



2015-2016
Bluffton Marketing Plan

Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce and
Visitor & Convention Bureau

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.

Bluffton's 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. In February of 2014, the new brand was revealed: Bluffton Heart of the Lowcountry, reflecting the deep emotional connection shared by Bluffton residents and the burgeoning business community. Mayor Lisa Sulka states it best: "The heart indicates we are a beating pulse of the Lowcountry, not just an afterthought or a two-hour detour for tourists. As a heart, we have our own beat as well as keeping other parts of the Lowcountry alive and well."

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 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.

Bluffton's core distinctions:

- Old Town Charm
- Bluffton Attitude
 - Authentic/Realness
 - Eclectic/Expressive
 - Unique/Pride
 - Town on the Move/Progressive
- Nature
- May River
- Live Oaks
- Location

Guiding Principles

- 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

Bluffton Marketing Committee

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.

The VCB has approached long range strategic planning for Bluffton as a destination. Our steps:

Proactive engagement with local stakeholders, influential and industry thought leaders.

Expansion of the Bluffton Marketing Committee representing lodging, sports, cultural, retail, restaurants, attractions and Town of Bluffton local stakeholders.

Bluffton Marketing Plan

A. Bluffton Creative Brief Highlights

Main Idea

Bluffton is the Heart of the Lowcountry.

Brand Personality

Authentic and real, eclectic and expressive, unique and pride

Support:

- Old fashioned Southern Hospitality with a coastal flair
- Tapestry of eclectic arts, crafts and shops
- Historic sites, characters and stories
- Lowcountry cuisine-local, coastal and fresh
- Natural beauty of the May River
- Bluffton is open for Business: Economic Development

Key Attributes:

- Rich history and heritage
- Legacy of creative and cultural appreciation
- Strong arts presence
- Independent spirit
- May River
- Balance of tradition and new ideas
- Bluffton retail, business and residential centers
- Complementary contrast to resort luxury image of Hilton Head Island
- Fast growing residential community with a new brand identity

Bluffton Marketing Committee Goals and Markets

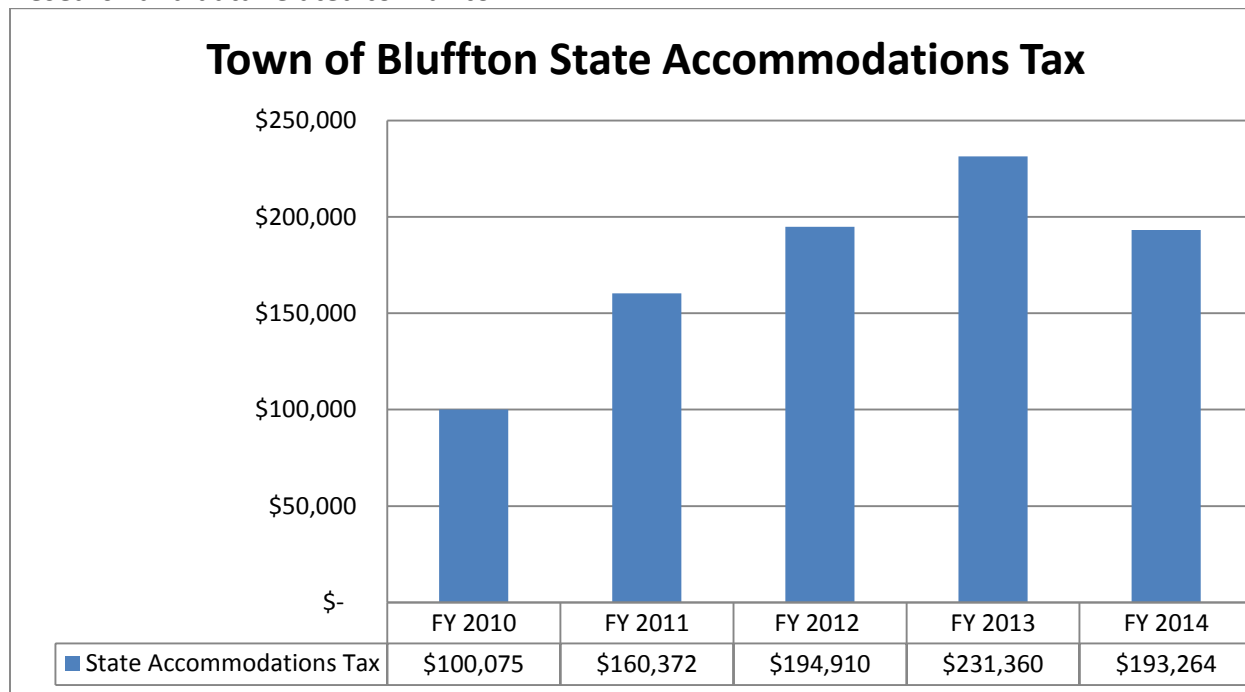
The Bluffton Marketing Committee became an official Chamber standing committee under the Bluffton-Okatie Business Council in early 2003, with two

appointed co-chairs, and became a standing committee of the Chamber's Visitor and Convention Bureau in 2008.

The group is committed to the following goals:

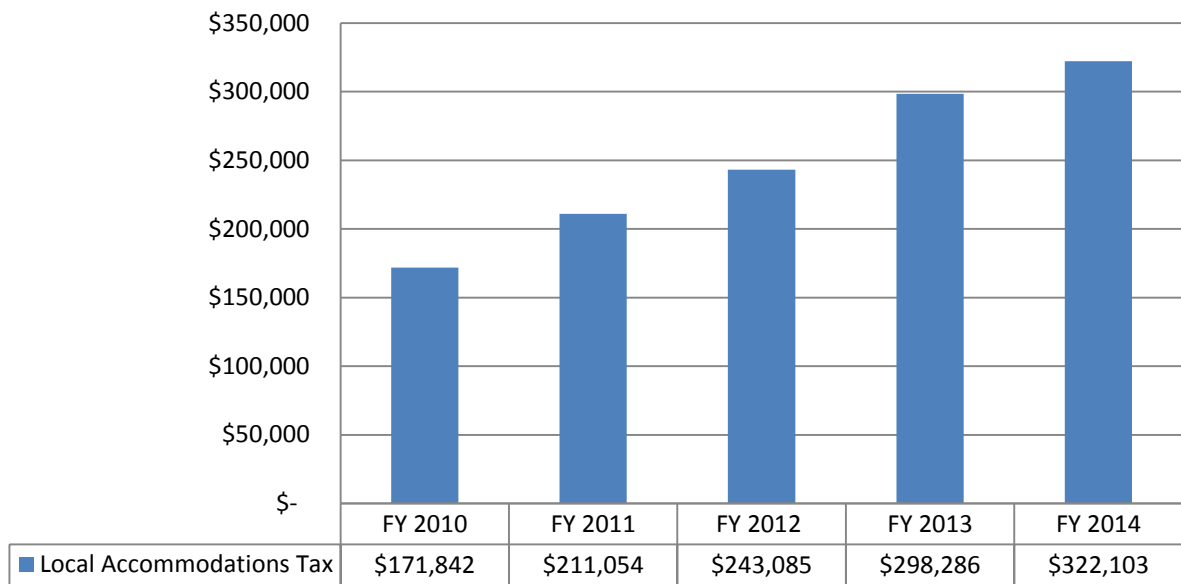
1. Support the destination's brand position throughout all marketing programs.
2. Increase overnight visitation in Southern Beaufort County, particularly Bluffton and Daufuskie Island.
3. Increase visitor's expenditures at Beaufort County attractions, retail and dining facilities, particularly in Bluffton. Thus, increase Bluffton and Beaufort County's attraction, hospitality, and sales taxes collected.
4. Goal for 2015-2016 is 2% overall visitor spending increase and visitor tax base.

Research and data related to Bluffton



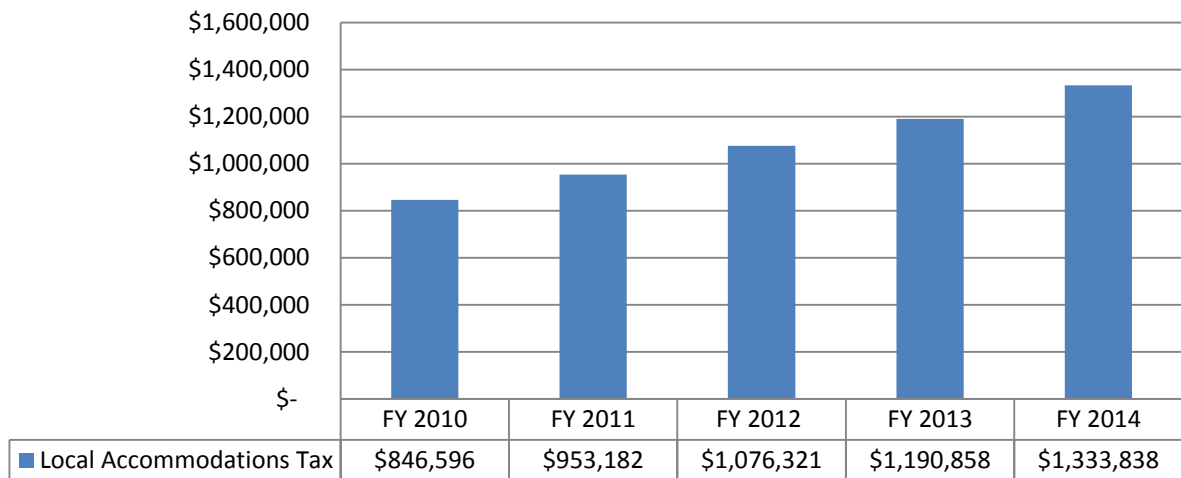
Source: Town of Bluffton Finance Department, Special Revenues

Town of Bluffton Local Accommodations Tax



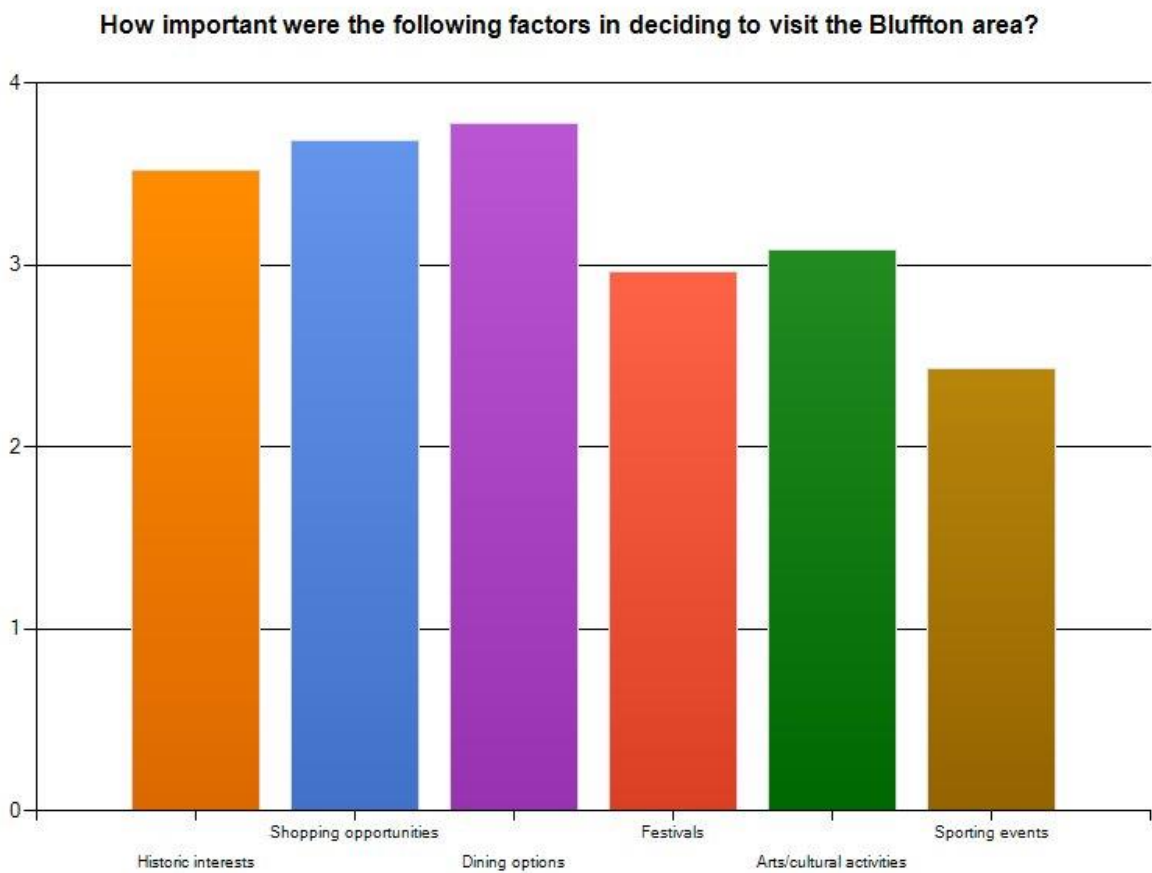
Source: Town of Bluffton Finance Department, Special Revenues

Town of Bluffton Local Hospitality Tax



Source: Town of Bluffton Finance Department, Special Revenues

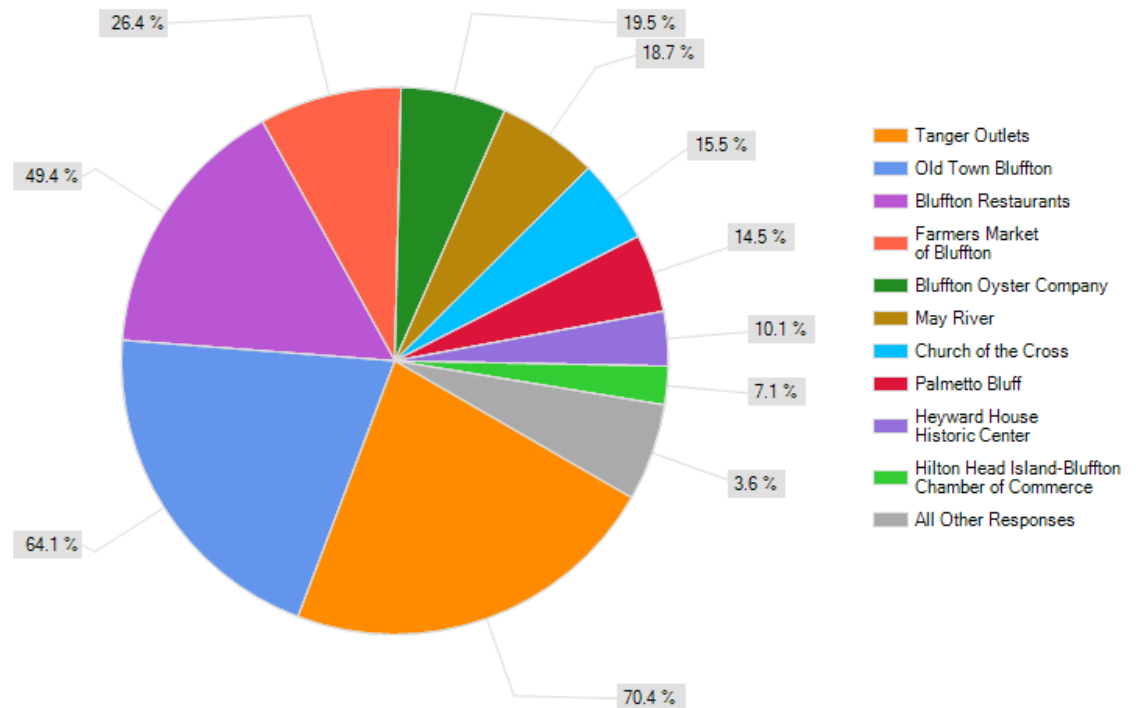
2013-2014 Bluffton Visitor Profile Study



Source: 2013-2014 Bluffton Visitor Profile Study

2013-2014 Bluffton Visitor Profile Study

Which specific areas of Bluffton did you visit?



Source: 2013-2014 Bluffton Visitor Profile Study

B. Marketing Tactics

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, capable and 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 paid space media. 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 (12) 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 markets targeting travel and cultural enthusiasts with a household income of \$100,000.

In 2015-2016 we plan to continue the Bluffton, Heart of the Lowcountry branding campaign with a core focus on digital marketing complimented by strategic print and broadcast media placement.

Leisure Brand Marketing

AD CREATIVE & PRODUCTION COST: Budget \$5,000

We plan to use a local graphic designer/agency to produce any necessary print and digital advertising components.

1. Bluffton-specific e-newsletter on a quarterly basis: Budget \$10,000

- September 2015 issue: 11th Annual Bluffton Arts and Seafood Festival to be sent to full Insider database (Bluffton and Hilton Head Island)

Below newsletters will be sent to Bluffton Insider databases

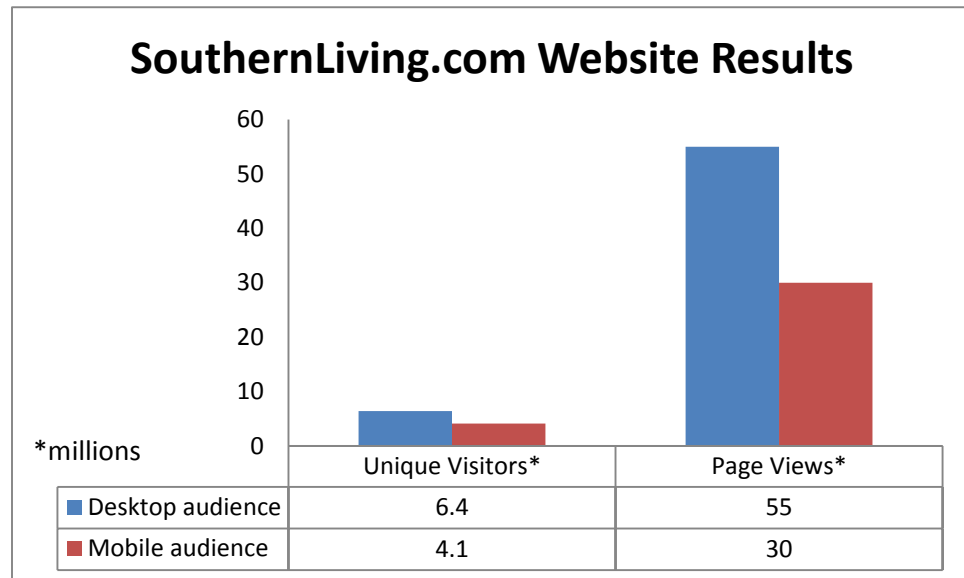
- November 2015 issue: Bluffton Christmas Parade Weekend events
- January 2016 issue: Winter Art Walk
- March 2016 issue: 38th Annual Bluffton Village Festival
- May 2016 issue: May River/On the water

2. Southern Living \$35,000

Digital Travel Main Page Sponsorship

Sponsored Bluffton ad/content will have 100% exposure on SouthernLiving.com's Travel main page for one month. The preferred month is August with a focus on the 11th Annual Historic Bluffton Arts and Seafood Festival. This will drive visitors to VisitBluffton.org. The Festival will be the featured event on the home page.

SouthernLiving.com demonstrates strength in numbers among digital and social media



3. Bluffton Destination Photo Shoot Budget: \$10,000

In the Spring of 2012 a photo shoot in Bluffton was conducted for the purpose of providing imagery for the Bluffton Billboard Campaign at the following locations:

- Bluffton Farmers Market
- Calhoun Street
- On the May River
- May River pier

These images were also used for the refresh of VisitBluffton.org and other promotional marketing programs.

There is a need for new images that would highlight Old Town Bluffton, the Calhoun Street Promenade, the May River and Buckwalter Place.

Visuals are at the core of our work across all marketing and sales platforms. Some of the considerations in planning the photo shoot include:

- Show off Bluffton's products and amenities
- 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, including large format displays
- In addition to shooting with models, include a day shooting scenic photography
- Best, clearest blue sky weather months to shoot include: September, October, April and May
- As possible, negotiate buy out rights for the Chamber/VCB

4. Organic Search Engine Marketing (SEO): Budget \$7,400

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.

5. Bluffton Blog: Budget \$5,500

Sharing experience via Social Media

At the core of all social media channels is the Bluffton Blog which provides original content created by local writers on assignment for the VCB. These content creators will feature festivals, events, dining, shopping, outdoor and adventures for families. With this authentic storytelling we plan to see a large increase in interactive online engagement with Bluffton aficionados.

Embracing the NextGen Communication & Digital Channels for Bluffton

Social Content Strategy

Purpose

A social content strategy, similar to writing an outline for a novel or a movie, allows the writer to know what to write next and to make sure it aligns with the overall story. With a social content strategy, a communicator knows what to post next because he or she knows how the brand would behave, what it is passionate about, and what it seeks to accomplish. This social content strategy is meant to arm the brand, and the people who communicate about it online, with the knowledge, tools, and passion necessary to engage audiences and get them to convert on-site.

Our overall goal for this strategy is to increase referral traffic from social media to the website. We have identified the three key elements to increasing referrals, based on our extensive experience and first-hand research:

1. Including links in every post
2. Using original, informal photography in most posts, as well as custom graphics
3. Combining an emotional connection with a tangible incentive

Objective

We plan to generate conversions on VisitBluffton.org by sending qualified traffic and establishing an ongoing relationship with potential customers through social media content.

Process

The process for developing and maintaining a social content strategy consists of:

- Developing an overall story to which all content ties
- Determining audiences and the online channels they use, and in what ways
- Creating a set of content units or categories that are consistent and measurable
- Developing a channel strategy for each major platform on which we will be posting content
- Sparking interest in existing content through online ads, contests, offers, etc.
- Measuring the relative success of each content unit and channel versus one another, and the absolute success of each based on number of qualified conversions versus level of investment
- On-going content creation and making adjustments based on measurement

Telling Our Story

The overall story of a social campaign ties an emotional connection to a tangible incentive. This is so that we can effectively write consistent, regular content that will interest our target.

Audience (Our Fans and Followers)

Our primary outreach target for social media is “Affluent Leisure Travelers”:

- Household income \$150,000+ who take at least one leisure trip requiring overnight accommodations in the last 12 months
- 92% are married
- 51% are Boomers (born 1946-64)
- 29% are GenXers (born 1965-78)
- 11% are Matures (born before 1946)
- 9% are Echo-Boomers (born 1979-97)
- Evenly split, female (51%) to male (49%)

Additionally, we would target:

- Younger travelers (GenX and Echo-Boomers) who spend a higher portion of their discretionary income on travel
- Mature travelers who spend a higher portion of their discretionary income on travel, which will grow the multi-gen market as Boomers retire
- NextGen visitors
- Bluffton and area locals who are vocal online supporters.
- Passionate visitors who make a tradition of vacationing in the Lowcountry every year.

Gaining Momentum

Our strategy for accomplishing these objectives will lead us to:

- Nurture existing profiles and grow the number of engaged followers and fans
- Seek out potential customers who have not considered Bluffton yet or who are not aware of the brand
- Engage users and further develop as a trusted source of information about boating and outdoor activities, family-friendly activities, dining, seasonal events and romantic getaways
- Engage that potential customer by regularly communicating in a meaningful, heartfelt, warm, and genuine way

Primary Outreach

- Target travel, lifestyle and food blogs in the Northeast and Southern United States
- Engage with bloggers and influencers on Twitter and Instagram
- Target bloggers and influencers to attend Bluffton events
- Engage online with influencers visiting Bluffton during press trips, and continue the relationships afterward

Twitter

- Custom photos
- Interesting links to other sites
- News and events
- Monitor and interact with community
- Drive qualified traffic with compelling links
- RT visitors/potential visitors' tweets, photos, questions, etc.
- Participate in relevant Twitter chats

Facebook

- Compelling photos
- User-submitted content
- Branded content, using testimonials and inspirational quotes
- Offers, contests/super shareable content
- Interact with people who ask questions, or post comments

Pinterest

- Continue to nurture existing account
- Regularly add photos and create new Pinboards for the different core areas of Bluffton

Instagram

- Post stunning photos of Bluffton, using relevant hashtags to expand reach
- Focus on sharing great user-generated content
- Search relevant hashtags to find user-generated content to share across all channels

Metrics: How success will be measured?

As always, it's critical that all online marketing that is deployed to drive exposure for Bluffton is based on driving business results for its partners, and exposure for the destination. It's more than just online marketing – it's about results and understanding what is working and what is not. These social content initiatives will be viewed both on a standalone basis, and holistically as each strategy will ripple up into the overall digital marketing plan.

We will watch how one initiative helps to push the needle forward for the website as a whole. Similar to other initiatives, primary website objectives that will be tied to each campaign are focused on conversion metrics, which are reported on each month following the model below:

- Continuously improving campaign performance over time
- Individual posts will be tracked based on channel engagement (Likes, RTs, etc.), traffic driven to the site, and conversions from that traffic. We will look for correlations between these metrics to determine the best way to adjust content and increase conversions.
- Content units or categories will be similarly measured. Determining the aggregate success of a category will help us refine our focus.
- Each month, based on the previous month's data, we will revisit and refine the proposed content.
- We will measure levels of conversations over time, examine spikes and what caused them, and determine how conversation topics and volume relate to conversions on-site.

6. **Search Engine Marketing (SEM) PPC Campaign: Budget \$38,751**

SEM/PPC marketing is a key driver of VisitBluffton.org website visitation and measurable conversions. 2015-2016 campaigns will include the following:

- Local Search
- US Search
- Contextual
- Remarketing
- Interest categories

We will expand the PPC effort to build on the most efficient and effective channels plus banner ad campaigns. We will also continue our mobile and video campaigns.

- Additional ad groups and keywords- Consumers continue to search in new ways resulting in the need to continually expand and optimize.
- This SEM program will drive traffic to specific pages on **VisitBluffton.org** based on the messaging in the PPC ads. We will also set up tracking for the PPC ads to measure success for these ads.

Bluffton Contextual Ad Example

BUY
RENT
MORTGAGE
Find REALTORS®
LOCAL
NEWS & ADVICE
Log In

\$ Any Price ▾
Any ▾
Any ▾
More filters
★ Follow Search

981 properties found Bluffton, SC Real Estate and Homes for Sale

viewing: home > homes for sale > south carolina > bluffton, sc

Map View

Ad Sponsored Homes See More...

\$599,000
Bluffton, SC
3 Bd | 3 Ba

Just Listed
\$209,900
Bluffton, SC
3 Bd | 3 Ba

Sort: New Listings ▾

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | ... | 99 | Next >

Homes for Sale Search Results - Sorted by New Listings

New Listing

181 Heritage Pkwy, Bluffton, SC 29910
\$209,900
3 Bd | 2 Full, 1 Half Ba | Single Family Home
1,971 Sq Ft | 8,276 Sq Ft Lot
Brokered by: D R Horton Inc.

5 Photos

Save Listing

Bluffton SC Festivals

Visit Bluffton and Experience the Festivals & Events! Book Today.

>

How Much Are Houses Worth in Bluffton, SC?

Search Ad Example

Web
Maps
News
Images
Shopping
More ▾
Search tools

About 1,110,000 results (0.44 seconds)

Bluffton Hotels & Resorts - Hotels & Resorts for every budget

Ad www.hiltonheadisland.org/Bluffton

Free vacation planner available.

Hilton Head Island has 779 followers on Google+

[Plan Your Vacation - Hotels & Lodging - Boating & Cruises - Shopping & Antiques](#)

The Inn at Palmetto Bluff: A Montage Resort

www.palmettobluff.com/stay.aspx Palmetto Bluff Online ▾

The Inn at Palmetto Bluff, a Montage Resort, features a charming collection of cottages, PALMETTO BLUFF; 19 Village Park Square Bluffton, SC 29910 ...

4.2 ★★★★★ 5 Google reviews · [Write a review](#) · \$405 ▾

1 Village Park Square, Bluffton, SC 29910
(843) 706-6500

Inn at Palmetto Bluff, A Montage Resort (Bluffton, SC ...

www.tripadvisor.com > ... > Bluffton > Bluffton Hotels ▾ TripAdvisor LLC ▾

★★★★★ Rating: 5 - 376 reviews - Price range: \$\$\$\$

Inn at Palmetto Bluff, A Montage Resort, Bluffton: See 376 traveler reviews, 171 candid photos, and great deals for Inn at Palmetto Bluff, A Montage Resort, ...

The Inn at Palmetto Bluff

More about The Inn at Palmetto Bluff

Are you the business owner?

Ads

Bluffton Resorts

www.tripadvisor.com/ ▾

4.6 ★★★★★ rating for tripadvisor.com

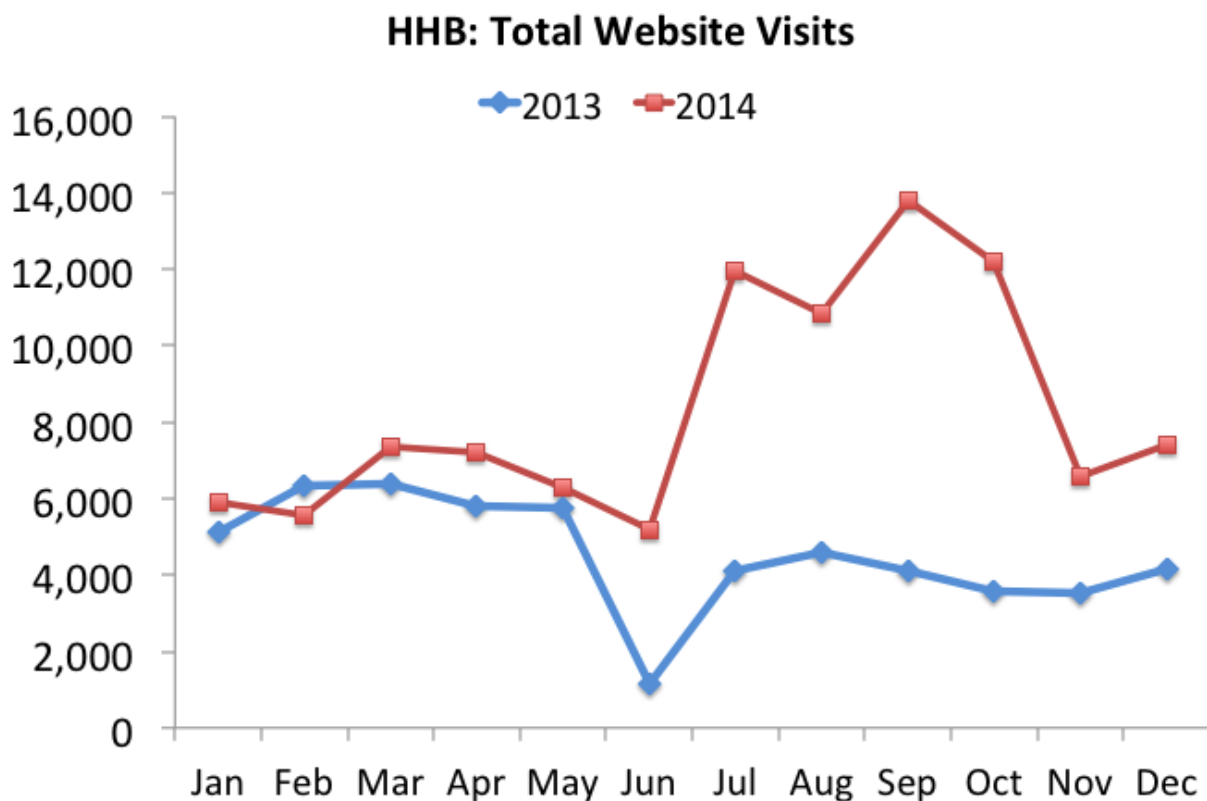
Visiting Bluffton?

Find Deals & Read Hotel Reviews!

Included in our fee by the digital agency are monthly reports on the measurable metrics of the SEM program. We will measure cost per click, resulting time/pages viewed on our website, conversion to the VCB visitor database, fulfillment ordered, and where appropriate, conversion to partner websites.

Total Website Visitation – VisitBluffton.org

- December YTD : 100,238 Website Visits up +84% vs. PY



7. South Carolina Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) 2015-2016 co-op marketing plan: Budget \$7,125

Television budget: \$5,925

:30 second TV spots to air in early fall- September-October 2015 in multiple markets to include Augusta, Charleston, Columbia, Florence-Myrtle Beach, Greensboro-High Point-Winston-Salem, Greenville-Spartanburg-Andersonville-Asheville, Raleigh-Durham, Savannah, and Wilmington. We will receive a total of approximately 324 spots resulting

in approximately 1,015,102 impressions. We will use the revised :30 second spot created by Rawle Murdy and Crescent Moon Productions. There will be a maximum reach of TV audiences by combining local broadcast stations (FOX, CBS, NBC, ABC) and cable (NCC).

Digital Budget: \$1,200

Banner ads to run in the fall of 2015 and spring of 2016 with the goal of driving traffic to VisitBluffton.org

8. Military Budget \$700.00 **portion also budgeted from Beaufort County/Hilton Head Island

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 that are required to take some R&R once they return home. We intend to do this by participating in the annual Travel EXPO Parris Island hosts every March. The visitor bureau will be participating in this annual travel show, and select service partners will be able to partner and represent Southern Beaufort County.

9. Group Tour Budget \$ 4,800 **portion also budgeted from Beaufort County/Hilton Head Island

Group Tour remains to be an important market to maintain current and new relationships. Hilton Head Island and Bluffton continue 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:

- Build relationships with operators through ABA.
- Leverage group tour
- Educate our partners on what it means to be a group friendly community
- Offer tiered pricing/packaging attractions with accommodations
- Expand promotion of group experiences on our website and special group ticket pricing.

The American Bus Association (ABA), held every January, ABA 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 truly a market-place – 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 really unmatched as the best industry event each year.

In January 2016, Visitor Bureau staff will attend the ABA Marketplace, and take advantage of up to 60 pre-scheduled appointments with pre-qualified operators to promote and sell Hilton Head Island and Bluffton region.

Motorcoach Association of South Carolina - MCASC is an affiliate member of the American Bus Association and the United Motorcoach Association to stay abreast of issues and concerns at the national level. In August 2015, their annual meeting and marketplace will be a joint meeting with the Virginia Motorcoach Association and the North Carolina Motorcoach Association. The VCB will attend and conduct one-on-one appointments along with network and information share with all 3 state representatives within this group tour industry.

10. Insiders Program Budget \$1,100

Bluffton Insiders Program: Grow the specific email marketing distribution list. 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 and our Bluffton walking tour map.

11. Festivals and Special Events

We will continue to work with local partners who produce area destination events to generate regional and national attention to the events and to support corresponding travel packages. 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 Parade Calhoun Street
- Shuckin & Shaggin in Old Town Bluffton
- Palmetto Bluff Music to your Mouth
- Palmetto Bluff Half Marathon

- Palmetto Bluff Summer Concert Series
- Lowcountry Home and Garden Show-Buckwalter Recreation Center
- Other opportunities that may develop in the year ahead

12. Bluffton Collateral and Fulfillment

2016 Vacation Planner Print and Online: Budget \$16,000

The VCB will complete and refresh content promoting Bluffton in our 2016 Vacation Planner, including an 8 page color section with a map of Calhoun Street and all merchants, art galleries, restaurants, and shops highlighted.

Fulfillment: Budget \$12,000

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

13. Budgeted research programs for FY 2015-2016: Budget \$10,000

- Updating and maintenance of www.ThinkBluffton.com, the Chamber's online economic metrics portal.
- Smith Travel Research weekly and monthly reports. 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.
- Subscription to the US Travel Association's Travel Monitor Program and related reports.

14. DMO Partnership Marketing Initiatives

Leveraging the VCB's Hilton Head Island and Bluffton budgets will allow us to participate in the following Bluffton specific marketing programs:

Garden & Gun Bluffton co-op program Budget: \$20,000

To build off of the success of the Hilton Head Island *Garden & Gun* promotion that ran August 2014-February 2015, *Garden & Gun*, Hilton Head Island, Bluffton and Southern Beaufort County plan to collaborate to produce a three-part advertorial series highlighting all that our area has to offer.

Garden & Gun Statistics

325,000 Circulation
Newsstand Sales: +9.4%
Adweek's 2014 Hottest Lifestyle Magazine

THE G&G READER

- 92% are 35+
- 53% Male / 47% Female
- Average HHI: \$332,000
- Average Net Worth: \$2,255,000

G&G READERS HAVE THE MEANS AND MOTIVATION TO LIVE WELL

- 26% have investible income of \$1.5 million+
- 43% own 2+ residences
- G&G subscribers take an average of 13 trips per year
- 68% plan to remodel/redecorate home or grounds
- 86% purchased 2+ vehicles

THE G&G AUDIENCE IS PASSIONATELY CONNECTED

- 90% read 4 out of 4 issues
- 80% read G&G the day they receive

*Source: Alliance for Audited Media June 2014. 2013 Subscriber Study—IPSOS Mendelsohn Custom Division, base HHI \$100,000. *Based on proprietary data.*

GARDENANDGUN.COM

- 2.6 million average page views/month (up 65%)
- 455,000+ average unique visitors/month (up 127%)
- 4.32 pages viewed per visit

SOCIAL MEDIA

- 450,000+ fans across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest

Source: Google Analytics, full year 2014. Percent increase based on 2013 vs. 2014 Social Media as of March 2015.

Bluffton: Your Next Destination

Through custom in-magazine content, *Garden & Gun* puts a new twist on our area and positions it as the premier destination to visit right now. *Garden & Gun* will secure a top-caliber photographer and stylists to produce the photography for the series, with the VCB assisting to secure talent and locations.

Note: *G&G* will photograph all advertorials in one photo shoot for time and budget efficiency.

In-Magazine Section

- August/September 2015, The Food Issue
- Two (2) advertorial pages + one (1) brand ad
- *G&G* creates a custom advertorial section dedicated to the culinary and arts scene in Bluffton.
- Will showcase the variety of unique and unforgettable dining and arts experiences in the area
- Spotlights an established or up-and-coming chef
- Three (3) to four (4) additional hot spots featuring participating partners.
- Impactful unit drives readers to VisitBluffton.org to learn more.

Total Project Costs

Bluffton Budget Contribution	\$20,000
Town of Bluffton Grant Request	\$25,224*
Bluffton Tourism Co-op	\$12,000**
Total	\$57,224

*Accommodations tax supplemental grant request will be submitted to the Town of Bluffton in June of 2015.

**A co-op informational meeting will be held in mid-April 2015 to share the benefits and costs for the program. The goal is to recruit 4 partners within the Bluffton tourism industry.

15. Signature Experiences program: Budget \$11,375

Engineering Group Experiences

Phase I— in progress

In 2014-15 the Hilton Head Island Visitor & Convention Bureau's Marketing Council, in concert with the VCB staff, began the process of creating a Signature Group Experiences program.

Experience Lab Minneapolis, MN

VCB staff attended the Experience Lab hosted by Joe Veneto with Opportunities Unlimited in Minneapolis, MN in May 2014 to evaluate how Meet Minneapolis, the Minneapolis CVB's meetings and groups sector, developed and executed their signature group experiences program. During this intensive 3 day program VCB staff engaged in Meet Minneapolis' signature group experiences first hand and learned the process Meet Minneapolis and the Minneapolis CVB staff, attractions partners and key stakeholders went through along with Opportunities Unlimited to develop these experiences that actively engage and immerse visitors by providing a deeper, richer and unforgettable destination experience.

Out of the Experience Lab came an understanding of the necessary process the Hilton Head Island VCB Marketing Council, VCB staff along with our experiential tourism partners must go through to enhance our existing signature experiences and potentially develop new experiences for the groups and meetings sector that can also easily translate to the leisure sector. **1-2 Signature Experiences will be developed for Bluffton depending on partner participation.**

Experiential Development Process

The VCB has partnered with Joe Veneto of Opportunities Unlimited to execute a three phase Experiential Development program with the following goals and objectives in mind.

- Develop Group Experiences to package and wrap unique Experiences in an engaging way to drive meeting and convention business.
- Evaluate current signature experiences to enhance and innovate. Provide actionable ideas and insights to stage and script that capture the essence of the area's culture and flavor.
- Collaborate with the VCB to integrate new experiences into the sales, marketing and booking process of customers (Meetings, Conventions, Group Tours, Reunions, Weddings and Local Market Groups).
- Assist the VCB with the Development of the Gullah Experience

Phase I – Assessment

Project Scope & Objectives: January– October 2015

- Conduct on-site assessments of designated Hilton Head Island, Bluffton and the surrounding Lowcountry attractions and venues to assess the current state of the customers' experience.
- Uncover strengths, weaknesses, gaps and opportunities for enhancing the current offerings as well as engineering new experiences.
- Collaborate to identify product gaps based on brand attributes and develop a list of new experience possibilities.

- Review brand attributes and research to align and map new Experiences to the brand.
- Identify, recommend and discuss new offerings for destination development with select partners involved in the assessment.
- Meet with select stakeholders after the assessment visits to discuss the Experiential process and potential development opportunities.
- Present a program on Engineering Experiences to designated attraction partners to introduce the Experiential Development process and gain commitment for Phase II.

Deliverables include:

- On site visits completed of key attractions and destination drivers to assess visitor experiences.
- An Assessment Report with key findings on visitors' actual experience along with ideas, recommendations and product development opportunities.
- Meetings with key stakeholders are completed, obtaining conceptual agreement and buy-in to the Experiential Development process.
- Presentation to Tourism Partners on Engineering Experiences for visitors and the Experiential Development process.

Time Frame: Two on-site assessment visits, two to three days each (varies based on number of attractions) plus a third half-day presentation for potential Experiential Partners on the process and project. Phase I Assessment completion expected Fall 2015.

HiltonHeadMeetings.org Signature Experiences content development – March 2015

1. Development of content and design of a Signature Experiences section on our official meetings and groups microsite, HiltonHeadMeetings.org is due to go live in March 2015. **1-2 experiences will be developed for Bluffton.** This section of the microsite will be updated following Phase II of the Experiential Development Process. Identified initial Signature Group Experiences include:

- Zipline Hilton Head & Aerial Adventure
- Savor the Lowcountry Culinary and Historic Tours
- Arts Center of Coastal Carolina Backstage Tours
- Coastal Discovery Eco and Historic Tours
- Gullah Heritage Trail Tours
- Heritage Library
- Outside Hilton Head
- Sea Pines Teambuilding Course
- Vagabond Cruises
- Shopping experience
- Golf Experience, HiltonHeadGolfIsland.com

- Tennis Experience, PlayHiltonHeadTennis.org
- Heyward House Historic Center and Official Welcome Center
- Port Royal Sound Foundation
- Santa Elena Foundation
- Waddell Mariculture Center

2. Support Signature Group Experiences section with SEM campaign

Phase II – Development Phase

September 2015-February 2016

Design and develop selected attraction offerings into engaging and immersive Experiences along with tourism partners. Focus on enhancing the Signature Experiences of all designated partners. Design, craft, script and stage new Experiential Product offerings for visitors (in the Meetings, Conventions, Group Tour & Travel & Leisure Market segments) with the key partners.

Experiential Development:

- The VCB along with the Marketing Council will identify key stakeholders to implement the Experiential Process beginning with the existing list of Signature Experiences outlined above which includes: Cultural and Arts Organizations, Signature Attractions, Sports & Recreation, Culinary Venues, Retail Sites, etc.
- Enhance the current offerings of the designated partners using the Experience Formula created by Opportunities Unlimited.
- Collaboration with the VCB, Opportunities Unlimited and tourism partners to develop new experiential products.
- Monthly partner meetings with Joe Veneto to design, craft, script and stage new Experiences.
- Monthly partner meetings include action items and next step deliverables to be completed for subsequent meetings to move the development process along to meet the project timeframe.
- Partners will complete a series of four high content workshops during the process.
- New Experiences will be incorporated into all collateral, promotional and online marketing materials of the VCB and designated partners.
- Opportunities Unlimited will review and collaborate on Experiential product copy; pricing and operational aspects to ensure the products are market-ready.
- The VCB and Partners will revamp Experiential web content to promote, sell and market the experiences.

Budget:	\$60,000 (VCB contribution)
	<u>\$15,000</u> (Private sector investment, \$1,875 per partner x 8 partners)
Total	\$75,000

Phase III – Implementation and Promotion Spring 2015

Measurement Metrics of Success Experiential Development Project:

We will know success has been achieved when the following has been accomplished:

- The VCB and its partners have enhanced our current offerings to visitors.
- The VCB Partners have engineered a collection of new experiential offerings for multiple market segments.
- The VCB Partners have completed four high-content workshops:
 - Possibilities & Stories
 - Staging & Scripting Experiences
 - Marketing & Selling Experiences
 - Best Practices for Delivering Experiences
- Monthly meetings and deliverables have been completed to engineer new experiences.
- Experiential Products have been tested with key clients, VCB associates and partners for feedback and insight before market launch.
- Experiences have been incorporated into promotional materials, web content and the Social Media strategies of the VCB and their partners for the Conventions, Small Meetings, Tour & Travel and Consumer markets.
- The VCB has created a tracking program to measure the R.O.I. of Experiential products.

Signature Experiences Launch Marketing Plan:

- a. Refresh of Signature Experiences landing page on HiltonHeadMeetings.org
 - Budget: Included in existing agreement with VERB Interactive
 - Facilitated by: VERB and VCB Marketing Staff
- b. Support Signature Experiences with comprehensive SEM campaign
 - Budget: Included in NetConversion's Digital Media Brand Allocation
 - Facilitated by: NetConversion/VERB and VCB Marketing Staff

- c. Support Signature Experiences with e-promotions to the VCB's Group Planner database, plus purchased access to trade media e-mail promotions.

Budget: Series of 6 e-promotions: \$6,000

Facilitated by: VCB Marketing Staff with local freelance writers (content) and VERB (deployment)

- d. Support Signature Experiences with PR pitches to appropriate specialty and general travel writers/editors and media outlets.

Budget: Covered in general PR fees

Facilitated by: Weber Shandwick Worldwide and Chamber Communications Staff

- e. Create Signature Experiences printed marketing pieces for VCB sales staff to use as a sales tool at trade shows and for site visits

Budget: \$10,000 (includes design and printing of 5,000)

Facilitated by: VCB Marketing Staff and selected printing company

- f. Feature Signature Experiences and Results/ ROI in Local Business and Community Communications/PR.

Budget/ Facilitated by: Chamber Communications Staff

Phase II Experiential Development Process: \$ 75,000

Signature Experiences e-promos \$ 6,000

Signature Experiences printed piece: \$ 10,000

Social Media Promotion: \$ Included in Social Media budget

Signature Experiences PR: \$ Included in PR budget

SEM and Local Mobile Promotions \$ Included in Digital Media_Budget

SUB-TOTAL \$ 91,000

(Town of HHI - \$68,250, Town of Bluffton - \$11,375, Beaufort County \$11,375)