for 2017-2018 is 2% overall visitor spending increase and visitor tax base.





# Marketing Strategies

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Marketing tactics and strategies will focus on the following markets:

1. Affluent consumers visiting Old Town Bluffton for cultural, historic tours, shopping and culinary activities as day visitors.
2. Overnight stays in Bluffton for new visitors as well as repeat visitors to the region.
3. 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 VCB 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 – particularly with limited funding available for the paid media space. 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.

Over the past twelve years of managing the Bluffton Marketing Committee and destination marketing program for the Town of Bluffton, the VCB has expanded our branding efforts through buys in regional and national publications and digital platforms in key drive and drive markets targeting travel and cultural enthusiasts with a household income of \$150,000+.

## Marketing Strategies & Programs (1-8)

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### 1. Bluffton Quarterly E-newsletter & Insider Program:

**Bluffton Quarterly E-newsletter:** Each year, we set a robust content calendar of monthly (and sometimes bi-monthly) e-newsletters around themes to highlight key seasonal events and promotion of our membership products/services. We also will continue to send emails/e-promos that cross market the whole destination to the entire *Insider* database.

Some of the themes include:

- Family Vacations
- Outdoor Adventures
- Culinary Travel and Events
- Cultural & Heritage Travel
- Marquee Events & Festival

**Budget:**

Bluffton DMO:	\$1,525
Beaufort County DMO:	<u>\$3,475</u>
<b>Total Budget:</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>

#### **Bluffton Insider Program**

Grow the specific email marketing distribution list. Though our digital promotion of the destination, visitors will sign up to become a Bluffton Insider and receive our bi-monthly Bluffton “insider” blog posts, Bluffton quarterly e-newsletters plus an information package including a regional vacation planner.

**Budget:**

Bluffton DMO:	\$335
Beaufort County DMO:	<u>\$765</u>
<b>Total Budget:</b>	<b>\$1,100</b>



## 2. Media Partnerships

*Coastal Living* celebrates the best of Southern life sharing authentic experiences and Southern culture through core editorial pillars that include Home & Garden, Style & Beauty, Travel and Food. While the

**COASTAL  
LIVING**

*Coastal Living* audience, stretches from the rugged rocky shores of Connecticut to the white sandy beaches of California, the reader is initially drawn to the brand for its beautiful view. They linger because the content, like the always sunny, soul-soothing coast itself, it is their happy place. Their diverse brand loyalists agree: “coastal” is a state of mind. From inspiring design and decorating to gorgeous, blissful getaways to delicious, made-for-entertaining recipes, *Coastal Living* offers its audience an escape to the good life-to be enjoyed barefoot, of course. *Coastal Living* is the perfect platform for our heart of the lowcountry – Bluffton.

### A. Coastal Living

#### Coastal Living Digital Audience

##### Website

Total Unique Visitors: 728,000

Total Unique Pageviews: 5,000,000

##### Mobile

Total Unique Visitors: 486,000

Mobile Exclusive Visitors: 469,000

Unique Pageviews: 3,000,000

##### Tablet

Total Unique Visitors: 145,000

Unique Pageviews: 827,000

##### Social Media

Total Audience: 2,217,833

Facebook, 1,791,578

Twitter, 62,276

Instagram, 262,000

Pinterest, 101,979

##### Digital User Profile

85% Female/ 15% Male

##### Median HHI

\$88,581

##### Median Age

49



## October, *Coastal Living's* Annual Food Issue

Seafood is a growing component of the American diet. It's healthy, easy to prepare, and embodies the "locally sourced" culinary trend in an organic way. Furthermore, gathering around a large table with family and friends is an integral component of life at the coast. *Coastal Living* celebrates National Seafood Month with their second annual food issue. Highlights include: The Ultimate Sea-Foodie Road trip; the Best Coastal Restaurants; A Food Lover's Dream Escape and Foodie Faceoffs.

The Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB) will develop a multi-prong digital marketing campaign utilizing *Coastal Living's* on-line and social media assets. The partnership will highlight the Historic Arts and Seafood Festival and touch upon the unique-ness of Bluffton and its surrounding attributes.

We will look to develop a campaign showcasing the Historic Arts and Seafood Festival, driving fall travel and website visitation.

### Campaign Details:

- 100% SOV of View of the Day for one month
- High-impact homepage roadblocks
- Sponsorship of e-newsletter
- Targeted media to relevant content on desktop, tablet and mobile platforms
- Run of Site on desktop, tablet and mobile platforms
- Pre-Roll on CoastalLiving.com and CoastalLiving.com video partner networks

To enhance our partnership with *Coastal Living* the VCB will include paid social media and digital advertising to compliment and support the campaign.

### **Budget:**

Bluffton DMO:	\$15,250
Beaufort County DMO:	<u>\$35,750</u>
<b>Total Budget:</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>

## B. Matador Network

Matador Network is an online community who embraces the culture of outdoors — discovering,



protecting, and celebrating heritage and adventure. The Matador Network focuses on Millennials who are obsessed with exploration, travel, inspiration, and constantly seeking unique experiences with food, culture, and the arts—both while at home and on the through travel.

Launched in 2006 as a social network for travelers, Matador Network is a media company and content creation studio. Matador has been ranked by Skift\*, as one of the top 25 consumer travel media sites in the world. Matador Network is an industry leader at destination marketing and custom content. The Matador staff is regularly invited to speak at travel industry conferences, such as ITB, WTM and TBEX. Matador's clients include major retail brands as well as numerous destination marketing organizations (DMOs).

\*Skift is the largest industry intelligence platform providing media, insights and marketing to key sectors of travel

### Core Audience Demographics

The Matador Audience is obsessed with exploration, travel inspiration and constantly seeking unique experiences with food, nightlife, culture and the arts. There consumer, our consumer, is also an early adopter of new technology and a heavy user of social media before – during – after their vacations and trips.

Female: 54%

Audience Average Age: 25-54 years' old

House Hold Income: \$60K - \$120K

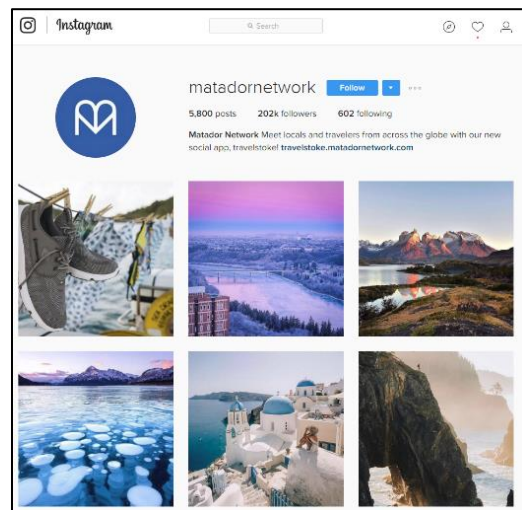
Campaign Details:

1, Supervid package

- 3 destination videos
- 30-45 seconds each

2, Social Pro (destination branded article)

- Minimum of 10,000 pageviews



- Average time spent on article: 6 minutes

#### 4, Instagram Tagged Posts

- 201K followers
- Captured imagery from Matador Influencers/ Staff

A guaranteed component of Matador partnership includes:

- All displays will be geo-targeted
- All content will live online forever
- Provide comprehensive and granular reporting on all content

**Budget:**

Bluffton DMO:	\$9,150
Beaufort County DMO:	<u>\$20,850</u>
<b>Total Budget:</b>	<b>\$30,000</b>

### 3. Destination Photo & Video Shoot

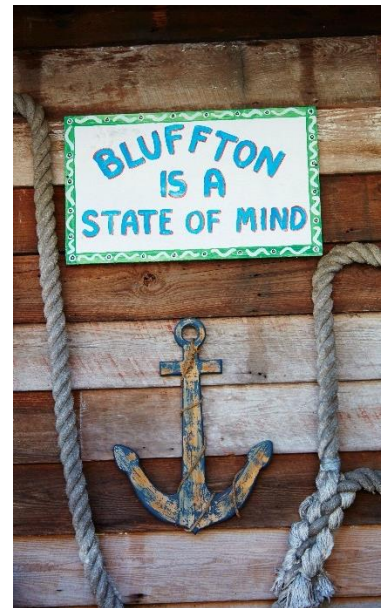
There is a need for the most current destination imagery and video content that showcases Historic Old Town Bluffton, Calhoun Street Promenade, the natural beauty of the May River, recent expansions at Montage Palmetto Bluff and more. These assets that visually showcase the destination are at the core of our marketing programs and tactics.

Some of the considerations in planning the photo shoot include:

- Capture Bluffton's new products and amenities, cultural district and new neighborhoods
- Include ethnic and age diversity
- Feature experienced, professional and natural looking models that portray our target demographics, and supplement with locals
- Shoot in a high-level DPI format to create high quality images that will translate well into a variety of formats
- 360° Video and drone footage

**Budget:**

Bluffton DMO:	\$3,050
Beaufort County DMO:	\$6,950
Beaufort County, Daufuskie Island:	<u>\$3,000</u>
<b>Total Budget:</b>	<b>\$13,000</b>



## 4. Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Social Media & Content Hub

### Organic Search Engine Marketing (SEO)

The VCB plans to continue the program for expanding and broadening our organic keyword search engine rankings on Google, Yahoo, YouTube and Bing for a targeted list of key search terms that best correlate with Bluffton's target visitor and visitor experiences. The VCB will also be implementing a custom outreach program to increase the overall authority for the web platform, which will influence search rankings.

#### **Budget:**

Bluffton DMO:	\$2,257
Beaufort County DMO:	<u>\$5,143</u>
<b>Total Budget:</b>	<b>\$7,400</b>

### Social Content Strategy

Visit Hilton Head has a strong presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest. We are continuing to grow our audiences on these channels by posting interesting and appealing content in an authentic voice. Our social media has a unique, friendly persona and serves as a persuasive advocate for the destination.

Our published content receives excellent organic reach and engagement, and sends users to the Bluffton website to learn more. The monthly social budget will aid in furthering our reach, ultimately garnering the brand further exposure and an increase in our follower base.

Content about Bluffton, SC, should focus on its charm as a quintessential Southern town, its convenient location to both Charleston and Savannah, its position as a place for great local cuisine, its appeal as a romantic wedding destination and for a thriving arts and culture community. These content topics have been determined through routine tracking of the most successful content and will continue to be adjusted as we identify new trends in data.

Our overall goal for this strategy is to increase referral traffic from social media to the website, and to drive social media engagement for Bluffton.



**Budget:**

Bluffton DMO:	\$1,525
Beaufort County DMO:	<u>\$3,475</u>
<b>Total Budget:</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>

**Content Hub: Lowcountry Life**

The Lowcountry Life content hub provides the opportunity to publish original content specific to Bluffton, as well as to include mentions of Bluffton in blog posts about food, family travel, and other relevant categories. The Bluffton blog will feature authentic storytelling created by local writers, while the Lowcountry Life blog overall will feature well-written evergreen content that is optimized for SEO. This content will further engage users and help drive them deeper into the website.

The main photo gallery of user-generated content will regularly feature photos and videos taken in Bluffton, which will be paired with calls to action driving users to the Bluffton website. Additionally, the Bluffton website will feature a smaller user-generated content gallery of strictly Bluffton-area photos and videos.

**Audience (Our Fans and Followers)**

Our primary outreach target for social media is “Affluent Leisure Travelers”. Our Facebook demographics are as follows:

- Household income \$150,000+ who take at least one leisure trip requiring overnight accommodations in the last 12 months
- 92% are married
- 51% are female, 49% are male
- 15% between ages 25-34
- 25% between ages 35-44
- 26% between ages 45-54
- 18% between ages 55-64
- 12% over 65
- 52% use mobile, 2% use desktop, 46% use both

Other possible considerations:

- Targeting local residents who are passionate promoters of the destination
- Engaging with sentimental visitors who make a tradition of vacationing in the Lowcountry every year

#### Primary Campaigns

- Invite relevant bloggers and social media influencers to visit Bluffton and attend events
- Host a blogger in Bluffton and have him or her host a social media takeover of the @visithiltonhead Instagram channel
- Engage with Bluffton visitors and residents who share photos and videos of Bluffton on social media and cultivate relationships
- Create engaging Instagram ad campaigns centered around the unique appeal of Bluffton as a travel destination

#### **Budget:**

Bluffton DMO:	\$2,287
Beaufort County DMO:	\$5,213
Beaufort County, Daufuskie Island:	<u>\$2,500</u>
<b>Total Budget:</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>

## 5. Search Engine Marketing (SEM) PPC Campaign

**Paid Search** is the most **fundamental digital channel** and provides a foundation for nearly all digital marketing initiatives. Our deep expertise and experience would be directly applied to drive outstanding results for the destination.

The primary objective of the search strategy is to drive link-outs to partners by utilizing advances in Search Marketing. This is a flexible working media plan to be optimized over time based on performance, business needs, and seasonality.

### **Strategy**

Leverage lower funnel, direct response tactics such as Branded Search and Remarketing to reach valued consumers and ultimately increase sales of local Bluffton businesses.

### **Location**

- Drive and Fly Markets
- Domestic Travelers

### **Direct Response**

Strategies will also be in place to capture searchers in the lower funnel who are closer to converting. Tactics used here will center around Branded Search and Display Remarketing.

### **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

KPIs for direct response strategies will be:

- Conversions
- Conversion Rate
- Assisted Conversions

### **Search, Brand**

- Bluffton + Things to Do
- Things to Do, Restaurants, Tours, Shopping, Events, Farmers Market, Biking, Arts and Culture, Spas, Health and Wellness, Catering
- Bluffton Brand
- Getting Here, Hotels/Resorts, Bluffton SC, Daufuskie

### Remarketing Lists for Search Ads

Tailor bids to those who have previously visited the site or are in CRM audiences and are actively searching for relevant keywords on Google:

- Increase bids based on visit: 3 days > 5 days > 14 days > 30 days
- Increase bids to CRM audiences

### Display Remarketing

- All visitors who have been to the site in the last 90 days
- Visitors of specific pages on the site

#### **Budget:**

Bluffton DMO:	\$11,819
Beaufort County DMO:	\$26,932
Beaufort County, Daufuskie Island:	<u>\$ 7,500</u>
<b>Total Budget:</b>	<b>\$46,251</b>

## 6. Group Sales & Trade Shows

Bluffton continues to grow and position itself as a group destination more so now than any point in the last decade. The variety and quality of experiences for group visitors has never been more diverse, offering a robust arts and cultural scene, and growing culinary experiences. The VCB will continue to promote Bluffton while attending numerous travel trade shows throughout the country.

### Focused Service Hotel Market Initiatives

#### **Military**

With Parris Island in our own backyard, it is important that we reach out and strengthen our destination's relationship with the many families who come to attend graduations, as well as those soldiers on active leave who are required to take some R&R once they return home. We intend to do this by participating in the annual Travel EXPO that Parris Island hosts every March. The VCB will be participating in this annual travel show, and select service partners will be able to partner and represent Southern Beaufort County.

#### **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 Hilton Head Island-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 ABA
- Leverage group tour by hosting a FAM trip to potential group planners/operators
- Educate our partners on what it means to be a group friendly community
- Offer tiered pricing/packages attractions with accommodations
- Expand promotion of group experiences on our website and special group ticket pricing

#### **The American Bus Association (ABA)**

Every January, welcomes the travel and tourism community to the first conference of the year, the industry's premier business event – Marketplace. More than 3,500 tour operators, suppliers and exhibitors come together to kick off a new year of business opportunity and growth. Marketplace is an

active, vibrant forum of buyers and sellers where business gets done. With more than 140,000 pre-scheduled appointments and 900 pre-qualified operators, 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. Couple this with leading education seminars and the industry's largest exhibit hall and marketplace is unmatched as the best industry event each year.

In January 2018, The Visitor & Convention Bureau staff will attend the ABA Marketplace, and take advantage of up to 60 pre-scheduled appointments with pre-qualified operators to promoting the South Carolina Lowcountry Region.

## Full Service Resort/Hotels Initiatives

### **Connect Marketplace**

Connect Marketplace, an annual education conference and appointment-only trade show, is a highly respected event that brings together the most active planners, suppliers and experts in corporate, association and specialty association meeting markets for three days of general sessions, roundtables, workshops, pre-set appointments and networking. The appointment-only trade show is the business marketplace, where RFPs are placed, dates are secured and relationships are developed for future business. The focus on education at Connect Marketplace allows you to brush up on your skills, learn about trending topics, get great business advice from speakers, and enjoy networking with other industry professionals.

### **IMEX America**

Meet over 3,000 corporate, incentive, association and third party planners experiencing IMEX America's refreshing new model for doing business.

### *The Size and Scale of the Hosted Buyer Program*

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



### *Online Scheduling System*

This convenient system lets you reach out before the show and get business lined up with people you want to see at IMEX America. With tens of thousands of appointments made in advance, everyone comes to the show focused on serious business.

### *The Number and Depth of Industry Partnerships*

Industry associations have shown unprecedented confidence in IMEX America. Examples include a Strategic Partnership with MPI, (our Premier Education Provider) endorsement by DMAI, Site and ICCA, an Industry Partnership with PCMA and close ties with every major association including ASAE and the U.S. Travel Association.

### *The Scale and Quality of Education Programs*

IMEX America hosts an unprecedented number of industry educational events. Participants can choose from hundreds of lively learning sessions and seminars throughout the trade show, all at no cost.

### *Dedicated Attention to Association and Corporate Buyers*

Association Focus, a “conference within a conference” on Smart Monday, is dedicated to educating association executives and is followed by an Association Evening, a great event for socializing and networking.

### **ConferenceDirect Annual Partners Meeting**

Being a preferred partner, it includes participation at their most important Associate Networking educational event. Involves a reverse tradeshow format where the attendee gets quality time with each ConferenceDirect Associate and attendance to training sessions on sales development.

### **HelmsBriscoe Annual Partners Meeting**

HelmsBriscoe allows member participation at their most important Associate Networking educational event. Designed in a reverse tradeshow format where the attendee get quality time with each HelmsBriscoe Associate and attendance to training sessions on sales development.

### **Association Executives of North Carolina (AENC)**

The AENC Trade Show is your source for information and contacts on meeting venues, programs products and services. Spend time with over 200 exhibitors and learn how they can help you bring more value and be more efficient. Meet with others from a wide variety of organizations and share ideas as you go through the show.

### **South Carolina Society of Association Executives (SCSAE)**

SCSAE's Trade Show is your 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 '17 Tradeshow**

TEAMS: TRAVEL, EVENTS AND MANAGEMENT IN SPORTS, is the world's leading conference and expo for the sports-event industry. Presented by SportsTravel magazine, TEAMS '17 will be held October 30–November 2, 2017, in Orlando, Florida. Launched in 1998, TEAMS attracts more than one thousand 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. Now in its 18th year, TEAMS has helped define the sports-event and appointment-based trade show industries.

## Hilton Head Island – Bluffton Visitor & Convention Bureau's 2017-2018 Trade Shows

Tradeshow	Market	Dates	Location	Investment
Connect Marketplace	Corp/Assn	Aug./2017	New Orleans, LA	11,500
IMEX America	Corporate	Oct./2017	Las Vegas, NV	34,000
Sports Travel's TEAMS Expo	Sports	Oct./2017	Orlando, FL	3,500
AENC	State Assn	Dec./2017	Raleigh, NC	1,750
SCSAE	State Assn	Jan./2018	Columbia, SC	1,500
American Bus Assn.	Group Tour	Jan./ 2018	Charlotte, NC	4,000
Parris Island Expo	Military	March/2018	Parris Island, SC	300
ConferenceDirect APM	Third Party	April/2018	TBD	4,500
HelmsBriscoe APM	Third Party	May/2018	TBD	4,500
TOTAL:				\$65,550

### Group Sales & Marketing Budget Summary Recap:

Total Travel Trade Shows:	\$65,550
Beaufort County/Bluffton Budget (Military/Group Tour)	\$4,300
▪ Bluffton DMO:	\$300
▪ Beaufort County DMO:	<u>\$4,000</u>
Total DMO Budget:	\$ 4,300

\*Remainder paid by Town of HHI DMO

## 7. Collateral and Fulfillment

### 2018 Vacation Planner

The Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Visitor & Convention Bureau's Vacation Planner is a comprehensive guide to what to see and do, it is our primary print fulfillment piece. We receive many online, as well as media and phone inquiries, and distribute the planner to state and local welcome centers, along with trade shows and promotional events with media.

In today's more visual world, telling a story through pictures and graphics appeals more to our target demographic. To further entice these target markets, we have redesigned the Vacation Planner so visitors can better visualize their vacations and discover what to do on Hilton Head Island, Bluffton, and Daufuskie Island. Our area's natural beauty is what sets Hilton Head Island, Bluffton and Daufuskie Island apart from other resort communities. By tapping into our portfolio of stunning photography and combining it with updated content, we have transformed the Vacation Planner into a "look book" destination discovery piece so visitors can imagine themselves experiencing all things Lowcountry.

In addition to working with a digital and print publisher, our in-house marketing staff provides the business directory, local photography and editorial content management, editorial review and proofreading for this asset.

Quantity: 125,000 printed

Postage, Shipping and Mail Operations for Bluffton fulfillment for 12 months.

**Budget:**

Bluffton DMO:	\$7,957
Beaufort County DMO:	<u>\$18,132</u>
<b>Total Budget:</b>	<b>\$26,089</b>

## 8. Budgeted research programs for FY 2017-2018

Research provides powerful information to evolve and perfect the VCB'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.
- V-Trip Monthly Home & Villa lodging reports on occupancy, average room rates, RevPAR and six month forward booking pace reports. Two-source V-Trip report crunches back end Smith Travel hotel data with V-Trip back end home and villa data to produce a monthly destination report on total destination accommodations tax paying occupancy, average room rates and RevPAR.
- Monthly and YTD Visitor Traffic and Segmentation Reports by USCB's Dr. John Salazar, PH. D.
- Subscription to the U.S. Travel Association's (USTA) Travel Monitor Program and related reports.

### **Budget:**

Bluffton DMO:	\$ 4,727
Beaufort County DMO:	<u>\$10,773</u>
<b>Total Budget:</b>	<b>\$15,500</b>

### *2017-2018 MARKETING PLAN SOURCES*

*American Automobile Association  
American Express Travel  
MMGY Global  
NetConversion  
Regional Transactions Concepts, LLC/ Economic Modeling  
United States Travel Association (USTA)  
VERB Interactive*

## Marketing Plan Appendix

➤ 2017-2018 Budget

➤ 2016 Website & Online Marketing Performance



## Bluffton and Beaufort County FY 2017-18 Budget

	VCB TOTALS (Bluffton & BC)	Paid by Bluffton DMO	Paid by Beaufort Co DMO (Bluffton & Southern BC)	Paid by Beaufort Co DMO (Daufuskie Isl. Programs)
<b>Revenues</b>				
Town of Bluffton DMO	98,000	98,000		
Southern Beaufort County DMO	260,000		234,000	26,000
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>358,000</b>	<b>98,000</b>	<b>234,000</b>	<b>26,000</b>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Research & Planning	15,500	4,728	10,773	
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>15,500</b>	<b>4,728</b>	<b>10,773</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Social Media</b>				
Twitter/Instagram/Influencers	5,000	1,525	3,475	
Content Hub / Lowcountry Life	10,000	2,288	5,213	2,500
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>15,000</b>	<b>3,813</b>	<b>8,688</b>	<b>2,500</b>
<b>Digital Marketing</b>				
SEM Marketing	46,251	11,819	26,932	7,500
Website SEO	7,400	2,257	5,143	
Quarterly Newsletter	5,000	1,525	3,475	
Insider Program	1,100	336	765	
Website Maintenance	6,900		3,450	3,450
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>66,651</b>	<b>15,937</b>	<b>39,764</b>	<b>10,950</b>
<b>Media Partnerships</b>				
Coastal Living	50,000	15,250	34,750	0
Matador Network	30,000	9,150	20,850	0
Ad Production	5,000	1,525	3,475	
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>85,000</b>	<b>25,925</b>	<b>59,075</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Destination Assets</b>				
Photo and Video Shoots	13,000	3,050	6,950	3,000
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>13,000</b>	<b>3,050</b>	<b>6,950</b>	<b>3,000</b>
<b>Packaging Programs</b>				
	0	0	0	0
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Insiders/Collateral/Fulfillment</b>				
Bluffton Collateral (Vacation Planner)	14,000	4,270	9,730	
Bluffton Fulfillment (shipping and mail)	12,089	3,687	8,402	
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>26,089</b>	<b>7,957</b>	<b>18,132</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Group Sales &amp; Marketing</b>				
Group Tour	4,000	0	4,000	
Military	300	300	0	
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>4,300</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>4,000</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL MARKETING</b>				
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>225,540</b>	<b>61,709</b>	<b>147,381</b>	<b>16,450</b>
Destination Marketing Operations & Management	132,460	36,291	86,619	9,550
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>358,000</b>	<b>98,000</b>	<b>234,000</b>	<b>26,000</b>
<b>TOTAL REVENUE MINUS EXPENSES</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>