



# QUARTERLY REPORT APRIL – JUNE 2017

Submitted to

**MENDOCINO COUNTY TOURISM COMMISSION**

**COUNTY OF MENDOCINO**

**SEPTEMBER 12, 2017**







TSF also conducted a study of two years of VMC's Google Analytics to determine who is visiting the website and what they are interested in. See Website section for an overview; the study is available upon request.

In June, TSF presented three campaign platforms based on research rank and six preliminary logo design ideas and by mid-month, the Marketing Committee selected their top pick for campaign platform (Mendo Moments) and logo design (hotel key). The committee requested TheorySF to move forward with testing "Mendo Moments" and "We Call it Mendocino" with the key logo. The research resulted in "Mendo Moments" as the clear winner. TheorySF will develop creative around the "Mendo Moments" platform incorporating the "Find Your Happy" tagline and the key logo.

Introducing VMC's new logo...



## website & social media

### website

- Website stats show a steady rise in users over the same time period in 2016: 54,893 vs 37,643 (45.8%). Pageviews and sessions likewise showed 40%+ increases.
- Events continue to be a driver to the website, underscoring the necessity to post visitor-facing events that will attract guests to the county.
- Work on the back-end of the Wordpress site was completed during the fourth quarter with:
  - \* Updates to latest version of WordPress and to underlying theme and plug-ins
  - \* Optimization of site images
  - \* Descriptive headers added to all landing pages for improved SEO results
  - \* Mapping updated for events

- \* "Favorites" feature added so visitors can save their top likes on the site
- \* Home page configured to show additional events for visitor planning purposes
- \* Community pages built to allow visitors to explore specific cities and towns
- We continue to post blogs on current topics with six posted for the quarter featuring: Appetite for Anderson Valley; Nine Things You Must Do and See in Inland Mendocino; Hit Your Sweet Spot!; Summer's Here; Pick Your Favorite Farm Stay; and Mendocino Rocks July 4!

### google analytics

As part of their brief, TheorySF conducted a thorough review of VMC's Google Analytics for the past two years. The key highlights of the report are listed here. The full report in PowerPoint format is available upon request.

The purpose of the report was:

- To gain a high level understanding of who is visiting the website and why, over time
- To look at 2-year comparisons for seasonal traffic trends
- To understand what technologies users are engaging with (desktop vs. mobile)
- To aid in targeting user experience choices for a website redesign

Two-year comparisons show sessions, users and pageviews have trended up, while session time has trended down. This is likely due to an increase in mobile activity over time — mobile users tend to spend less overall time consuming content than desktop users. In 2016, 49.51% of all traffic came from desktop computers; down to 44.95% YTD in 2017, while 63.96% of all mobile traffic came from Apple devices (iPhone + iPad combined).

Demographics show a majority of website visitors are female (59.8%). With regard to age, the primary audience is 25–34. 73.5% of all traffic is from within California, Texas is a distant second at 2.22%.

User flow reports indicate that the majority of traffic comes to the site via organic search and drops off after a single page view. This means that organic search is effective, however site engagement is not. While users are finding what they initially searched for, they're not being intrigued or enticed sufficiently to go deeper into more site content. Users are seeking content specific to events.

The top referring sites are:

- VisitCalifornia.com (23.86%)
- Facebook mobile (20.97%)
- Mediaplex advertising (17.93%)
- facebook.com (4.92%)
- NorthcoastCA.com (2.49%)

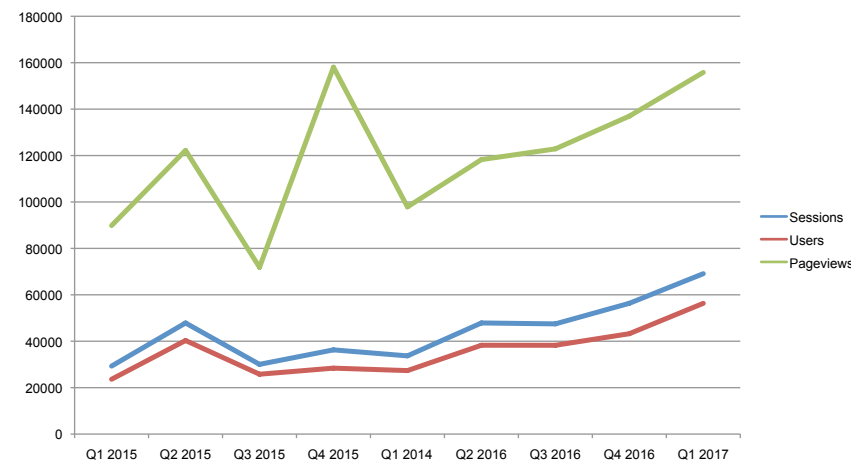
N.B., the Mediaplex advertising spike is an anomaly due to a Homeaway.com advertising campaign that produced traffic but little to no engagement or retention.

Year-over-year data for the year to date period shows increases across the board from the top referring sites:

- VisitCalifornia.com is up 77.06% (5,418 vs. 3,060)
- Facebook mobile is up 153.9% (4,763 vs. 1,876)
- Mediaplex 69.95% (4,072 vs. 2,396)
- facebook.com 27.33% (1,118 vs. 878)
- NorthcoastCA.com is down 3.25% (566 vs. 585)

General observations include:

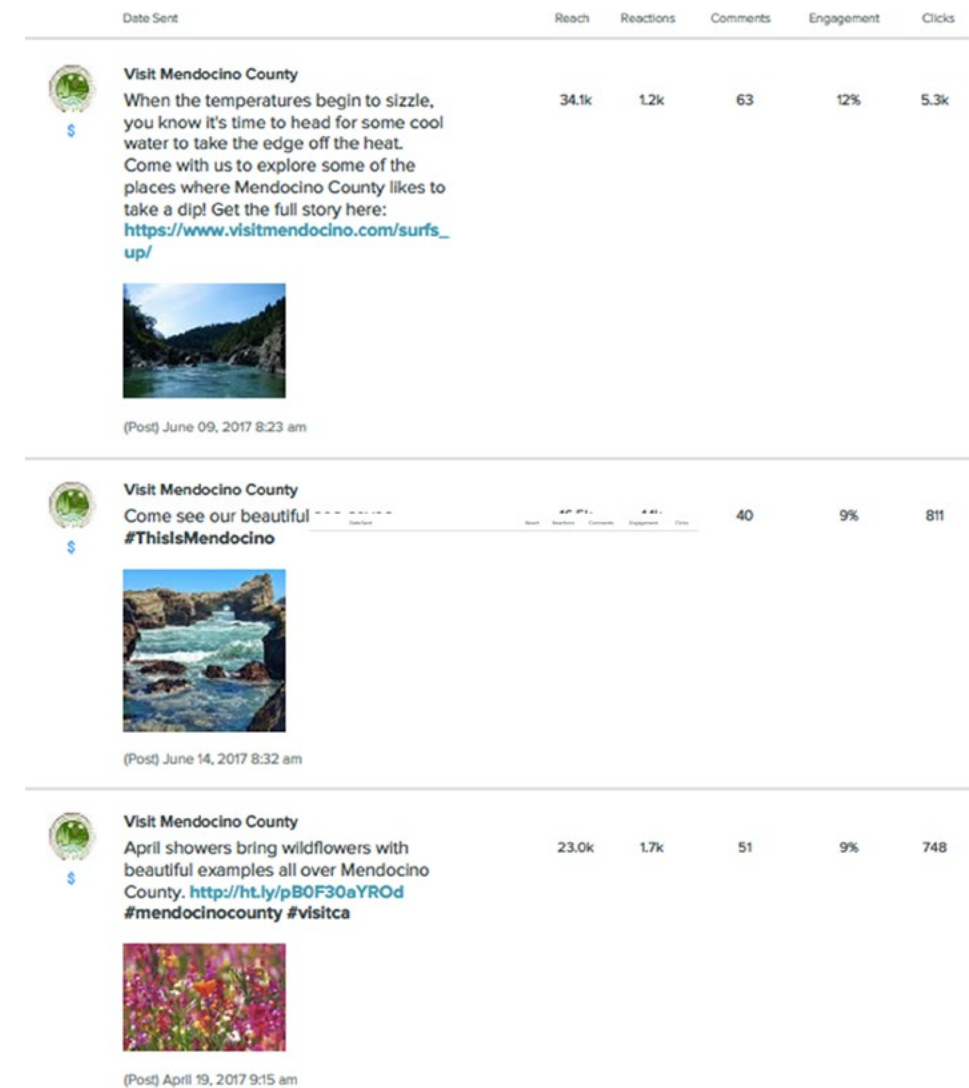
- People are engaging with content related to events and things to see and do.



- Link back to the VMC website even when citing third-party publications and always provide some promotional content to drive traffic back to VMC.
- Get into a sales mindset vs. a marketing mindset.
- The new VMC Website needs to:
  - \* Be optimized for mobile use, not just responsive
  - \* Provide full multi-day itineraries front and center to drive trip planning (Google Maps integration)
  - \* Feature events and things to do on the homepage
  - \* Provide family-friendly content
  - \* Treat and market every page like a homepage
  - \* Represent the new VMC brand
  - \* Incorporate user-generated content and be able to embrace advancing technologies

## social media

- The “Top Three” Facebook posts for the quarter by engagement are:



- FaceBook fans increased by 1.1% over the third quarter, bringing the total number of “likes” to 56,185.
- A concerted effort to increase engagement by Facebook users resulted in a 50% rise over the previous quarter.





On the **Instagram** platform, for the fourth quarter, Visit Mendocino gained 353 new followers, made 30 posts, and realised 127.4 engagements per post. The goal going forward into the new fiscal year is to decrease the number of posts but 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.

## public relations

The Public Relations team is thrilled to report that the year ended on a high note. The team has been highly successful in media placements for the final quarter of the 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.

For April through June, PR saw more than **203 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. Unsolicited impressions were more than 3 million for the quarter. In terms of advertising equivalency, it would have cost VMC almost \$7 million to purchase the print and digital media space!

Year over year data (for the quarter) show an increase from 187.8 million impressions to 206 million; and a decrease in advertising equivalency from just over \$9 million.

## press visits

PR is pleased to report 23 media visitors for the quarter!

**In April**, we hosted three Canadian writers: Jennifer Hubbert/ [Explore Magazine](#) and Canadian Traveller, Brittany Wood/ Westworld Magazine, and Alison Sinkewicz/[Montecristo Magazine](#). These visits were the result of a highly successful PR trip to Vancouver BC in March 2016. Each of these writers has produced feature articles about the county. We also hosted Simona Sacrifici, a highly rated social media influencer from Italy who ran a series of live posts while in the county as well as a feature on her website. The month ended with visits by Michele Herrman of AM New York, and Wendy Diamond of [Animal Fair](#) with a focus on pet-friendly Mendocino.

**In May and June**, we again hosted international media beginning with Rob McFarland from Australia's Traveller Magazine, a group visit by five Japanese media, Detlef Berg from Germany, and a video team from the Italian Kilimangiaro travel television show. The show is the most highly rated travel show in Italy. We anticipate the segment on Mendocino County to air in fall 2017.

## media placements & reach

- We issued press releases to more than 2,000 outlets and updated our summer hot sheet, which is a notification to media of new and noteworthy happenings in the county.
- Press releases included:
  - \* Executive Director announcement to local outlets and industry trades
  - \* Plug In and Unplug featuring the new electric vehicle charging stations in the county
  - \* Taste of Mendocino
  - \* Summer Hot Sheet to national and international outlets

## 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.

<a href="#">Coastal Living Magazine</a>	NBC Bay Area	Dallas Morning News
<a href="#">VIA</a>	<a href="#">Zagat.com</a>	<a href="#">Bindu Media</a>
<a href="#">South Bay Magazine</a>	<a href="#">Los Angeles Times</a>	<a href="#">Travel + Leisure</a>
<a href="#">KGO AM</a>	<a href="#">Forbes.com</a>	<a href="#">AM New York</a>

## marketing committee

The Marketing Committee continues to meet on a regular basis to make recommendations regarding PR and marketing programs. See section on Advertising and Paid Media for an update on activities regarding TheorySF.

## sales

- Attended Sunset Celebration Weekend in Sonoma; obtained 700 consumer leads and distributed Mendocino County collateral.
- On behalf of the North Coast Tourism Council, participated in IPW (Washington DC) in partnership with Shasta Cascade. Had appointments with 80 travel companies and obtained many leads for group and FIT business.
- Prepared for two north coast sales missions to the UK and Switzerland and Germany.
- Prepared for several FAMs involving Scandinavia, Austria, the UK, and Adventure Travel.
- Obtained several additional contracts between hotels and receptives for international visitors.
- Signed up to participate in Sacramento Sportsmen Show and Women's Expo, both in January 2018.

## visitor services

- Willits tear off maps are complete. VMC aided the Willits Chamber with distribution.
- Ukiah tear off maps are in final draft format.
- Negotiating a new contract with Certified Folder to distribute visitor guides, mini-guides and festival brochures. Discussing need for additional collateral printing to satisfy Certified demand.
- Planning to update Mendocino County pet-friendly travel brochure next quarter.
- New green tote bags have been received and distribution is underway.
- Prepared Itineraries and conducted two international FAMS: Claire Baxter (Intrepid Travel / Australia) on April 8, and Florianne Trinel (Product Manager for Voyageurs du Monde / France) on April 22.
- Compiled Meeting Space questionnaire responses to create a master spreadsheet.
- Compiled comprehensive Willits lodging list for organizer of Solar Pioneer Party, to be held in Willits/Hopland on Nov 3-5 with anticipated attendance of 200-plus.
- On Saturday June 3, opened the Fort Bragg Visitor's center to assist walk-ins.

## festivals & events

- Provided Almost Fringe Festival information to stakeholders, local media, and vendors during the event.
- Attended Almost Fringe Festival events countywide and followed up with event-holders about their experiences.
- In collaboration with marketing assistant, created an in-depth wrap-up report for the "Almost Fringe Festival" for presentation to Festival Committee.
- Made site visit to "Rosé Today ~ A Country Garden Party" in Hopland and BARRA of Mendocino for their Tourism Ambassador open house.
- Did in-person outreach to stakeholders in Willits, Ukiah, and Hopland regarding creation of a signature event for the Mushroom Festival, as well as general participation in the festival.
- In June, started outreach to businesses and organizations countywide for Mushroom Festival events.
- Distributed 2,000 "Save the Date" cards throughout the county to promote the Mushroom and Crab Festivals.
- Attended April AVWA General Membership meeting in May and Board of Directors meetings
- Organized and attended monthly Festival Committee meetings.

- Tabled for VMC at the following events:
  - \* MWI's Economic Summit (Ukiah Valley Conference Center)
  - \* 20th Annual Pinot Noir Grand Tasting Check-in Table (Goldeneye Winery)
  - \* Taste of Mendocino (Fort Mason, SF).

## ops & admin

- Alan Humason began full-time as VMC Executive Director on June 12, 2017
- The MCTC BID Advisory Committee submitted its annual report and the VMC FY 2017-18 budget to the County Supervisors, and after presentations and hearings, the BID was renewed by a unanimous vote. There is now an effort underway to recruit new members to serve on the BID Advisory Committee and, soon, Board of Director candidates for expiring terms.
- The MCTC Board of Directors conducted a "training day" that included a broad discussion of roles and responsibilities, ethics, and Brown Act regulations.
- VMC staff continued its work with marketing firm TheorySF to develop new marketing platform and materials, centered around the tagline "Find Your Happy" and focusing on a series of "Mendocino Moments" to drive visitor interest and engagement. These themes were arrived at through market testing of several concepts and extensive review by the Marketing Committee. The next step: redo of the website.
- VMC staff met again with the Coraggio Group, fleshing out action plans to execute the nine key initiatives within our three-year strategic plan.
- Other projects currently underway include a financial audit, trademark applications, and updating of personnel and workplace policies.

## overview

The final quarter of the 2016/17 fiscal year ended on an up note with impressive results from PR efforts, social media, and sales.

project		2016/17 goals	year totals	% complete
public relations	press releases issued	11	11	100%
	audience reach	110 million	592.4 million	538%
	ad. equivalency	\$4.6 million	\$47.2 million	1021%
	FAM programs	18	31	172%
	media missions	2	1	50%
	trade shows	2	2	100%
sales	consumer leads	9,000	7,588	84%
	room nights	1,250	1,400	112%
	FAMs	8	12	150%
	consumer/trade shows	6	9	150%
website/social media	consumer database	35,000	34,645	99%
	consumer newsletter engagement	15.0%	14.3%	95%
	FB fan base (likes)	55,000	56,185	102%
	Instagram	~	7,163	100%
advertising	Increase VisitMendocino.com unique visitors to 240,000	drive traffic to new website through targeted paid online advertising, SEO, and viral sharing of editorial pieces	187,597	78%
visitor services	signage/wayfaring	1	0	tabled
	festivals & events	3 festivals	3	100%
marketplace	visitors	2,000	2,288	114%

## 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.

<b>Advertising equivalency</b>	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.
<b>Impressions</b>	The number of views a print or digital article is estimated to reach based on circulation and subscription data.
<b>Media Placement</b>	A story (print or digital) about an aspect of Mendocino County that arises from PR efforts.
<b>Media Mission</b>	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.
<b>Releases</b>	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.
<b>FAM</b>	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.
<b>Millennials</b>	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.
<b>Gen-Xers</b>	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.
<b>Baby Boomers</b>	Those born between the early-to-mid 1940s up to about 1964.
<b>Content marketing</b>	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.
<b>Google Analytics</b>	A reporting tool provided by Google that can be used to analyze traffic, ad words, digital marketing campaigns, demographics, etc. for VisitMendocino.com.
<b>Facebook Insights</b>	A reporting tool for analyzing traffic, advertising campaigns, and other activities on Facebook.
<b>Activity Provider</b>	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.
<b>Free Independent Traveler (FIT)</b>	A person or a couple that is not traveling with a group; usually references foreign travelers out on their own (Foreign Independent Traveler).
<b>Inbound Tour Operator</b>	Someone specializing in providing tours to overseas travelers to a destination, either operating the tour themselves or working through established partnerships with local suppliers.
<b>Receptives</b>	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.

<b>Search Engine Marketing</b>	A marketing tactic using paid advertising services so that interested clients and customers can reach a business quicker and easier while searching online.
<b>Block</b>	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.
<b>Conversion</b>	Getting “heads in beds” or otherwise closing the sale. Differs from “hospitality.” Hospitality is being warm, friendly and helpful. Conversion is active selling.
<b>Demand generators</b>	Strategies and programs developed by DMOs and suppliers to generate destination demand. Examples include festivals, events, cultural tours, and consumer promotion.
<b>Engagement</b>	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.
<b>Reach</b>	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.
<b>Selected Key Industry Associations</b>	
<b>DMA West</b>	Destination Marketing Associations West, a membership organization of visitor bureaus throughout the western United States.
<b>Visit California</b>	The tourism marketing agency for the state.
<b>California Travel Association</b>	Membership organization offering education and advocacy for state tourism operators.
<b>U.S. Travel Association</b>	National, non-profit organization representing and advocating for all components of the travel industry.
<b>Destination International</b>	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.
<b>Brand USA</b>	Agency chiefly responsible for marketing the USA as a destination to the rest of the world.