



QUARTERLY REPORT JULY – SEPTEMBER 2017

Submitted to
MENDOCINO COUNTY TOURISM COMMISSION
COUNTY OF MENDOCINO
NOVEMBER 14, 2017

quarterly activities report

july – september 2017

Mission: Visit Mendocino County stewards and amplifies the total Mendocino County experience

The Visit Mendocino County (VMC) 2017/18 Marketing Plan states the following goals and objectives:

- Position Mendocino County as one of Northern California's premier destinations.
- Educate consumers on the different coastal and inland experiences that can be found within the county.
- Maintain marketing focus to key lifestyle and passion segments including outdoor/recreation, wine, food, family, and romance.
- Maintain the role of technology and digital marketing efforts in order to broaden the reach and increase effectiveness.
- Continue implementation of a marketing dashboard that tracks VMC's marketing efforts, successes and shortfalls, and distribute that information in an effort to educate and support partners within the tourism industry and the general public.
- Continue research that tracks the effectiveness of the VMC website and the influence it has on persuading visitors to visit Mendocino County.
- Develop and implement board education and training as policymakers and advocates of the county's travel industry.

summary

The first quarter of the fiscal year has seen Visit Mendocino County work closely with marketing consultants, TheorySF, in order to determine how best to position the county in the challenging tourism market. The conclusion was that in order to compete effectively, VMC will need to create a website that better engages visitors to explore the county's assets and is a conversion tool to better promote our unique value proposition, and local businesses, while prospects are at a critical decision point. In addition, VMC has worked with TheorySF on rebranding, which will become an integral part of the website. Staff and contractors have made a deep dive into the Three-year Strategic Plan and mapped all initiatives to be worked on. Results and progress are reported to the Board at their monthly meeting. Staff has completed a Hotel Adoption Plan outline. The HAP will enable VMC staff to personally meet with lodging owners throughout the county to explain VMC's role and resources and to gather pertinent information about each property. Alan Humason, the Executive Director, launched the first in an ongoing series of bi-monthly communications with partners and stakeholders. The PR team continues to send monthly highlights of A-level PR hits.

advertising & paid media

Due to rebranding and website implementation plans, advertising is on hold until the rebranding effort is complete and the website functional. VMC has continued to work the TheorySF to develop a marketing platform in preparation for launch.

rebrand

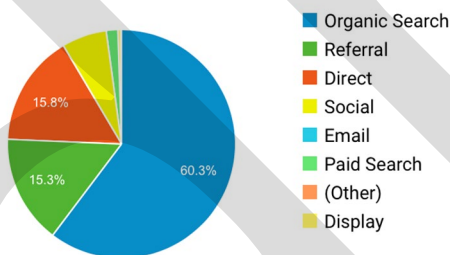
During the quarter, VMC worked with TheorySF to refine the proposed branding look and feel to be used in all future digital and print collateral.

website & social media

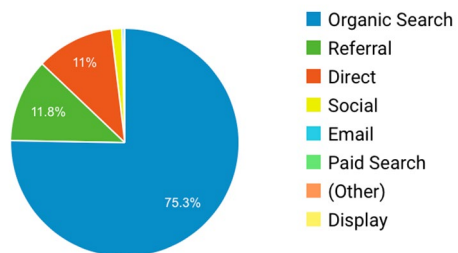
website

- Website stats continue to show a steady rise in users over the same time period in 2016: 60,413 vs 47,005 (28.5%). Pageviews showed a 20%+ increase with a 5% drop in bounce rate.
- Organic search has increased to 75.3% over the same period in 2016. The top referral site continues to be Visit California.

Jul 1, 2016 - Sep 30, 2016



Jul 1, 2017 - Sep 30, 2017



- Events and blog posts are the biggest drivers to the website, underscoring the need for a robust event calendar with relevant, visitor-facing information and high-impact imagery, and the need for a higher rate of content development.
- We continue to post blogs on current topics with three posted for the quarter featuring: Cider Rules!; Ready for Mr. Fungi?; Top 10 Selfie Stops.




social media

- Brendan McGuigan was engaged to run VMC’s social media programs effective July 1, 2017. The strategy is to post on a regular basis with high-impact images that engage Facebook followers to “like, comment and share.” As has been demonstrated in previous campaigns, posting frequently with content that fans don’t relate to creates a drop-off in attracting new fans and low engagement numbers.

| | april – june 2017 | july – september 2017 |
|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| impressions | 864,567 | 520,016 |
| engagement | 15,350 | 15,547 |
| clicks | 4,501 | 610 |
| posts | 72 | 29 |
| impressions per post | 12,008 | 17,932 |
| engagement per post | 213.2 | 536.1 |

- VMC gained 501 Likes over the quarter.
- The “**Top Three**” Facebook posts for the quarter by reactions are:

Facebook Top Posts, by Reactions

| Post | Reactions | Comments | Engagement | Reach |
|--|-----------|----------|------------|--------|
| <p>Visit Mendocino County Just 30 minutes west of Ukiah stand some of the tallest, oldest, most beautiful trees in the world. Montgomery Woods is an alluvial flat, tucked well off the beaten path – often you’ll be the only person hiking the short two-mile loop trail. The grove is a special place, with wide spacing between the trees that gives it a cathedral-like quality. Some of these trees are over a thousand years old and stand more than 300 feet high (the Mendocino Tree stands at roughly 368’, and was once the tallest tree in the world). It’s quite an experience walking among them. Do you have a favorite place to see the redwoods?</p>  <p>(Post) July 24, 2017 1:10 am</p> | 2,107 | 128 | 7.6% | 37,525 |
| <p>Visit Mendocino County The weekend is calling in Mendocino County! Love this snapshot of our beautiful region by Mendo Mavic. Is there somewhere in the county you’d like to see from above?</p>  <p>(Post) July 28, 2017 11:54 pm</p> | 1,626 | 154 | 4.3% | 98,222 |
| <p>Visit Mendocino County These peaceful mornings just outside of Willits are hard to beat. Do you have a favorite place to wake up in Mendocino County?</p>  <p>(Post) August 19, 2017 5:38 pm</p> | 729 | 59 | 8.3% | 11,752 |

On the **Instagram** platform, Visit Mendocino gained 727 new followers (a 100% increase over the previous quarter), boosted engagement by almost 50% to 294.2 engagements per media. The goal going forward is to raise engagement, as well as to engage with Instagram users on a more personal level and incorporate user-generated content into the anticipated new VMC website.

The consumer newsletter has been reformatted to show “hero” images with accompanying short description and links to website content. We are also including a [monthly video](#) recapping the county during the prior month. The newsletter’s engagement numbers have risen quite substantially to more than double the open rate of previous communications.

public relations

The Public Relations team is thrilled to report a great start to the new fiscal year. Public relations’ success is measured in “impressions” and advertising equivalency. Impressions are the number of views a print or digital article is estimated to reach based on circulation and subscription data; ad equivalency represents the amount of money it would take to purchase the equivalent in advertising space in a print publication or digital equivalent. The VMC PR team uses a 1:1 ratio unlike many PR firms who use a multiplier to boost numbers.

Stated goals for PR for the fiscal year are:

- 300 articles (“hits”);
- \$6.6 million ad equivalency;
- 150 million impressions;
- 11 press releases and hot sheets;
- 19 FAM visits;
- 1 media mission;
- 2 trade shows.

For July through September, PR saw more than **348 million impressions** generated from our efforts i.e., stories and features generated from a media visit to the county and in response to outreach via press releases, hot sheets, etc. In terms of advertising equivalency, it would have cost VMC more than \$17 million to purchase the print and digital media space!

Year over year data (for the quarter) show an increase from 96+ million impressions to 348 million; and a huge increase in advertising equivalency from \$3,432,982! Media placements increased 43% to 135.

press visits

PR is pleased to report 19 media visitors for the quarter, already surpassing the stated goal for the year! This doesn't mean that PR won't continue to work hard to invite media to experience the wonders of Mendocino County.

In July, we hosted Sharon Boorstin on the South Coast. Sharon's subsequent article in the [LA Times](#) highlighted the culture and geography of this scenic area. Journalist Abby Tegnalia stayed in Anderson Valley and on the coast, while writer Kate O'Reilly's interest was the Solar Living Center and the town of Hopland. We're pleased to be able to send media to cover different areas of the county.

August saw visits from international media hailing from Sweden and Brazil. September was a very busy month with some individual FAMs, a group FAM of five media organized by Visit California, and a combined media/tour operator FAM put on by Visit CA's Austrian office. Towards the end of the month, VMC was pleased to host ABC7 Bay Area to film a segment for their Bay Area Life program. The focus for the filming was the [Mushroom, Wine & Beer Festival](#). The segment airs twice: on October 8 and October 14, and resides on the Bay Area Life website.

media placements & reach

- We issued two press releases to more than 2,000 outlets and updated our fall hot sheet, which is a notification to media of new and noteworthy happenings in the county.
- Press releases included:
 - * Mendocino County's Top 10 Selfie Stops for the Intrepid Traveler
 - * Roadtrip 101: Mendocino County Uncorks 92 Miles of Smiles Along the Inspiration Highway
 - * Fall Hot Sheet to national and international outlets
- The September issue of *Sunset* magazine ran a reader contest for a vacation in Mendocino County. A winner is expected to be announced in October.

sample placements

The following are a sampling of *some* of the key highlights that hit the print and online press during the quarter. Click the links to read the articles. All our media articles are stored in a digital archive. Please call our Fort Bragg office if you would like to review any of them.

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| San Jose Mercury News | USA Today | Sunset |
| Where magazine | Western Living Magazine | Montecristo |
| NUVO | Explore | The Vancouver Sun |
| Los Angeles Times | 7x7.com | 805 Living |

marketing committee

The Marketing Committee continues to meet on a regular basis to make recommendations regarding PR and marketing programs.

sales

- Participated on behalf of the North Coast Tourism Council in a Visit CA sales mission to the UK and Ireland.
- Participated on behalf of the North Coast Tourism Council in a sales mission to Switzerland and Germany.
- The Mendocino County booth at the CA State Fair won both a gold medal and a special award for best content. The theme was whales and appreciation goes to the Noyo Center for their contributions.
- The Adventure Travel Trade Association conducted a 19 day FAM through all eight of California's rural regions, designated by Visit CA. The group was comprised of social media influencers chosen by Visit CA. They will be providing content for both the Visit Mendocino and Visit CA websites over the next year.
- For the first time, we hosted an Austrian FAM in September.

visitor services

- Work is underway to reprint the Mendocino County visitor guide as in interim step until the rebranding is complete.
- Working with Mendocino winery donors, VMC arranged a reception for the Ferrari Owners Charitable Foundation group visiting the county. The reception supported the Make-A-Wish Foundation. It is hoped this affluent demographic will frequent our county in the future.

festivals & events

- Recruited participants for 2017 Mushroom Wine & Beer Festival. Procured Ukiah stakeholders to produce Inaugural Homebrew festival.
- Compiled 140 event listings for the 2017 Mushroom Wine & Beer Festival Brochure, a 4% increase from 2016.
- Ordered 15,000 Mushroom Brochures. Distributed 8,700 units via Certified outside of Mendocino County, and remainder within county.
- Informed Mushroom Festival event producers of Festival Grant Fund opportunities and processed applications and awards as follows: \$2500 to UC Hopland Research Center; \$2500 to the Inaugural Homebrew Festival; \$2500 for "Mycelium in Industry and Art" Talk at Mendocino Art Center.
- Attended monthly AVWA Board of Directors meetings and AV Pinot Noir Festival Committee meeting regarding the move of the event to Camp Navarro.
- Organized and staffed monthly Festival Committee meetings.
- Volunteered for and attended 33rd Annual Winesong Charity Auction at the Botanical Gardens.
- Met with Destination Hopland Marketing committee regarding increasing Hopland's participation in umbrella festivals.

ops & admin

- Completed FY 2015/16 Audit and nearing completion of FY 2016/17 Audit.
- Nearing completion of review and updates to Employee Handbook and other personnel policy documents.
- Updated lodging owner/operator database with input from County Tax office; the roll now has more than 500 entities listed.
- Created first of new bimonthly newsletter to partners and stakeholders, delivered via email and print; print version included a business reply card to capture email addresses for database.
- Continued recruitment efforts for MCTC Board of Directors and MCTC BID Advisory Board.
- Gave presentation to Visit California Staff in Sacramento; reviewed PR and Marketing strategies and rebranding/repositioning project status.



Saracina Sunflowers

glossary of terms

This glossary is included to explain terms used in this plan and in other reports and documents issued by Visit Mendocino County. While staff and contractors are familiar with the terminology, some of the terms need a brief explanation.

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| Advertising equivalency | This dollar figure represents the amount of money it would take to purchase the equivalent in advertising space in a print publication or digital equivalent. The VMC PR team uses a 1:1 ratio unlike many PR firms who use a multiplier to boost numbers. |
| Impressions | The number of views a print or digital article is estimated to reach based on circulation and subscription data. |
| Media Placement | A story (print or digital) about an aspect of Mendocino County that arises from PR efforts. |
| Media Mission | A trip by the PR team to a particular market, e.g., Vancouver BC, to meet local journalists and writers and inspire visitation to and coverage of Mendocino County. |
| Releases | This can either refer to a press release or a “hot sheet,” which is distributed to the press and highlights new and upcoming businesses and openings in the county. |
| FAM | Familiarization tour or trip. Media FAMs involve members of the media who are vetted by the PR team prior to a visit. Sales FAMs apply to tour group operators who are visiting the county with the aim of including Mendocino in tour packages. |
| Millennials | The segment of the population born between the early and the mid-1990s to early 2000s. Also known as Generation Y, they are the children of baby boomers and older Gen Xers. |
| Gen-Xers | The population segment born between the early-to-mid 1960s and ending birth years ranging from the late 1970s to early 1980s. Children of the Baby Boomers. |
| Baby Boomers | Those born between the early-to-mid 1940s up to about 1964. |
| Content marketing | Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action. |
| Google Analytics | A reporting tool provided by Google that can be used to analyze traffic, ad words, digital marketing campaigns, demographics, etc. for VisitMendocino.com. |
| Facebook Insights | A reporting tool for analyzing traffic, advertising campaigns, and other activities on Facebook. |
| Activity Provider | A person located in a tourist destination who provides a unique, local activity for a visitor to do while on vacation. Examples of such activities include kayaking, bike riding or arts and crafts, among others. |
| Free Independent Traveler (FIT) | A person or a couple that is not traveling with a group; usually references foreign travelers out on their own (Foreign Independent Traveler). |
| Inbound Tour Operator | Someone specializing in providing tours to overseas travelers to a destination, either operating the tour themselves or working through established partnerships with local suppliers. |
| Receptives | In effect, “middle men” between tour operators and hotel/lodging owners, chiefly in overseas markets. Receptives obtain contracts with hotels for booking arrangements and offer these to tour operators looking to satisfy tourist demand. |

| | |
|---|--|
| Search Engine Marketing | A marketing tactic using paid advertising services so that interested clients and customers can reach a business quicker and easier while searching online. |
| Block | A number of rooms, seats, or spaces reserved in advance, usually by wholesalers, tour operators, or receptive operators who intend to sell them as components of tour packages. |
| Conversion | Getting “heads in beds” or otherwise closing the sale. Differs from “hospitality.” Hospitality is being warm, friendly and helpful. Conversion is active selling. |
| Demand generators | Strategies and programs developed by DMOs and suppliers to generate destination demand. Examples include festivals, events, cultural tours, and consumer promotion. |
| Engagement | On Facebook (and other social media platforms), engagement is when people perform actions on your Page. They may like a post, click on a link, or comment on an image for example. With Facebook Insights, engagement is measured as the number of times a post is clicked, liked, shared, or commented on. |
| Reach | A measure of the range of influence of any content; it is the measurement of how content is spread across various social media channels. Think of it as the number of eyeballs a piece of content is getting. On Facebook, for example, “total reach” is the number of people that have seen a particular post. |
| Selected Key Industry Associations | |
| DMA West | Destination Marketing Associations West, a membership organization of visitor bureaus throughout the western United States. |
| Visit California | The tourism marketing agency for the state. |
| California Travel Association | Membership organization offering education and advocacy for state tourism operators. |
| U.S. Travel Association | National, non-profit organization representing and advocating for all components of the travel industry. |
| Destination International | Global association of travel industry agencies and groups, offering education and advocacy for members. Visit Mendocino holds a certification from the globally recognized Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP); this serves as a visible industry distinction that defines quality and performance standards in destination marketing and management. |
| Brand USA | Agency chiefly responsible for marketing the USA as a destination to the rest of the world. |