



2019 MARKETING PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

The Branson Convention & Visitors Bureau markets the Branson/Lakes Area, positioning Branson as a family-focused, wholesome tourist destination. While constantly evolving, the 2019 Marketing Plan represents the strategic direction of the CVB. The CVB seeks professional and community input and monitors and responds to changing media, economic, and tourism trends throughout the execution of this plan.

As directed by the CVB's contracts with the City of Branson and the Tourism Community Enhancement District (TCED), the CVB is required to market and promote Branson as a tourist destination through strategies and tactics which produce measurable success for the City and District as a whole.

This plan encompasses key program areas of the Branson CVB, and provides actionable tactics designed to deliver the highest level of success. The process behind its creation includes the review of recent, Branson-specific research, national and regional trends analysis, and the input and advice of numerous committees, including the District Marketing Council.

While the Branson/Lakes Area has begun to diversify its business base, tourism is, and for the foreseeable future will continue to be, the economic driver for the area. This plan is developed for and centered on tourism marketing and will evolve as changes in that discipline dictate new courses of action.

The 2019 Marketing Plan will guide the decisions and direction of the organization. This plan provides a clear path for the staff and constituents of the CVB to make the most effective and efficient choices in marketing Branson as a unique, best-in-class, nationally recognized tourist destination.

2019 TRAVEL OUTLOOK FOR U.S. & BRANSON

Travel and tourism continue to grow across the United States. However, that growth has begun to slow, and travel patterns have started changing.

Nationwide, according to the U.S. Travel Association, leisure travel person-trips have increased in 2018 by 1.9% to 1.82 billion while business travel person-trips increased by 2.1% to 472 million. The U.S. Travel Association estimates that leisure travel will increase at a lesser rate in 2019 with leisure travel increasing by another

1.9% and business travel by another 1.7%. The extended forecast through 2020 shows leisure travel increasing by 1.6% and business travel increasing by 1.3%.

The rate of growth has been slowing in recent years. While this year's growth at 1.9% would be slightly better than last year's 1.8% increase, it remains short of the 2.7% average recorded between 2010-2015.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce International Trade Administration's National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO), the United States welcomed nearly 77 million international visitors into the country, who collectively spent a record-setting \$251.4 billion experiencing the United States in 2017, a two percent increase when compared to 2016. Over the course of 2017, travel and tourism exports helped support more than 1.2 million American jobs across the United States.ⁱ

U.S. travel and tourism-related exports accounted for nearly 32 percent of all U.S. services exports and 11 percent of all U.S. exports, with goods and services combined.

Spending on personal travel including leisure, education and health-related travel as well as passenger air transportation increased 3.1 percent and 3.4 percent, respectively. Education-related travel, in and of itself, accounted for nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of the increase in personal travel.

The number of international travelers to the United States rose 0.7 percent in 2017 compared to the previous year. Growing markets were led by South Korea (+17.8 percent), Brazil (+11 percent), Argentina (+10 percent), Ireland (+9 percent), and Canada (+4.8 percent). Growing markets outnumbered declining markets 2-to-1.ⁱⁱ

Branson's situation is still evolving. Visitation increased at a brisk pace from 2012-2016, however it slowed in 2017. While the market enjoyed a strong start to the year, increasing by an estimated +2.9% in the first quarter of 2017, April was unusually slow and despite small increases in both May and June the area was down slightly at the end of 2017. In 2018, the market shows consistent growth over 2017. At the end of the 3rd Quarter in 2018, visitation was up 1% over 2017 levels.

Sales tax receipts through September 2018 indicate that Branson's tourism tax revenues were up 4.73% and that Taney County sales tax revenues were up 6%. The Tourism Community Enhancement District Tax revenues posted a 6.4% increase and Branson's 1% City Sales Tax revenues were up 7.51%ⁱⁱⁱ.

YTD THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2018 TAX COLLECTIONS*

	2018 vs 2017
City of Branson Sales Tax	+7.51%
Taney County	+6%
TCED Tax	+6.4%
City of Branson Tourism Tax	+4.73%
Stone County	+10.32%

Year-to-date through September 2018 (the most recent reporting cycle available as of this writing), first-time visitors were up 2% from 24% in 2017 to 26% in 2018. The Branson CVB's intercept research showed that self-reported visitor spending per party decreased \$51 from \$970 in 2017 to \$919 in 2018, which is something we are going to monitor closely in the 4th Quarter results.

Branson's length of stay decreased slightly from 4.4 nights in 2017 to 4.3 nights in 3rd Quarter 2018.

The percent of people seeing shows decreased 2% from 71% to 69%, according to the most recent report available as of this writing. Visitors reported seeing an average of 3.3 shows which was flat compare to the same timeframe of 2017.

A new updated report will be published after December 2018 visitor intercept survey results are posted.^{iv}

Assuming similar results October through December, we estimate that Branson's visitation will be up around 1% by the end of 2018. Therefore, Branson will need the 4th Quarter to remain steady in order to have measurable growth in 2018. At this point, it is estimated that Branson's visitation will be up slightly in 2018 but not quite at 2016 levels.^v

Moving forward there remain a variety of micro and macro-economic issues that will make it challenging for Branson to continue to generate as strong of growth as was recorded from 2012-2016.

The 3rd Quarter of 2018 has seen steady U.S. economic growth. Gasoline prices bottomed out at an average of \$1.75 in January 2016 and stood at an average of \$2.38 at the end of 2017. 2018 prices have been flat over the summer and into early fall. However, there are still a few uncertainties that remain. Given that many

Branson visitors are retired, any type of volatility or uncertainty in the marketplace could have a negative impact on the destination. Hence, like the national forecast, H2R forecasts Branson's growth in 2019 to look similar to what we are experiencing in 2018.

The U.S. Unemployment rate flattened out in late 2017. It has dropped or maintained for five of the past six months and is currently sitting at 3.7%.

Assuming there are no major economic or environmental surprises beyond the norm, projections from H2R Market Research are that Branson's visitation will post a 1% increase in 2018.^{vi}

MEASURING RESULTS

The CVB marketing programs are research-driven. Research provides data to substantiate important trends within our region and industry and serves as a valuable tool in decision-making. Research provides facts on a market-wide basis, rather than individual perspective.

Four measurements are used within the CVB to monitor the success of the organization's marketing efforts:

1. **Tax Revenues:** Tourism Tax and Sales Tax revenues from the City of Branson, Taney and Stone counties, and the Tourism Community Enhancement District provide a standard to measure the success of our district businesses and give an objective basis of comparison for measuring our ultimate success in growing Branson's economic strength.
2. **Responses to Advertising:** This measurement utilizes digital benchmarks and, to a lesser extent, 800 number phone call volume as a basis of comparison of response to media advertising.
3. **Ad Effectiveness Study:** This annual study measures the awareness of our advertising and public relations efforts and their effect on intent to travel.
4. **Visitor Profile:** Direct in-market intercept surveys measure attendance by market via zip code comparison.

A. MARKETING APPROACH

Branson has a loyal and committed group of guests who know and love the Branson experience and visit frequently. However, focusing our marketing on this group alone would yield diminishing returns and does not provide the basis for sustained and significant growth.

The key to long-term growth is diversifying the audience base we invite to Branson, while maintaining strong relationships with returning customers. An important component to extending the invitation further, is positioning the most relevant tourism product to the most receptive audience for that product, at the right time.

KEY APPEALS

- Friends and family can celebrate each other in a wholesome and authentic environment.
- Branson celebrates American values.
- Branson offers a variety of live shows.
- Branson offers a quality vacation experience for a reasonable price.
- Branson is surrounded by three spectacular lakes and exciting outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Branson is located within a day's drive of one-third of the country's population.
- Branson is home to a world-class theme park- Silver Dollar City.

This marketing plan provides an integrated, comprehensive marketing and communications approach, leveraging Branson's key appeals to drive increased visitation and improve overall perception of the brand.

Goal A:

Position Branson as the top choice in consumer consideration set for wholesome vacations.

Objectives:

1. Generate an advertising ROI that outperforms industry norms for CVBs with similarly sized budgets.
2. Maintain "intent to visit" across all tiers.
3. Increase Advertising Awareness across paid and earned media channels.

Tactics:

1. Grow quality and continuity of re-positioned brand messages.

In 2016 the Branson CVB launched an effort to re-position Branson’s brand to improve consumer perception of the destination, and ultimately lay the foundation for Branson’s future visitors and brand ambassadors. During the process, the position that resonated most with consumers, included the following attributes:

- a. Family: Branson offers a variety of activities that appeal to everyone in the family.
- b. Reconnection: Branson is a place where you can “get away” from every day activities/technology and focus on what’s truly important.
- c. Freedom: Free to do as much or as little as you want – it’s YOUR vacation.

In 2015, in partnership with Strategic Marketing and Research Insights (SMARI), the CVB conducted qualitative research to arrive at a logo design. Creative concepts, an extension of the brand repositioning, were tested next, to provide direction for the 2016-2018 advertising campaign. In 2019, we will once again conduct this qualitative research in order to provide direction for the next 2019-2021 advertising campaigns.

The more “thoughtful” or “emotional” concepts rose to the top as consumers’ favorites. Blending emotion and energy, these concepts provide an umbrella for the reintroduction of Branson to travelers.

“We Believe” was the chosen concept that will be used in all 2019 and 2020 marketing messaging. This concept scored highest on influencing interest in visiting Branson and likelihood to seek more information on the destination. It also evoked the highest ratings for presenting Branson as welcoming, wholesome, beautiful and charming.

The creative campaign features three distinct activity genres: Live Shows, Outdoor Recreation, and Family Fun.

The creative will be strategically delivered to each target market based on research that helps define which markets/demographics are most receptive to which specific activity message.

2. Employ media strategies maximizing effectiveness and relevance to current markets and targets.

Camelot will place TV media, and Miles Partnership will place digital media. The CVB will collaborate with all media partners, and consolidate media buying where appropriate to build maximum effectiveness and efficiency.

The advertising plan is designed to enhance consumer perception of Branson, keep Branson top-of-mind as a destination in priority markets, and drive traffic to ExploreBranson.com. In 2019, the CVB's media messaging will include specific calls-to-action to drive consumers deeper into the decision-making funnel. These activities include ordering a vacation guide, visiting the Official Branson website, signing up for e-newsletters and following Explore Branson on social media.

Research results show that advertising in multiple mediums is critical to achieve maximum effectiveness. A blend of the following advertising elements will be used:

- Television
- Online Banner ads
- Search Text ads
- Online video advertising
- Social Media advertising (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat)
- Content Distribution

Target Audience: Media will be extended across two main target audiences: Women 35-54 and Women 55+.

In 2018, the CVB advertised Branson in priority markets. Due to expenditure restrictions, the core markets of Springfield and Joplin did not expect to receive TV advertising in 2018. Digital media in these markets was also limited. Several significant additions to Branson's tourism product in 2018, including the new Time Traveler rollercoaster at Silver Dollar City and the launch of "Samson" at Sight & Sound theater, were to provide "new news" to share with this important audience mainly through earned and owned media efforts. National cable was used to extend reach and connect with potential first-time visitors.

In August of 2018, the TCED allocated \$300,000 of incremental dollars to the CVB to be spent in marketing. These funds were used for additional TV advertising for Fall and Christmas in core and primary markets. This decision was based on research from H2R showing a decrease in the core market in 1st and 2nd Quarters.

In 2019, TV advertising will be purchased in priority markets, on national cable and in the core market. This TV buy will begin in February with a strong push of the entire mix in order to boost travelers to book their vacations sooner rather than later.

While the market mix used in recent years has successfully delivered more visitors, additional media markets were investigated in 2016 to determine if new DMAs could deliver an increased volume of high-value visitors to the Branson area. Working with H2R Market Research, a three-year database (2013-2015) of 50 markets was created from Branson's intercept surveys. Each market was assigned a value based on criteria such as visitation, compound annual growth rate, intent to return, per person spending, etc.

The focused geography of these markets was 301-700 miles – focusing on those markets which have a larger population base but are within a reasonable drive distance to Branson. These markets have been dubbed “super-regional markets.” Seven super regional markets rose to the top. In discussions with Camelot Communications and the District Marketing Council, Memphis and Des Moines were deemed the two most valuable new markets that would be added to the media plan for 2017 and will continue to be targeted in 2018. To meet budgets, Dallas and Topeka were eliminated as spot markets, but will continue receiving national cable TV as well as digital media.

2018 market segments included:

- **Primary** (101-300 miles) Regional drive markets– Kansas City, St. Louis, Little Rock, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Ft. Smith, Paducah, Wichita and Memphis
- **Outer** (301-650 miles) – Des Moines
- **National** (650+ miles)

2019 market segments included:

- **Primary** (101-300 miles) Regional drive markets– Kansas City, St. Louis, Little Rock, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Ft. Smith, and Paducah
- **Outer** (301-650 miles) – Des Moines

- **National** (650+ miles)

The major difference in 2019 market segments will be the elimination of the “super-regional” markets of Wichita and Memphis. From the period of 2016-2018, the CVB consistently focused on these markets. Specifically, Wichita numbers have gone down year over year while Memphis has remained flat over the three-year period.

Scheduled media will be concentrated during peak travel planning times, with the heaviest activity starting in February and running thru late June. There will also be scheduled media in the primary markets in the fall and for Christmas.

Goal B:

Improve consumer perception of Branson.

Objectives:

1. Increase brand attribute ratings and post-ad traveler intentions.
2. Activate refreshed brand identity across all Branson CVB touchpoints, both local and consumer-facing.
3. Maintain Net Promoter Score of at least 55-60%. In 2018, the Net Promoter Score was the highest ever at 59%.
4. Explore licensing opportunities with key partners to enhance the reach of Branson’s brand.

Tactics:

1. Monitor intercept visitor profile survey results.

The multi-month visitor profile surveys are the most consistent method of tracking consumer sentiment as well as seasonal trends. H2R will continue executing these surveys in 2019, and the CVB will monitor the results to track key performance indicators such as the Net Promoter Score.

2. Redesign internal and external creative brand marks to ensure consistency and effectiveness.

Throughout 2019, Explore Branson touchpoints will continue to be redesigned to feature the new brand identity. Both internal (within the CVB and Branson community), and external (consumer-facing) opportunities will be identified and refreshed. Specifically, the CVB will seek more opportunities to install artwork

and touchpoints that provide opportunities to create shareable content, to help deliver our message further.

3. Build on success of existing creative campaign to develop the next generation of creative messaging for 2019 and beyond.

The current creative campaign has successfully moved the needle in improving consumer perceptions about Branson. Working with Cultivator and Strategic Marketing and Research, the CVB has developed a research-based campaign that will build on the effectiveness of the “Be Together” campaign, and continue telling Branson’s story, featuring the diverse tourism product in our destination: Live Shows, Outdoor Adventure, and Family Fun. Creative development took place in 2018, with a scheduled launch of the new “We Believe” creative campaign in 2019.

4. Continue growing and improving library of professional photo and video assets.

Branson’s photo and video assets are one of the most critical components to success in re-positioning Explore Branson’s brand. Consumers rely heavily on visual cues to persuade them to visit a destination. The CVB will continue investing in high quality, professional still photography and video footage that can be used throughout our marketing messages both online and offline.

Goal C:

Grow Branson’s position as a multi-season vacation destination.

Objectives:

1. Enhance shoulder season opportunities and extend the invitation further.
2. Leverage special events and limited engagements to drive visitation from inactives.
3. Develop a sports facility strategic plan for 2019

Tactics:

1. Reallocate media investment as recommended by media partners, to focus additional dollars on a concentrated spring marketing effort.

To further grow the opportunity to capture spring break travelers (including families and multigenerational travel parties); the CVB will continue

appropriating funds to February, March and April to make a sizable impact on the awareness of Branson as a spring-time destination.

2. Promote Branson as a fall getaway destination.

Run fall-themed creative messaging across all mediums, promoting live shows and the scenic Ozark Mountains during this time of year.

3. Promote Ozark Mountain Christmas and “America’s Christmas Tree City” as a robust holiday season featuring live shows, a Christmas Tree Trail, and special events that can only be found in Branson.

Talk about Christmas TV Special

Goal D:

Convert consumers with a casual interest in Branson to overnight Branson visitors.

Objectives:

1. Implement organization-wide initiatives to “close the deal” with audiences including leisure visitors, meeting planners, sports organizers, tour operators and travel journalists.
2. Focus key creative messaging, specifically digital media, with strong calls to action that will drive consumers deeper into the trip planning funnel.
3. Investigate opportunities to more accurately track consumer engagement with the Explore Branson brand that leads to conversion.

Tactics:

1. Explore opportunities to further enhance the Branson Vacation Guide.

The Branson CVB produces several publications throughout the year, providing requested and necessary information to consumers and trade partners. These publications allow the CVB to collate the vast amount of data and travel options available to individuals and groups seeking trip planning assistance.

The annual Vacation Guide offers industry partners the opportunity to advertise their product to potential customers. It is the primary fulfillment piece through our inquiry fulfillment program. It is also used as a fulfillment piece at special events, trade shows, and in the Chamber of Commerce/CVB information center.

The CVB will continue evaluating the effectiveness of the Vacation Guide, seeking opportunities to enhance the publication in areas of editorial and trip ideas.

2. Produce niche collateral material as needed.

In addition to the Vacation Guide, the CVB will produce several niche publications to deliver to various audiences who frequently request information above and beyond that which is provided in the Vacation Guide. These publications may include:

1. Bi-Annual Meeting/Convention & Sports Planner Guide
2. Group Tour & Reunion Planner
3. Travel Agent Commission Guide
4. Student Travel Planning Guide

Goal E:

Convert consumers with a casual interest in Branson to overnight Branson visitors.

B. COMMUNICATIONS/PUBLIC RELATIONS

In 2018, more than 275 media from a variety of press, radio, TV and social media outlets were invited to Branson by the CVB and given additional insight into our Midwest vacation destination. In 2017, the annual ad equivalency tracked similarly to the \$19.3 million ad equivalency total for 2016. In 2018, ad equivalency, measured by Cision/Meltwater/TVEyes, year to date running \$1.2 million behind record \$15.7 million last year at end of September. In August of 2017, Time Traveler (a new coaster at Silver Dollar City) was announced and received press both nationally and internationally.

In 2016-2017 the Branson community welcomed more than \$362 million in new investments. In 2018 and beyond, we are on a sales mission – closing the deal – and spreading the word about longtime favorites and new additions to Branson’s tourism product.

As it is increasingly more difficult to get “good news” stories published, the CVB will provide the media with even more compelling reasons to take a closer look at Branson.

When FOX & Friends replied to the CVB’s invitation to cover the SDC announcement in August 2017, Executive Producer Lauren Petterson wrote “I would love to keep it in consideration. This news cycle has been insane – so I can’t honestly say if we will have the resources to do much out of the hard news realm.” This is a typical

response from television producers in today's media environment. It's increasingly hard to cut through political news to get anything else on the media radar.

That being said...we were thrilled to welcome FOX & Friends three times this year to Branson. The first was for the opening of Time Traveler at Silver Dollar City, the second a visit to College of the Ozarks, and finally the Election Day results live from downtown Branson at the Farm House restaurant.

The following goals and objectives are designed to reach the CVB's targeted media audiences and provide cost-effective, third-party, credible promotion of Branson.

Goal A:

Generate positive coverage of the Branson area in regional and national media outlets.

Objective:

1. Generate \$20 million in ad equivalency as evaluated by national monitoring services (Vocus/Cision, Meltwater and TVEyes), representing a 55:1 ROI.

Tactics:

1. Generate feature stories in newspapers, magazines, online and other media across the country using Geiger & Assoc. and Dan Shepherd. We will host three FAM tours during springtime and fall, with focused, niche, individual FAMS.
2. Generate positive print, radio and TV coverage, both nationally and regionally working with Mindy Bianca PR, whose network of media contacts enables first-hand access to story placement in Branson's primary market cities and media outlets in New York City, Los Angeles, Dallas and Chicago. Additionally, staff amplifies added value offerings from media buys through Camelot Communications.
3. Continue improving and expanding Branson's brand image by pursuing ELLEN, CBS Sunday Morning, Hoda & Kathie Lee, The Weather Channel and other national TV shows.
4. Host A-list journalists by working with the CVB's PR Committee, Geiger & Associates, Mindy Bianca PR, Dan Shepherd Agency and others.
5. Invite journalists to Branson Live! Event in Chicago. This event will be held in September 2019.

6. Maximize coverage from members of the Missouri Press Association, Texas Press Association, and Arkansas Press Association by attending and sponsoring association functions.
7. Continue working with NW Arkansas/SW Missouri destinations for a complete Ozarks tour de force (Eureka Springs, Bentonville and Springfield) to bring in topnotch journalists by touting the overall “Only in the Ozarks” story.

Goal B:

Recruit professional media conferences to Branson.

Objectives:

1. Offer a compelling reason for journalists who have never been to Branson to come and experience our authentic hospitality.

Tactics:

1. We hosted the North American Travel Journalists Association (NATJA) annual conference in Branson in 2018
2. Sponsored the Mid-America Emmy Awards in Kansas City in September of 2018. Branson will be the host of the Mid-America Emmy Awards in 2019. We previously hosted this event in October 2016 at the Hilton Convention Center.
3. Invite chapters of Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) to hold their annual conferences in Branson, i.e., editors or freelance national chapters.
4. Bid on upcoming conferences to host Outdoor Writers Association of America and Association of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers, with their members’ support. Anticipate 2020 and 2021 conferences for these two organizations to be in Branson.
5. Plan strong offerings for continuing education seminars to further entice selection committees.
6. Maximize the value of first-hand experience by bringing editorial decision-makers and photographers to Branson for professional development offerings in conjunction with these conferences.

Capitalize on media interest in Bass Pro holdings, including PGA golf, the new Wonders of Wildlife Museum & Aquarium and the Outdoor Academy in addition to

the area's pristine lakes, nationally recognized entertainers, longtime award-winning family attractions, Silver Dollar City's Time Traveler, and more to promote the plethora of travel stories in Branson.

C. DIGITAL MARKETING

The CVB develops, operates and markets Branson's official digital channels, including ExploreBranson.com, and manages active communities on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and Pinterest.

Consistent with industry best practices, the CVB uses in-house resources and outside consultants to create unique and compelling content for these channels. In addition, the CVB and its vendor experts take advantage of site optimization, inbound links, content and social promotion to maximize our investment in digital channels and reach as many potential visitors as possible at every step of the conversion funnel.

The CVB reaches consumers through year-round paid advertising that coincides with offline advertising and takes advantage of opportunities unique to digital media. In many instances, these ads are geographically, demographically and behaviorally targeted and include rich-media display advertising, search engine marketing, contextual content distribution, retargeting and lead generation.

This comprehensive digital approach includes organic and paid components that speak to consumers at each of the following steps of the travel-planning process:

1. Branding/Awareness
2. Consideration/Inspiration
3. Planning
4. Booking
5. Follow-up and Loyalty

Goal A:

Use digital media to inspire, inform and convert Branson visitors.

Objectives:

1. Continue to refine and improve the user experience on ExploreBranson.com.
2. Optimize and maximize our investment of time and resources in social channels by analyzing engagement and reach.
3. Grow newsletter list by 10,000 subscribers.

4. Increase goal completions on ExploreBranson.com by 5% over 2018.
5. To maintain site traffic on ExploreBranson.com at 2018 level.
6. Optimize robust digital marketing dashboard that coordinates and integrates advertising across all digital media, including desktop, mobile and social channels.
7. Continue evaluating big data opportunities and how they apply to marketing efforts.
8. Continue seeking opportunities to overlay digital and traditional advertising.
9. Provide ongoing customer service and engagement through digital channels.
10. Continue to invest in content creation to inspire visitation.

Tactics:

1. After reviewing the findings of the Website Conversion Study completed in late 2017, continue to implement changes identified in the findings to improve conversion rates on ExploreBranson.com.
2. Evaluate and implement opportunities to use API data feeds to assist in maintaining up-to-date content on ExploreBranson.com
3. Reskin ExploreBranson.com in Q1 to match new brand creative to roll-out in 2019.
4. Execute form optimization program on ExploreBranson.com to foster better conversions.
5. Conduct landing page A/B testing to increase conversions on paid media programs.
6. Continue working with staff and outside resources to identify and create 360-degree and Virtual Reality content.
7. Coordinate and execute 2019 content asset list through photography and videography.
8. Work with digital marketing agencies, Miles Partnership and TwoSix Digital, to make sure campaigns are structured to foster website goal completions, including, vacation guide requests and newsletter sign-ups.
9. Coordinate the efforts of the CVB's digital marketing and social agencies to better maximize the effectiveness of paid advertising and content creation efforts by having monthly status calls.
10. Continue investing in analytics, research and training for the fast-evolving social media marketplace, including webinars and conferences.
11. Implement and optimize unified data dashboard for use by CVB staff and vendors.
12. Investigate big data measurement programs and content scheduling services.
13. Continue building upon the vibrant and active social media communities already created, working to expand and further engage these audiences.

14. Continue refining the CVB strategy for staff to respond to online questions, tweets and other direct communications with visitors by maintaining and improving on-call schedule.
15. Evaluate and improve social media community management strategy.
16. Evaluate new digital opportunities and implement new channels as is appropriate.
17. Evaluate and improve in-house video development for digital and social media needs as appropriate.
18. Continue existing monthly newsletter campaign and grow niche newsletter segments, including live shows, family fun, outdoor adventure and golf.
19. Evaluate new growth opportunities with Explore Branson Golf pages and golf council.
20. Overlay national cable and spot markets with digital and social ad buys.
21. Continue investing in the Google My Business program and to host a two-day seminar in effort to educate business partners of digital growth opportunities through Google.
22. Evaluate and improve current reporting metrics for ExploreBranson.com and social media communities.

Goal B:

Educate and empower community partners to better communicate and market via digital channels.

Objectives:

1. Increase number of businesses controlling their data on ExploreBranson.com by 5%.
2. Continue to grow and evolve the iConnect Portal as the official channel for B2B tourism information for Branson.
3. Keep the Branson tourism industry abreast of changing digital landscape and best practices.

Tactics:

1. Continue refining user experience on iConnect Portal in 2019.
2. Continue promoting the iConnect Portal as the official channel for B2B tourism information for Branson by producing a monthly newsletter for industry partners that drives them back to the portal.
3. Make optimizations to the iConnect newsletter to increase partner engagement.
4. Create how-to videos and two-day seminar for partner businesses about the features of ExploreBranson.com and the business data-management tool.

D. LEISURE GROUP TRAVEL

Branson group visitor numbers have seen growth in the past five years. The CVB's group marketing efforts in 2019 could set the stage for future growth in an ever-changing industry business model, with an active outbound effort to increase group travel visitors.

The term "leisure groups" represents a broad definition of many group types. In 2019, we will target established leisure groups as well as numerous niche groups such as bank groups, faith-based, military and family reunions, representing multi-generation group travel, which is a growing trend. Professional travel planners such as tour operators and travel agents continue to be established leisure group travel buyers and are a proven way to generate group travel business and bookings within a 12 to 24-month cycle.

In 2017 Branson hosted Travel South Domestic Showcase in partnership with the Missouri Division of Tourism. This event drew approximately 550 total attendees from around the US to Branson. The Travel South leadership team reported Branson was the first host city ever to receive a perfect 5.0 score and for strong early results. Additional results from Travel South include:

- 124 print & digital articles published
- 65,674,433 media impressions
- \$2,979,72 estimated advertising value

The benefits of hosting Travel South Domestic Showcase are continuing to be felt with more group travel business and bookings within the proven time frame of the 12 to 24-month cycle after hosting the conference. We continued in 2018 to build our relationship with Travel South by hosting a Branson dine-around during the domestic showcase in Biloxi, MS.

In January 2019, Branson will present for the 2nd year in a row, a sponsorship at the ABA Marketplace in Louisville, KY: the Branson Ice Cream Social booth. This sponsorship partners area businesses with the CVB to promote Branson to key tour operators for four days to network and sell Branson while enjoying ice cream served by Branson suppliers. This sponsorship will include a customized Branson ice cream booth displaying Branson graphics, images, and logo. In addition, our efforts to market to ABA tour operators in Louisville, KY includes a Branson Dine Around featuring Branson entertainment: Clay Cooper, Matt Gumm & Yakov Smirnoff.

Branson will host three prominent group sales conferences in 2019. These niche market conferences continue to have a strong presence in the group travel industry. These conferences include: Heritage Club International (HCI), Missouri Bank Travel Exchange (MBTE), and Military Reunion Network (MRN) Regional Round Table Annual Conference for Military Reunion Planners.

In 2019, the CVB will host a group sales event: “Branson Live in Chicago.” We hosted two of these sales events in 2018: “Branson Live in Memphis” in June and “Branson Live in Dallas” in September. These events were borne from a need to reach the next level of leisure group customers. By reaching tour operators’ clients, Branson will educate a wider audience of buyers, who can influence new group travel to the destination.

The Branson Live sales event series was created in response to discussions with Branson CVB committees and the community. Both events will host buyers from all group sales industry categories that represent both leisure, meetings and sports markets. These invited buyers will be comprised of tour operators, travel agents, faith-based groups, student groups, bank travel, military reunions, affinity groups, meeting planners, sports event organizers and travel journalists.

The full day of sales activities includes a morning trade show, an afternoon lunch with Branson entertainment, and an evening event with special entertainment. These events have the potential to impact group business in 2018 and beyond, bringing together qualified group travel buyers and Branson sellers in a unique and exclusive setting that will be conducive to buying and selling group travel to Branson.

For Branson to maintain its strong share of the country’s traditional senior adult motor coach travel, we’ll continue to have a presence through national group travel associations including ABA, Travel South Domestic Showcase and TAP Dance.

The CVB’s marketing efforts continue to focus on growing the student and youth market. These efforts include participation at the annual Student & Youth Travel Association (SYTA) and Texas Music Education Association (TMEA) annual conferences.

Our marketing efforts to attract and grow the military reunion market will be met through participation at Your Military Reunion Connection (YMRC) and Military Reunion Network (MRN) conferences.

Two FAMs scheduled in 2019 will round out the sales events hosted in Branson to reach tour operators and travel agents at the 11th Annual Professional Travel Planner FAM and music teachers and educators at the 13th Annual Music Director FAM.

The group travel industry continues to evolve in the 21st century. Research and development remain the best tool and the key to staying relevant in the marketplace. To help us better understand the industry in today's changing world, the Branson CVB will host a Tour Operator Focus Group in 2019. The CVB will hire a moderator to facilitate the program and invite a panel of key tour operators. The goal is to assess emerging trends that customers are experiencing to help us to better serve them now and in the future.

Goal A:

Increase the number of leisure groups to Branson.

Objectives:

1. Increase RFI's by 3% over 2018
2. Increase the number of RFPs by 3% over 2018
3. 50% FAM attendees book Branson business within three years of FAM

Tactics:

1. Sponsor ABA Branson Ice Cream Social booth with area partners in January
2. Sponsor Branson ABA Dine Around in January
3. Attend the Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA) exhibitor trade show in San Antonio, TX in February
4. Sponsor Branson TMEA Dine Around in February
5. Host NAMO Post Conference FAM
6. Host 10th Annual Professional Travel Planner FAM Tour in April
7. Attend Missouri Bank Travel Exchange sales conference (MBTE) in Lake of the Ozarks in May
8. Host 12th Annual Music Director FAM Tour in June
9. Sponsor SYTA Branson Ice Cream Booth with area partners in August
10. Attend Military Reunion Network (MRN) Regional Round Table conference in June
11. Produce "Branson Live in Chicago" sales event in September
12. Attend "Your Military Reunion Connection" (YMRC) sales conference in Baton Rouge and host a YRMC in Branson
13. Host 34th Annual ITMI Symposium

14. Attend TAP Dance Sales Conference in June
15. Attend Travel South Domestic Showcase in February and host a Branson dine-around
16. Work with PR department to promote military reunions to Branson by submitting
17. Branson military reunion stories and images to military magazines.
18. Develop and distribute 2019 group publications
19. Secure travel trade advertisements thru print and web based media sources.
20. Attend industry group travel shows and marketplaces with the goal to maintain current group travel relationships, develop new ones, and generate RFIs, RFPs and qualified FAM attendees to meet our objectives
21. Maintain memberships in leisure group travel associations
22. Daily database management
23. Produce outbound post card mail campaigns
24. Distribute sales leads to area businesses
25. Distribute travel show appointment notes via the industry portal
26. Promote Branson group travel to family reunions and travel agents through digital marketing. Measure engagement and report Google Analytics quarterly to determine benchmarks in 2019.
27. Work with digital team to establish organic social media campaign through Facebook and Twitter and develop monthly content calendar, reflecting social media best practices that will measure activity through engagement
28. Quarterly outbound email blast campaigns to Travel Agents via Mailpound
29. Attend SYTA Summit in February

Goal B:

Communicate and partner with area businesses to engage and encourage participation in CVB programs, projects, partnerships and publications to promote and facilitate group travel to Branson and ultimately to their businesses.

Objectives:

1. 50% or higher of Branson sponsors book business as a result of CVB FAMs.
2. 80% or higher of Branson sponsors positive overall satisfaction of FAMs.
3. 80% or higher of Branson sponsors positive overall satisfaction with Branson Live series and ABA and SYTA partnerships.

Tactics:

1. Maintain three leisure group committees: Groups & Travel Agents, Student & Youth and Reunion Market
2. Maintain 10-15 committee members on each of the three committees

3. Schedule New Chair orientation in January to review marketing plan and budget
4. Present the 2019 calendar of events by first quarter to include dates and times for quarterly committee meetings
5. Distribute 2019 sales guides by email and mail
6. Send 30 and 10-day reminder emails for partnerships, programs and publications in the 2019 sales guide
7. Meet with committee chairs and committee members quarterly to review and report on 2019 goals & objectives, projects and partnerships
8. Assign task forces for partnerships and sponsorships as needed
9. Communicate and post projects, meeting notes and reports through industry portal
10. Implement current policies on sales lead, RFI and RFP distribution
11. Develop and schedule an RFP 101 class for new sales persons in the community
12. Provide portal training and for new group sales and committee members.
13. Update 2019 Leisure Group Sales Department Guide Book 101 for new group sales training and orientation

E. MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS

The CVB will increase sales and marketing efforts in Washington DC, Denver and Chicago to gain more connections for national association groups, corporate groups and third-party planners.

We will shift efforts with MSAE, ASAE (Arkansas) and OSAE to focus on more advertising, sponsorship and key tradeshow to support the efforts of local partners. This shift will allow the CVB to focus sales efforts on new markets to find more new business.

We will continue efforts in the SMERF market – with special attention given to finding city-wide events including car clubs, motorcycle groups and niche groups (like Discover Santa) that also provide strong Public Relations opportunities.

Goal A:

Increase the number of meetings and conventions in the Branson/Lakes area.

Objectives:

1. Increase the number of qualified RFPs by 10% over 2018.
2. Increase definite room nights by 10% over 2018.

3. Increase awareness within the community about the importance of the meetings & convention market.
4. Increase PR exposure with editorial coverage in meeting & convention trade publications and track ad equivalency.
5. Increase web presence, search engine marketing and social media efforts to reach more meeting planners. Track page view traffic, keyword optimization, RFP production on website and Cvent and measure social engagement.

Tactics:

1. Advertising and Marketing:
 - a. Develop an advertising plan utilizing findings from the 2016 meeting planner survey.
 - b. Analyze year-end results with Cvent and optimize advertising package.
 - c. Advertise through opportunities with Helms Briscoe and Conference Direct.
2. Sales Efforts (Tradeshows, Prospecting & Events)
 - a. Develop new business from administrative assistants utilizing our membership with the International Association of Administrative Professionals.
 - b. Continue partnering with Spinnaker DME, a Chicago-based destination rep firm, to gain more leads from the Chicago area. Sponsor MPI Next and attend Connect Chicago.
 - c. Actively pursue new business in the DC market when additional flights are added from the east coast. These efforts will include involvement in the MPI Potomac Chapter, PCMA Capital Chapter and the DC Destination Reps group. When we can locate a candidate, we plan to secure a part-time rep who can lead efforts with tradeshows, blitzes and client events.
 - d. Attend industry tradeshows, marketplaces and hosted buyer events that bring a substantial ROI (tradeshow ROI is measured by attending 2-3 years in a row and tracking RFPs). With the possibility of new airlift, we will revisit larger, national tradeshows and events like MPI World Education Congress, IMEX America and Destination Showcase. We will also continue our sponsorship at Connect Marketplace, maximizing exposure at this productive conference.
 - e. Continue prospecting with lost business reports, LinkedIn and through industry directories.

- f. Increase grass roots sales efforts in Washington DC, Kansas City, Memphis, Tulsa, Oklahoma City and Dallas.
- g. Support our local partner efforts in Arkansas Society of Association Executives with advertising, sponsorship and attending main events.
- h. Support our local partner efforts in Missouri Society of Association Executives with advertising, sponsorship and attending main events.
- i. Maintain a presence with Oklahoma Society of Association Executives with advertising.
- j. Continue pursuing ground transportation options from SGF including Uber and other solutions.

3. Sponsorships

- a. Become destination partners with third party planner organization Conference Direct and sponsor their conference.
- b. Continue sponsorship with the Senior Planners Industry Network (SPIN) to capitalize on opportunities to develop relationships with senior-level planners and Shawna Suckow.
- c. Sponsored and hosted Connect Missouri in November 2018

4. Education

- a. Plan and conduct educational events for the local community with Cvent and iDSS. This training helps Branson partners to provide better proposals and capture all leads available to them.

5. PR

- a. Continue working with the Communications Department and Buffalo Communications to court travel writers and golf writers who publish articles for meeting & convention trade publications.
- b. Identify groups, like Discover Santa, that provide strong PR opportunities.

6. Digital & Social

- a. Create new content for ExploreBransonMeetings.com, including articles, site inspection videos and other video content.
- b. Continue keyword and retargeting campaigns to drive planners to website and RFP form.
- c. Establish a robust social media content calendar and feature testimonials, articles and short videos.
- d. Continue relationship-building on LinkedIn through industry groups and connections.

- e. Use Twitter for prospecting new meetings by following and researching event hashtags.

F. SPORTS MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT

It is the goal of the Branson CVB Sports department to drive direct visitor spending and long-term interest in return visits while introducing new audiences to the Branson/Lakes Area through youth and amateur sports. Despite limited facilities, the Branson/Lakes Area has experienced noteworthy success from the sports travel market.

The Branson CVB is an important resource for identifying and recruiting visitor-heavy events to the facilities currently available in our community. In 2019 the focus will be on attracting sporting events and conventions that fit current facilities while working with experts in the industry, and community stakeholders to implement the sports facility and venue development strategic plan defined in 2019.

In addition, the sports department will continue enhancing volunteer programs (Local Organizing Committees--LOC's) while working with community businesses to actively recruit, retain and grow sporting events while increasing recognition as a preferred market for sports event hosts and travelers.

Goal A:

Attract sporting events and conventions that best fit the Branson/Lakes Area facilities; showcasing the indoor and outdoor offerings available in our community.

Objectives:

1. Increase the number of qualified RFPs by 5% over 2018.
2. Increase definite room nights by 5% over 2018.
3. Educate community on the economic impact of sports events.

Tactics:

1. Focus sales efforts on cheer, dance, martial arts and other indoor athletic events that fit local theaters and current facilities.
2. Focus sales efforts on attracting sports conferences, tradeshow and conventions.
3. Maintain and build relationships with organizers of soft adventure/outdoor events that can be hosted on the lakes and trails (including Paddle Boarding, Fishing, Open Water Swimming, Running, Ragnar Trails, X-Terra, mud-runs).

4. Continue work with Branson Disc Golf Development group as they host tournaments annually (with the goal of hosting the PDGA Amateur and Junior Disc Golf World Championship in 2020) and expand Disc Golf product in the Branson/Lakes Area.
5. Support efforts of local event organizers as they implement and grow sporting events that showcase indoor and outdoor offerings.
6. While the Branson Rec Plex has very limited availability, we will support their efforts with baseball/softball, basketball and volleyball events when possible.
7. Work with the Branson Convention Center to add events that can utilize their facilities and new equipment during available and preferred timeframe(s).
8. Work with Ballparks of America to increase baseball/softball tournaments and other sports events that fit at their facility.
9. Sponsor industry events (i.e. NASC, SPORTS Relationship Conference) that provide optimum exposure to Sports Event Organizers.
10. Prospect and build relationships with event organizers from lost business reports, Linked In, past tradeshow/marketplace events and industry directories.
11. Sponsor events that provide national advertising opportunities and increase incremental travel (i.e. PGA, YBNNC, Cal Ripken, NAIA, etc.).
12. Host site inspections and/or FAM tours.
13. Inform and share information with the Branson community through the sports committee, portal.ExploreBranson.com and social media channels.
14. Work closely with Sports Committee Chair, Co-Chair and staff to define committee responsibilities.

Goal B:

Increase awareness to build participation and spectator attendance at events, recognition of existing sports facilities & venues and our family friendly tourism destination.

Objective:

1. Boost awareness of locally hosted and sponsored sporting events by running ads through social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and distributing Press Releases.
2. Increase event and facility/venue photography.
3. Increase participation from community members, event participants and spectators.

Tactics:

1. Host local FAM tours and economic benefit education event(s) for community.
2. Hold ongoing outreach events with key community leaders (brown bags, coffee meetings, etc.).
3. Add a Facebook Page for the Sports Department, dedicated to promoting, sharing and recognizing Branson sports events and information.
4. Increase messaging via Twitter to promote and recognize Branson sports events.
5. Maintain and provide content for all aspects of ExploreBransonSports.com, social media and other technology-driven marketing initiatives.
6. Work with BCVB team to coordinate and facilitate event photo and video shoots for future marketing initiatives.
7. Work with digital marketing department to define and implement social media plan to reach participation-based sports event attendees on a personal level.
8. Showcase the variety of live shows, attractions, outdoor activities, dining and shopping available to sporting event participants and guests through mediums that directly connect with guests visiting and/or watching these events.
9. Add content by telling stories about the event participants, families and friends when they visit the area.
10. Evaluate mobile marketing applications that link event attendees to local merchants, partners and restaurants.
11. Increase content and sports event information available on ExploreBranson.com and ExploreBransonSports.com for participants and spectators.

Goal C:

Implement the long-term strategic plan for sports facility and venue development.

Objective:

1. Assist with growth in Branson's position as a multi-season vacation destination through sport tourism.
2. Provide evaluation and recommendation to CMO regarding future staffing needs for the Sports Marketing and Development department.

Tactics:

- a. Meet with community stakeholders to build on discussions and progress related to sports facility and venue development.
- b. Work with industry experts and college students to update Sports Facility Study completed in 2015.
- c. Host workshops with community stakeholders.
- d. Capitalize on solid relationships built within the sports tourism industry.
- e. Work with consultants focused on grants, sponsorships and other funding opportunities.
- f. Work with the National Association of Sports Commission and industry counterparts to clearly outline roles/needs and properly educate LOC members.

Goal D:

Define and begin implementation of long-term strategic plan for golf tourism.

Objective:

- 1. Support current efforts for increased recognition of Branson as a world-class golf destination.

Tactics:

- a. Work with Branson Area golf council members.
- b. Communicate with Huddle Up Group and industry counterparts to gain insight into best practices for attracting golf travelers.
- c. Attend conferences for Golf Travel Planners, Tour Operators and Writers.
- d. Work with representatives within Dan Shepherd Agency, Billy Casper Golf and the GCSAA to gain industry specific insight for reaching golf travelers.
- e. Continue to grow Explore Branson Golf Facebook followers and Social Media reach.

G. COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

As directed by the Chamber/CVB's contract with the City of Branson, the CVB supports the Downtown Branson Mainstreet Association (Historic Downtown), and the Branson Veteran's Task Force through ear-marked funds. These dollars are allocated to funding programs within these organizations which are designed to ensure their success.

i "U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE ARRIVALS DATA REPORTS RECORD-SETTING SPENDING BY INTERNATIONAL VISITORS," <https://travel.trade.gov/tinews/archive/tinews2018/20180912b.asp>, September 12, 2018

ii Ibid.

iii Taney County, Stone County, City of Branson and TCED Tax Board, Official numbers YTD 2018 through September

iv H2R Market Research (Estimated, 3rd Quarter Report-YTD September 2018)

v Ibid.

vi Ibid.