



Visit **Sitka**

ANNUAL MARKETING WORK PLAN

FY19/20

January 8, 2019
VISIT SITKA
104 Lake Street, Sitka, Ak 99835

Summary

Visit Sitka's marketing plans are part of an ongoing process based on our 3-Year Strategic Marketing Plan 2019-2021 with responsiveness to current travel conditions, local economic realities and industry trends. Annual plans allow Visit Sitka to be nimble and forward thinking with our strategies adjusting as needed to changing exterior and interior financial conditions.

Key strategies, audiences and annual marketing budget are outlined. Visit Sitka's overall focus for 2019 is destination content marketing development. We note the following trends: 1. Instagram TV (IGTV) and Instagram Stories are taking more of your visitors' attention, 2. Constantly changing algorithms are a moving target for content publishers, 3. Micro-influencers and nano-influencers are on the rise (DestinationThink, Dec. 21, 2018).

2018 Highlights

Hosted Travel Blogger on Instagram 147K followers

@VisitSitka Instagram has over 3k+ followers

Sitka was selected to host SE Conference 2019 Annual Convention

Cruise Critic Selected Sitka as top 3-port in SE Alaska (2nd year)

Sitka hosted ATIA Fall Board Meeting Nov. 2018

First Annual Summer Expo

Lodging Tax and Sales Tax show positive growth

30% growth in Cruise Traffic for 2019

Sitka has the highest approval rating for all Southeast AK Ports

McDowell Agency, Inc.

Putting it to Action - Tactical Plans

Digital marketing

Digital marketing spans content creation; social media activities (post creation, promotion, and advertising); online advertising including search and display ads; and email marketing.

Given the advantages of digital advertising, including precise targeting, instant performance feedback and the ability this gives us to respond quickly based on this data, digital marketing will make up the largest portion of Visit Sitka's marketing spend.

Digital ad spend will be weighted strongly towards social media advertising and post promotion. The remaining portion of this budget will be used for search and display ads. (Display ads are used to raise awareness with your target audience. Their value for Visit Sitka comes through the use of retargeting for visitors to Visit Sitka's website.)

Print advertising

Magazine ads offer little-to-no trackability, leaving us unable to assess the ROI of ad placements or the relative performance of ads in one publication over another. In 2019/20 Visit Sitka will shift closer meet industry and consumer trends. Visit Sitka's print advertising will move to primarily digital advertising, offering a greater level of accountability, increased reach, and more efficient targeting. With an emphasis on digital marketing, a visitor experience begins long before they arrive and can last long after their journey ends.

Editorial and sponsored content and PR

Investing in editorial and sponsored content (long-form or visual content sponsored by your brand and published alongside native content) gives Visit Sitka the opportunity to reach an engaged audience with meaningful, relevant content. It also offers a more effective way to promote Sitka through magazines, such as Alaska Magazine or Seattle Magazine, than traditional advertising. Sponsored content in cruise ship and event planning industry publications will be prioritized as a way to raise the profile of Visit Sitka with decision-makers in these audiences.

Partnering with social influencers, many of whom are content producers themselves, not only provides opportunities to develop outstanding content but to capitalize on their reach, position as a trusted voice with a target audience, and the enthusiasm of their supporters. Many influencers also bring access to great editorial outlets.

Trade shows, events & presentations/meetings

Relationship building and face-to-face interactions with decision-makers are essential part of successful business-to-business marketing. Priority will be given to presentations to cruise lines executives and planners, attendance at key cruise line industry conferences and trade shows (for example Seatrade), as well as general tourism conferences and trade shows for meeting and event planning professionals, such as the Seattle Wedding Show and Destination West Show/Conference.

Putting it to Action - Tactical Plans *(Continued)*

Printed collateral

With the exception of a magazine-style Visitor Guide (see below), all Visit Sitka's print collateral will be designed to deliver useful information for visitors while in Sitka (for example the newly designed Sitka Pocket Guide), helping them make the most of their stay and maximize their spend. To reduce printing and distribution costs, all printed material is easily accessible in a user-friendly, mobile-ready digital format, and downloadable from the Visit Sitka website.

Platform Specific

Digital/social media

- Maximize Visit Sitka's presence on the different platforms as well as the placement of social media ads.

Email

- Proactively collect emails of current visitors through feedback forms and incentivized contests.
- Establish an occasional email newsletter campaign to remain front of mind with previous visitors and consolidate social media efforts.
- Utilize email to build relationships and remain front-of-mind with meeting and conference prospects. Use curated content to build a valuable regular email to contacts. Advertise Visit Sitka's presence at tradeshow with email.

Website

- Continue building out the meetings and conventions section of the visitsitka.org website so that it is information rich, providing full details of Sitka's offer. This section of the website must provide useful information to meeting planners, including a full overview of venues and facilities, sample itineraries, and links to suppliers.
- Upload user-friendly, mobile-ready, digital versions of all printed materials for reference and download from the Visit Sitka website.
- Set-up retargeting based on visits to key pages on the website (Add the Facebook Pixel).

Audience Specific Strategies

Current visitors

- Use geo-targeted Facebook ads to showcase member services to tourists in port and drive maximum visitorspend while in Sitka.
- Encourage cruise ship visitors to engage with Visit Sitka online while in port, for example, prominent promotion of hashtags, social media pages, or online sources of information in Sitka (e.g signage at embarkation/disembarkation points).
- Actively encourage visitors to share stories over their experience during and after their visit and give themmeaningful methods of doing this. For example, highlight the Instagram tag feed on the website. As Partners and Visitor Center staff, request visitors contribute to review sites or post user-generated content on social media.

Meetings, conferences, and convention visitors

- Continue to develop and make the following resources available through Visit Sitka website: Events & Meeting Guide and Meeting Planner's Toolkit (see below).
- 73% of meeting planners said online advertising is the most effective form of marketing to them, so focusyour advertising spend for this audience on digital search and display ads.
- Ensure ads targeted at meeting planners lead to a dedicated landing page not the website home page.
- Maximize the return of ad spend by retargeting ads to meeting planners who have already shown an interest in Sitka by visiting the Conference and Meeting section of the Visit Sitka website or landing pages from other conference and meeting ads.

Visit Sitka Partnership

Education program focused on:

- Emphasizing the importance of word-of-mouth in the context of today's digital landscape, and the importance of encouraging visitors to engage with and promote Sitka online after their return home.
- Building an understanding of Visit Sitka's marketing approach, its target niches, and the central stories it is telling these audiences. Helping partners identify their role within these stories, and how to use that knowledge to increase their business.

Audience Specific Strategies *(continued)*

- Exploring opportunities for sharing data or email lists of previous visitors to assist with destination marketing efforts. (e.g. uploading custom audiences within Facebook for page-like ad targeting for ‘Visit Sitka’).
- Open Visit Sitka’s social channels to partners. Partners can provide content based on guidelines provided by Visit Sitka.
- Offer Partners the option to buy in to influencer trips to have their product or services featured.

Travel-Trade and Promotion

Consumer	PR/Media	Conventions	Tourism	Travel Trade
San Diego Travel & Adventure Show January	Innovation Summit February	SE Conference Mid-Session February	Seatrade April	ASTA Small Business September
Denver Travel & Adventure Show February	TBEX North America September	Incentive Live March	Alaska Travel Industry Assoc. October	
International Pow Wow June	Alaska Media Road Show November	Smart Meeting Northwest March		
		Destination West July		
		IMEX America September		
		SE Conference (HOSTING) September		
		Global Incentive Summit		

Collateral

Sitka Visitor Guide

2019's Magazine-style Visitor Guide will feature content with high sponsored editorial content to ad ratio, featuring full-page visuals and content segmented to reflect the interests of the high potential target audiences as well as inspirational itineraries for the cruise ship passenger audience.

Offer targeted content and specific itineraries in the Visitor Guide for cruise ship passengers, highlighting opportunities unique to Sitka which can be experienced within the limited timeframe of their visit. The Visitor Guide magazine provides the most consistent opportunity to increase demand and greater spend from these visitors. This approach also offers partnership and promotion opportunities with partners, and increases visibility with locals in the community.

Events and Meetings Guide

Downloadable information booklet targeted at meeting planners. Highly visual prospectus showcasing Sitka's meeting facilities, outstanding location, and the quality of the services and suppliers available. Planners should be able to present this document to decision makers to support a meeting proposal. Content can duplicate information shared on the website.

Also, a Meeting Planner Toolkit should be available digitally through the website providing detailed listings for local services and suppliers, itinerary suggestions, and inspiration to support planners organizing events.

2019 Content Projects

Asset Development

1. Produce 5 (one for each high-potential niche) x 1-1:30 minute story video shorts displaying experience-focused visuals. Recut content to multiple versions of 1 minute clips for Facebook and 30 seconds for Instagram.
2. Arrange 2-3 influencer trips to Sitka in order to develop compelling content and distribute this content to large numbers of individuals from the Urban Escapees and Adventure Explorer audiences.
3. Produce a gallery containing 30-50 high quality professional, on location, images for each high-potential niche to visualize the stories and experiences being promoted to these audiences.
4. Actively seek out content partnerships with Alaska Airlines and high-end sport fishing and outdoors gear producers.

Measuring Success

1) Establish an effective multi-channel platform for promoting Sitka as a visitor destination

Increase visitor numbers and individual spend per visitor as well as support members and the community promoting Sitka as a destination by building an integrated multi-channel marketing platform.

KP Is

- *Visitor numbers*
- *Tourism revenue and spend per visitor*
- *Website traffic (Users, new users, sessions, session duration)*
- *Social media followers*
- *Requests for travel guide*
- *Social media engagement (likes, comments, shares - social media posts and digitalads)*
- *Video views*
- *Conversions - Click-thru rates (digital ads) and information requests*
- *Partnership numbers*
- *Meeting numbers (total overall attendees)*

2) Increase brand impact

Increase the visibility and appeal of Sitka as a visitor destination, as well as promote a clear understanding of its offer with specific target audiences, by developing and promoting an effective, high-impact brand presence.

KP Is

- *Reach (social media posts and digital ads)*
- *Engagement (likes, comments, shares - social media posts and digitalads)*
- *Video views*
- *Conversions - Click-thru rates (digital ads) and information requests*
- *Website traffic (Users, new users, sessions, session duration)*
- *Visitor numbers*
- *Tourism revenue and spending per visitor*

Measuring Success *(continued)*

3) Expand engagement

Convert visitors into ambassadors and leverage the enormous potential of user-generated content and word-of-mouth recommendations by engaging with visitors and potential visitors at all stages of the customer journey.

KPIs

- *Social media followers*
- *Reach (social media posts and digital ads)*
- *Engagement (likes, comments, shares - social media posts and digitalads)*
- *User-generated content indicators (e.g. Trip Advisor ranking)*
- *Hashtag uses*
- *Conversions - Click-thru rates (digital ads) and information requests*
- *Website traffic (Users, new users, sessions, session duration)*
- *Visitor Center foot traffic*

4) Target effectively

Maximize the ROI of Visit Sitka's marketing activities and reach potential visitors by focusing efforts on specific high-growth potential visitor audiences. Marketing efforts prioritize effective targeting over broad reach, utilizing content designed to connect with specific high-potential niches rather than for general appeal.

KPIs

- *Social media engagement rates (likes, comments, shares - social media posts and digitalads)*
- *User-generated content indicators (e.g. Trip Advisor ranking)*
- *Hashtag uses*
- *Conversions - Click-thru rates (digital ads) and information requests*
- *Website traffic (Users, new users, sessions, session duration)*