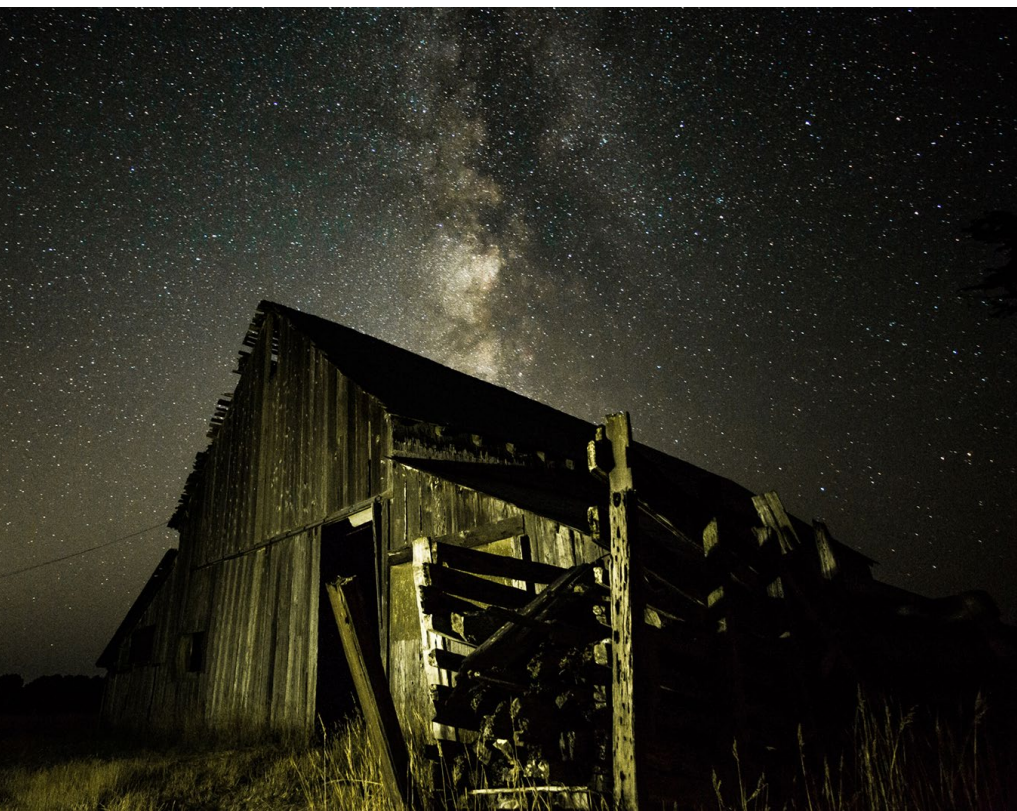




visit mendocino county

2016–2017 annual report



from the Executive Director

With the close of its second fiscal year, the Mendocino County Tourism Commission (MCTC) looks forward to the 2017/18 fiscal year with great energy and optimism.

The past year saw MCTC reaching several significant milestones, including:

- Writing and adopting a new three-year Strategic Plan
- Securing the services of a new marketing agency to research our audience and positioning and help us undertake a smartly crafted rebranding effort
- Turnover and reorganization of core staff
- Investment in further organizational and Board development
- The creation and launch of a new annual signature event, the Almost Fringe Festival, and successful continuation of the Mushroom, Wine & Beer and Crab, Wine & Beer festivals.

Financially, MCTC emerged in a very strong position; revenues exceeded expectations and expenses were kept well in control. As a result, we will be able to dedicate more resources into content creation, marketing, and promotional efforts in the coming year, primarily targeting Millennial and Gen-X travelers both at home and abroad.

Our public relations team delivered our most productive year ever. In 12 months, we had 31 media-related “familiarization tours,” resulting in journal, web and newspaper articles that reached a total audience of more than 1.2 billion! The retail value of that extensive coverage—what it would have cost us if we bought an equal amount of paid advertising—is almost \$45 million.

Our mission: To steward and amplify the total Mendocino County experience. **Our vision:** Enriching experiences for our guests, enhanced lifestyle for our residents, and diversity for our economy.

We cherish our community and aim to help preserve its everlasting beauty and value, while sharing what we hold dear for the benefit of our friends and neighbors. We work to inspire people to visit our redwoods, our shores, our many attractions and our welcoming people.

Together we can bring the number of visitors to our county to an all-time high, growing jobs, disposable income, and tax receipts throughout the county.

Thank you for your continuing support. We look forward to a bright future for tourism in Mendocino County.

Respectfully,

Alan Humason
Executive Director

photographs courtesy: Brendan McGuigan; VMC

2016 –17 marketing plan

goals

Increase overall demand for overnight visitation during key times of the year in an effort to increase revenues, employment and taxes in Mendocino County.

objectives

1. Continue to effectively position Mendocino County as one of California's premier coastal destinations.
2. Educate consumers on the different coastal and inland experiences that can be found within the county.
3. Maintain marketing focus to key lifestyle and passion segments including outdoor/recreation, wine, food, and romance.
4. Maintain the role of technology and digital marketing efforts in order to broaden the reach and increase effectiveness.

advertising & paid media

KPI (key performance indicators)

Increase VisitMendocino.com unique visitors to 240,000

outcomes

Visit Mendocino County worked with a variety of advertisers during the 2016/17 fiscal year. About \$8,000 of advertising costs were offset by coop buy-ins from partners. The list below is not exhaustive but provides an overview of how advertising dollars were spent in the fiscal year.

- **Digital & Broadcast**

The allotted budget for this line item was \$133,200; total expenditure was \$187,604.

CC Media was contracted from September 2016 through June 2017 to contract and distribute digital media for the organization, including a geo-fencing campaign and campaigns in The Enthusiast Network: \$100,000

Comcast ran broadcast ads in Sacramento and parts of the Bay Area and Sports Network: \$14,232 +/-

DogTrekker continues to be a quality partner for the investment: \$8,050

TripAdvisor: \$15,000

GayTravel.com: \$6,500

- **Print advertising**

California Visitor Guide, produced by Visit California. Distribution is 500,000 print copies plus online: \$20,340

Alaska Airlines ran a one-page advertorial and two pages of cooperative advertising: \$14,905

Bay Area News Group: \$21,000

Washington Post advertorial: \$3,800

Postcard to households in select zip codes in the Bay Area: \$5,507 plus postage

Today's Bride: \$6,825

- **E-Marketing**

Mother Jones dedicated e-newsletters (4): \$4,680

Small Market Meetings dedicated newsletters (2): \$1,700

HomeAway eblast: \$12,000

VacationFun brochure link: \$6,500

TravelGuidesFree: 99 cents per lead

Visitors to the visitmendocino.com website saw an increase of 62.2% over the previous year rising to 187,597, falling short of the goal stated in the Marketing Plan.

rebranding

VMC retained the services of marketing company TheorySF (TSF) through June 30, 2017. Their efforts were to focus on a rebrand design, based on research to understand the brand pathway. In April 2017, principals Russell Quinan and Chip Sheean began their research about Mendocino County and its potential audience. Research revealed the prime visitor audience for the county are Gen-Xers and Millennials; a target audience mostly comprising couples or families.

By the end of June 2017, TSF had worked with the Marketing Committee to approve the "Find Your Happy" tagline; design for a logo; and creative for digital and print advertising. VMC has contracted to work with TheorySF during the 2017/18 fiscal year on developing a new website that reflects the rebranding and on marketing efforts to VMC's target audience.



public relations

goals

- Generate \$4.6 million in measured advertising equivalency
- Reach an estimated audience of 110 million
- Achieve 170 media placements in key outlets
- Pitch/secure 26 media to visit the destination on an individual basis
- Attend 2 media missions and 2 trade shows
- Support VMC marketing & promotional objectives

outcomes

	goal	achieved
media placements	170	516
ad equivalency	\$4.6 million	\$44.96 million
circulation	110 million	1.2 billion
media missions	2	1
media content (press releases)	14*	11
event support	2	2
trade shows	2	2
FAM programs	26	31

* This number was revised when DCI's contract was terminated.

- These figures represent a significant push forward on VMC's PR efforts to introduce the county to markets throughout the United States and in selected foreign markets. The PR team scored 671 print and online features in publications and media outlets. This compares favorably with the previous fiscal year's total of 511: a 31% increase.
- Articles appeared in the following publications (among many others):
Vogue, San Francisco Chronicle & SFGate.com, Los Angeles Times, San Jose Mercury News and associated Bay Area News Group outlets, Vancouver Sun, The Province, 7x7.com, USA Today, VIA magazine, Sacramento Magazine, Canadian Traveller, NBC Bay Area, About.com, San Francisco Magazine, RalphLauren.com, Sunset magazine, Chicago Tribune, Wall Street Journal, Westways, Better Homes & Gardens, Coastal Living, Wine Enthusiast

- PR completed one successful media mission to New York City and attended two trade shows: Visit California's San Francisco media reception and the CalTravel summit.
- Directly recruited 31 members of the media (editors, producers, bloggers and freelancers) to visit Mendocino County:

Michele Herrmann / AMNY	Jackie Burrell / Bay Area News Group
Jennifer Hubbert / <i>Explore</i> (Canada)	Alex Pulaski / Alaska Airlines; <i>LA Times</i>
Brittany Wood / <i>Westworld</i> (Canada)	Leilani Labong / 7x7.com
Alison Sinkewicz / <i>Montecristo</i> (Canada)	Kathy Chin Leong / <i>South Bay Accent</i>
Jennifer Boden/KRON	Chelsea Davis / 7x7.com
Mark Gross / <i>Splash</i>	Mary Buttaro / FunofTravel.com
Matt Kirouac / <i>Zagat</i>	Brian Wiatrak / <i>Wine Enthusiast</i>
Bob Ecker / Freelance wine writers	Laetitia Wianapel / <i>MademoiselleRobot.com</i>
Cheryl Crabtree/ Calif. Directory of Fine Wines	Rob McFarland / <i>Traveller Magazine</i> (Australia)
Laurie Werner / <i>Forbes</i>	Japanese FAM Group (5)
Andrew McCredie / <i>Vancouver Sun & The Province</i>	Detlef Berg / <i>Rheinische Post</i> (Germany)
Michael McCarthy / <i>The Province</i>	Simona Sacrifizi / Visit CA (Italy)
Alec Scott / <i>Sunset</i>	JoAnn Actis-Grande / <i>Taste of the Seacoast Magazine</i>
Wendy Diamond / Animal Fair	Luca Leccese / <i>Kilimangiaro</i> (Italy)
Ian Anderson / Moon PCH	

- Distributed 11 press releases and hot sheets on various topics to local, regional, national, and international press, resulting in dozens of media placements.
- Recruited two groups to serve on the judging panel at the 2016 Mushroom, Wine & Beer Festival and the 2017 Crab, Wine & Beer Festival.
- Generated media awareness and coverage for the fifth annual "Taste of Mendocino" event in San Francisco.

website & social media

KPI

- Increase visitor time on site and average pages visited
- Reduce bounce rate
- Increase SEO
- Continue to grow and engage with VMC social media and database of consumers
- Make use of targeted Facebook advertising to support partner events and promotions

outcomes

- Events continue to be a driver to the website, underscoring the necessity to post visitor-facing events that will attract guests to the county. As noted in the prior section, website visitation fell short of the stated goal but increased 62.2% YOY.
- Throughout the year, BrandHound and VMC contractor, Alison de Grassi, worked on updates to the website including:
 - * 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
- Blog posts continue to be a popular draw to the site.
- VMC invested in boosting posts on Facebook and gained new “likes” and increased engagement. Net “likes” increased to 56,185 (8.9% YOY).
- We updated the look and feel of the consumer newsletter to be more mobile-friendly and invite consumers to “Explore, Stay and Play.” Blog posts and social media campaigns reflected the newsletter content for additional exposure.



sales

KPI

- Acquire 9,000 consumer leads
- Sell 1,250 room nights as a result of VMC sales efforts

outcomes

- Sales efforts were strong resulting in 1,400 room nights and 9,000+ leads for the consumer database generated at trade and consumer shows.
- Attended:
 - * The Fillmore Street Jazz Festival for the first time with great exposure for Mendocino in San Francisco
 - * Bark in the Park in San Jose
 - * Travel & Adventure Shows in Los Angeles and Santa Clara
 - * The Here and There Trade Show in Portland, Oregon
 - * Sunset Celebration Weekend in Sonoma
- At the California State Fair in July, the Mendocino County exhibit, featuring the Drive-Thru Tree, received a gold ribbon; almost 2,000 people participated in drawing for Mendocino County giveaway.
- Reprinted the mini guide.
- Prepared for several FAMs involving Scandinavia, Austria, the UK, and Adventure Travel.
- Obtained several additional contracts between hotels and receptives for international visitors.
- On behalf of the North Coast Tourism Council, participated in:
 - * Visit CA sales mission to New Zealand and three cities in Australia;
 - * Visit CA Canadian mission
 - * Sales missions to the UK and Switzerland and Germany.

visitor services

festivals: KPI

- Increase and lengthen overnight stays in Mendocino County
- Develop new events that both highlight the unique aspects of the County and utilize value partnerships
- Increase partner participation and visitor attendance for signature and high profile events
- Produce and distribute a countywide event calendar
- Continue to build on the established foundation for the Party for the Planet festival

outcomes

- The level of participation in the 2016 Mushroom, Wine & Beer Festival showed a 13% increase YOY, with gains in the number of restaurants and special events. The 2017 Crab, Wine & Beer Festival had a slight decrease (3%) in the YOY level of participation.
- The Party for the Planet festival was replaced by the fledgling “Almost Fringe Festival” with events held countywide.
- Staff worked closely with the Festival Committee on the festivals and presented new opportunities for discussion.
- Staff posts events and festivals on the VMC website and that data is used to compile the bi-monthly calendars distributed to County businesses to keep visitors updated on events. Staff also submitted events to outlets such as the Visit California website, *VIA Magazine*, and other regional publications and websites.
- VMC continued on the boards of the Greater Ukiah Chamber of Commerce and Visit Ukiah.
- Continued distribution of bi-monthly event calendars to partners.
- The festival committee expanded its grant program to support festivals and events that will potentially bring visitation to the county.
- Attended monthly AVWA Board of Directors meetings.

signage & wayfinding: KPI

- Increase visitor satisfaction with improved wayfinding signage

outcomes

- Distributed more than 100,000 county materials including tear off maps, wine maps, event calendars, pet-friendly guides, visitor guides, and mini-guides.
- The Visitor Services Committee continues to work on additional highway signage for the county.

marketplace: KPI

- Attract 2,000 VMC Marketplace visitors

outcomes

- The Marketplace was shut down in 2016 but the Visitor Center continued to attract visitors: 2,288 in total for the year.
- After a lull, First Friday art events were revived at VMC's Fort Bragg office and Saturday service was resumed as of Memorial Day 2017.

operations

KPI

Operations is the engine that keeps MCTC running

outcomes

- Brent Haugen began as Executive Director in July 2016. He gave notice in January 2017 and his contract terminated on March 31, 2017.
- 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.
- Turnover on the MCTC Board of Directors took place in early 2017 with all directors attending a "training day" that included a broad discussion of roles and responsibilities, ethics, and Brown Act regulations.
- VMC retained the services of the Coraggio Group to develop a three-year Strategic Plan containing nine key initiatives with specific goals, milestones, and deliverables. The plan is attached to this Annual Report as Appendix 1.

staffing

KPI

- Maintain a qualified, engaged and enthusiastic team of staff and contractors to carry out the programs and initiatives of VMC
- Continue to successfully administer the North Coast Tourism Council

outcomes

- Visit Mendocino County saw a turnover in staffing during the 2015–16 fiscal year. By the fall of 2016, the Fort Bragg office was fully staffed.
- Richard Strom transitioned to independent contractor status as of January 2017; he continues to head up the North Coast Tourism Council.

staff

- Executive Director: Alan Humason
- Office Coordinator: Kathy Chacon
- Sales, Hospitality & Events Coordinator: Luz Harvey
- Tourism Marketing Associate: Vanlee Waters

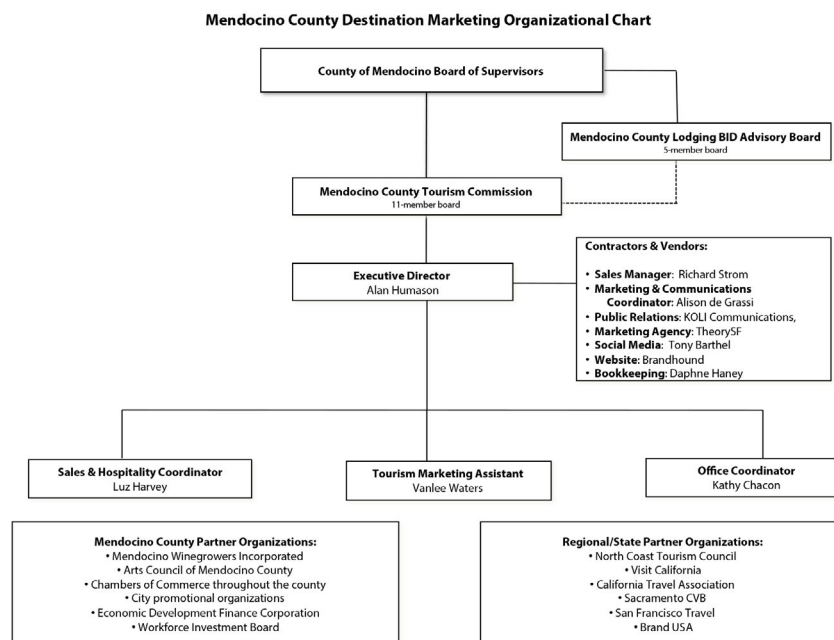
contractors

- Marketing & Communications Coordinator: Alison de Grassi
- Tourism Manager: Richard Strom
- Public Relations: KOLI Communications
- Online Marketing Consultant: Brendan McGuigan/Tony Barthel
- Website Management: Brandhound Marketing
- Saturday Office: Susan Peakall

MCTC board of directors

- Chair: John Kuhry, 3-Year Term – At Large Member
- Vice Chair: Sharon Davis, 3-Year Term – Mendocino Coast Chamber of Commerce/Coastal Regional Promotional Organization Member
- Secretary: Jo Bradley, 2-Year Term – Medium Lodging Operator Member
- Treasurer: Marcus Magdaleno, 2-Year Term – Inland Chamber of Commerce/Inland Regional Promotional Organization Member
- Cynthia Ariotosa, 3-Year Term – Food & Beverage
- Bernadette Byrne, 3-Year Term – Winery/Winegrower Member
- Cally Dym, 3-Year Term – Coastal Large Lodging Operator Member
- Jitu Ishwar, 3-Year Term – Large Lodging Operator Member
- Deborah Kettner, 3-Year Term – Small Lodging Operator Member
- Jan Rodriguez, 2-Year Term – Inland Large Lodging Operator Member
- Jennifer Seward, 2-Year Term – Arts Organization/Attractions Member

organization chart*



*As of June 30, 2017

appendix 1

Visit Mendocino County: Strategic Direction 2017/18-2019/20

CLARITY	Vision Enriching experiences for our guests, enhanced lifestyle for our residents, and stability and diversity for our economy	Mission Visit Mendocino County stewards and amplifies the total Mendocino County experience.	Values Transparency We foster trust through openness and integrity. Accountability We are outcome-oriented and professional. Partnership We create alignment through inclusive and meaningful relationships. Community We contribute to the fabric of Mendocino County. Innovation Our creativity reflects the uniqueness of our cultures and landscapes.	Reputation Leader We motivate and facilitate the tourism community. Accessible We welcome—and are responsive to—input from community members and stakeholders. Collaborative We actively seek engagement and collaboration with our stakeholders and partners. Bold We deliver on smart, effective, and forward-thinking ideas.	Position In order to support our stakeholders, generate economic activity for county residents through tourism, and inspire our visitors, Visit Mendocino County: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently markets the entire county and its assets. Creates, develops, and manages brand awareness for the county. Connects people and organizations to opportunities. Provides information to in-county partners and tourism resources to the industry. Delivers a robust and sustainable return on investment.
----------------	--	--	---	--	---

FOCUS	Imperatives Demonstrate and strengthen VMC's contribution to county economic and community vitality	Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bid assessment growth at 5% over average of top 3 competitors Year-over-year increase of sales tax receipts in Mendocino County Year-over-year increase in stakeholder survey response rate 	INITIATIVES	ACTION	
	Cultivate VMC's relationships and collaborations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year-over-year increase in number of events launched and reaching self-sufficiency Year-over-year increase in "opportunities" page visitation on VMC website Year-over-year increase in new applicants for BID and MCTC Board positions and committee membership 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase tourism revenue through the development and implementation of the annual integrated marketing, public relations, and sales plan. Improve data-driven decision making through increased participation and "buy in" from all of our partners. Develop a data-sharing process that offers context and insights for partners.
	Raise awareness of the Mendocino County experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year-over-year increase Mendocino County awareness score Year-over-year increases in impressions and ad equivalency Year-over-year increase in experience perception score on in-market visitor survey 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster collaboration and county-wide alignment by creating and developing the "go to" website for all tourism stakeholders. Strengthen regional tourism relationships to leverage broader marketing opportunities. Proactively educate and communicate with all tourism stakeholders.
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase Mendocino County brand awareness and positive perception. Work with partners to develop, promote and grow strong and beneficial tourism activities and events. Explore our options to influence and shape potential cannabis tourism. 		

appendix 2: 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.

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.

visit
mendocino county

345 N. Franklin Street
Fort Bragg, CA 95437

phone 707.964.9010
toll free 1.866.466.3636

www.visitmendocino.com