

visit  
**knoxville**  
TENNESSEE

SALES & MARKETING  
**ROAD MAP** 2015-2016



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## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Friends:

Since its inception, Visit Knoxville has made major strides in increasing visitor and convention business to our community, accelerating sustainable economic growth and development for Knoxville and Knox County. We have also emerged as the preferred source of tourism information not only for visitors, but our local community, including stakeholders and media.

We had a successful 2014-2015 fiscal year, and I have cited some key highlights below (more information can be obtained in the 2014-2015 Annual Report):

- Exceeded Total Booking Goal by 8%
- Exceeded Knoxville Convention Center Booking Goal by 22%
- Assisted in the Increase of Hotel/Motel Tax Collections which is up 16%
- Increased Website Traffic (organic searches up 120% from June 2014)
- Impressive Social Media Growth & Impact from June 2014 to May 2015
  - Facebook up 38%
  - Twitter up 42%
  - Instagram up 456%
  - Pinterest up 27%
- Partnered with the University of Tennessee to bring Garth Brooks back to Knoxville after 15 years. Garth performed a 4-night concert series that generated roughly \$7.5 million in economic impact while also contributing to the Visit Knoxville Marketing Fund.

In this 2015-2016 Sales & Marketing Road Map, you will find goals and strategies for Sales & Services, Marketing & Communications and Visitor Services. Each goal is actionable and measurable. You will also find details on our demographic and geographic targets.

As always, we welcome your comments and questions and appreciate your support as we work together to achieve these goals.

Sincerely,

Kim Bumpas

President  
Visit Knoxville

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TENNESSEE  
VisitKnoxville.com

Visit Knoxville continues to enjoy the support of a very informed and involved Board of Directors. These individuals are passionate about Knoxville and Knox County and the impact we have on a daily basis. They understand the economic impact of tourism and the importance of sales and marketing.

## 2015-2016

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**CORTNEY PIPER**  
Board Chair

**BILL LYONS**  
Board Vice-Chair

**CARMEN TEGANO**  
Board Secretary

**BECKY HANCOCK**  
Board Treasurer, Finance Committee Chair

**CRYSTAL WASHINGTON**  
Marketing Committee Chair

**BRAD ANDERS**

**LINDA BILLMAN**

**DEAN RICE**

**MIKE RILEY**  
Sales Committee Chair

**DOROTHY STAIR**

**Every dollar of marketing spent on promoting Knoxville produces \$19 in tourism spending.**

## ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS FOR 2015-2016

This year's organizational goals once again remain true to Visit Knoxville's mission to accelerate sustainable economic growth and development by increasing visitor and convention business to our community. We've incorporated new strategies to extend our marketing effectiveness with both leisure travelers and meeting planners. The 2015-2016 organizational goals include:

- Develop a Positioning Statement for Knoxville

This statement will appeal to both visitors and meeting planners and connect with all pillars of our tourism community

- Establish a Partner Program to grow Visit Knoxville's Marketing Fund

Develop and utilize materials and programs mutually beneficial for Visit Knoxville and our tourism partners

- Grow hotel/motel tax revenue by 5%

- Partner on activities and initiatives that support History & Heritage, Arts & Entertainment, Festivals & Events and Outdoor Adventure, including developing support materials for areas identified by new city signage (ex: Arts District, Theatre District)

- Work with partners to create a "brand" and promotional campaign for the 2016 Spring Festivals

- Focus on key special events for 2015-2016 including Knoxville's 225th Anniversary Celebration and The Knoxville Sessions (a partnership with Knox County Public Library and WDVX)

- Secure 2-million dollars in total production in Knoxville/Knox County through the efforts of the Knoxville Film Office

- Brand the Downtown Knoxville Visitors Center as a travel destination in the tour and travel market

# SALES ACTIVITY GOALS

The Visit Knoxville sales team promotes Knoxville as a destination for meetings and conventions in all markets. Our goal is to increase the number of quality bookings by:

- 1) Creating the highest economic impact for venues including the Knoxville Convention Center, Chilhowee Park and the Knoxville Civic Coliseum/Auditorium
- 2) Producing key incremental revenues to multiple hotels within Knoxville and Knox County

## Specific Activity Goals for 2015-2016 are as follows:

- Total Booking Goal – 110 groups (8% increase over FY14-15)
  1. Knoxville Convention Center – 22 bookings (22% increase over FY14-15)
  2. Chilhowee Park – 13 bookings
  3. Civic Coliseum – 4 bookings
  4. Hotel, other venues – 71 bookings
- Total Lead Goal – 280 Leads
- Increase the Lead Conversion Ratio by 5%
- Attend a minimum of 15 Trade Shows
- Host 3 Familiarization (FAM) Tours
- Host a minimum of 20 site visits targeting high value bookings with multiple hotel/venue combinations
- Execute a minimum of 4 event scouting trips or pre-promotes

# SALES ACTIVITY TIMELINE

The VK Sales Team is scheduled to attend the following trade shows and events:

## July 2015

Council of Engineering and Scientific Society Executives (CESSE)

## August 2015

American Society of Association Executives (ASAE)  
CONNECT (Sports & Marketplace)\*

## October 2015

Reunion Family Network

## November 2015

Rejuvenate Marketplace\*  
TEAMS

## December 2015

Association Forum of Chicagoland's Holiday Showcase  
Convention Sales Summit\*  
Tennessee Society of Association Executives

## January 2016

Religious Conference Management Association (RCMA)\*

## February 2016

Diversity Marketplace

## March 2016

Destination Showcase Spring Show\*

## April 2016

National Association Sports Commissions (NASC)  
ASAE Springtime Expo\*  
ConferenceDirect Annual Partner Meeting



## June 2016

Collaborate Marketplace

## Blitzes (dates TBD)\*

Indianapolis (sports)  
Washington D.C.  
Atlanta  
TN-statewide  
One additional market (TBD)

## Training

American Management Association  
Events Services Professionals Association

*\*Knoxville Convention Center promotion*

*Please contact the VK Sales Team if you would like to learn more*



## VISITOR SERVICES



**In June 2015, Visit Knoxville's Visitor Services Department reorganized to create a Tourism Manager position. This person will manage the Tour & Travel and AAA Markets, attending shows and placing calls.**

In an effort to book large conventions via the Sales Directors, as well as drive additional motorcoach business to Knoxville, the Visitor Services team will attend the following Tour & Travel trade shows, raising awareness of Knoxville and showcasing the Knoxville Visitors Center as a destination.

- GA-AL-South Central Motorcoach Marketplace – August 2015
- American Bus Association – January 2016
- Heartland Travel Show – February 2016
- Travel South – March 2016

**The Tourism Manager will also be responsible for pre-promotes showcasing Knoxville.**

Pre-Promotes for 2015-2016 (dates TBD):

- National Conference on Undergraduate
- Women of Faith

With a focus on the leisure traveler, the Visitor Services team will conduct two 2 AAA (American Automobile Association) blitzes in major cities within driving distance to Knoxville. Dates and locations TBD.



# MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS GOALS

Visit Knoxville's marketing and communications team is committed to developing and improving strategies that promote all that Knoxville has to offer through messaging and channels that increase both visitor stays and visitor spending.

## Marketing Goals, Strategies & Execution

### Goal: Engage Partners in Marketing Activities

Take advantage of VK's position as the area's tourism marketing leader to promote Knoxville as a whole and develop a platform that drives and supports community tourism partners.

**Strategy** - Develop a positioning statement for Knoxville. Expand the brand platform that showcases the unique culture, history, landscape and offerings of the area. VK will work with our tourism partners to develop a positioning statement that will:

Promote recognition by

- Setting Knoxville apart from the competition
- Generating referrals
- Setting expectations in the mind of visitors
- Creating clarity and focus among staff, vendors and community partners
- Helping connect with visitors emotionally
- Creating value over and above the physical assets of the community

## Goal: Engage Partners in Marketing Activities

(continued)

### Execution (Campaign Development) -

Upon completion of the research and brand positioning phases, Visit Knoxville will begin development of a new brand campaign. The campaign will paint a vivid picture of the new Knoxville brand and help potential visitors connect with Knoxville on an emotional level. The campaign will consist of the following elements:

- One :30 second television commercial
- Video assets
- Print ads
- Email marketing templates
- Banner ads
- Website visuals
- Collateral templates
- Social media assets
- Wearables

**Strategy** - Create a Community Partnership Marketing Program that generates economies of scale and allows community partners to reach markets through channels that would otherwise be cost-prohibitive.

The scale of the co-op buy, paired with the Visit Knoxville buy, will allow for small businesses to purchase advertising at a cost that is in line with their budget, while gaining access to the vehicles, technology and sophistication of a much larger ad spend. The program will launch with digital options. Additional opportunities will be considered.

**Execution (Digital Co-Op)** - The digital co-op is structured with three tiers of partnership investment and consists of two, three-month media flights. Program partners will be required to commit to at least one of the three-month flights.

### Metrics

- Web and marketing analytics
- Number of community participants



## Goal: Drive Engagement & Visitation

Deepen the brand relationship with consumers. Move beyond exposure and awareness to create the potential for repeat stays through a deeper affinity for Knoxville's unique culture and offerings.

**Strategy** - Engage potential visitors in a more sustainable Knoxville brand.

**Execution** - Incorporate content that will engage our audience more deeply. The goal is not only to generate trial, but also create a deeper affinity that incentivizes loyalty.

Visit Knoxville will concentrate content production across the following distribution channels and categories:

- Native Advertising
- Blog Posts
- Photography
- Video

**Strategy** - Distribute content through multiple channels (online publishers, website, email, mobile, social media and face-to-face communication) to reach consumers when and how they want across the travel cycle.

**Execution (Ex: Email Marketing)** - Through segmentation, Visit Knoxville communicates general information to a broad audience or specific information to a niche audience that has expressed interest in a topic.

The email marketing program consists of 3-7 emails per month to VK's database of more than 85,000 individuals from throughout the world. Each email contains a feature area, plus some combination of the content blocks outlined below. The content for the feature area varies based on seasonal emphasis, and highlights each of Knoxville's community pillars, multiple times over the course of a year.

### Content Blocks

- Lodging Spotlight
- Neighborhood Feature
- Business Spotlight
- Upcoming Events
- Featured Blog Posts

### Community Pillars

- History & Heritage
- Music & Entertainment
- Lodging
- Tours & Attractions
- Arts & Culture
- Outdoor
- Dining
- Festivals & Events

**Goal: Drive Engagement & Visitation** *(continued)*

**Strategy** – Continue to develop social media programs to inspire visitors to share their Knoxville experience and influence others to visit.

**Execution** - Visit Knoxville approaches its social media program with a strategic and methodical mindset. The program is built upon a variety of social media channels, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and YouTube and utilizes the following strategies:

- Content Calendars - planned posts that ensure “equal playing time” for all community pillars
- Flow Posts - “man-on-the-street” style information that allows for in-the-moment information dissemination
- Contests - designed to promote individual partners and the community
- Paid Advertising - often used to target specific groups and interests

**Metrics**

- Web and marketing analytics
- Social media followers and interactions
- Social buzz and sentiment

**Goal: Increase Awareness**

Promote consideration of the Knoxville market as a preferred travel destination in targeted close and outer drive markets.

**Strategy: Paid Media** - Visit Knoxville will continue to focus on channels and individual publications (print and digital) that have proven to produce high numbers of leads and conversions, while utilizing layered messaging and media to maximize reach and frequency.

**Execution Media buys for FYE15-16 will include\*:**

- Print
- Television
- Outdoor
- Digital

*\* We evaluate and adjust ad buys throughout the year. To obtain the most current Media Placement Calendar for Leisure and/or Meetings please contact the VK Marketing Department.*

**Goal: Increase Awareness** *(continued)*

**Strategy: Partnerships** - Deepen the Knoxville brand position through strategic alliances with trusted in-market partners that help define what the Knoxville brand means in the mind of the consumer.

**Execution** – Quarterly meetings with in-market partners to share information, brainstorm and carry out branding plans.

**Strategy: Earned Media** - Utilize online and offline press to carry a credible brand message to a broader audience.

**Execution** – Continue to network and develop relationships with travel journalists and bloggers to help tell the story of Knoxville in new and unique ways through a variety of channels.

**Metrics**

- Baseline and follow-up awareness surveys
- Incremental travel
- Marketing analytics



## ADDITIONAL MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS GOALS

- **Increase Visit Knoxville's visibility and recognition in the community**

Expand the VK Network\* by installing 10 new screens

Release the VK PSA

- **Improve user-friendliness of the Visit Knoxville website**

Partner with stakeholders to provide more in-depth content

- **Increase social media audiences**

Facebook by 35%  
Twitter by 40%  
Instagram by 75%  
Pinterest by 35%

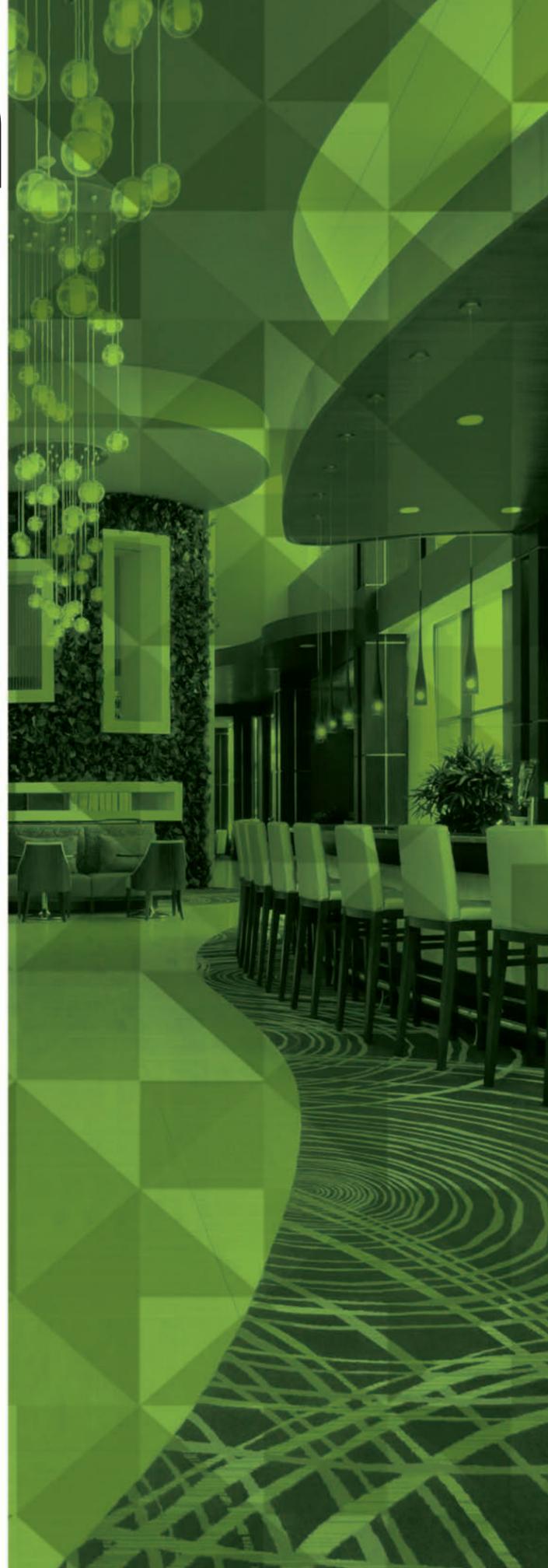
- **Host 50 journalists**

Identify journalists for specific stories not just broad stroke travel pieces

- **Conduct 7 media blitzes to key cities**

(Cities under evaluation: Lexington, Tri-Cities, Asheville, Charlotte, Atlanta, Birmingham, Chattanooga, Huntsville, Nashville, Tampa and Chicago)

*\* The VK Network consists of HDTV screens located in Knoxville's most popular, high-traffic locations. The network runs commercials and promotional videos to inform and entice visitors.*



## Guiding Principles for Marketing & Communications

- **Develop a positioning statement for Knoxville**

Provide a marketing platform that community partners can leverage to promote a unified Knoxville brand.

- **Leverage existing assets and alliances**

Establish and develop strategic alliances with trusted in-market brands to aggregate existing resources and reduce the overall burden of content production.

- **Evaluate program measures and return on investment (ROI) for major programs**

Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) for all initiatives; assign monetary value to each KPI; track/optimize performance over time.

- **Focus on drive markets to build and refine the Knoxville brand\***

VK marketing programs will serve to attract new consumers to Knoxville, while providing industry partners with opportunities to reach new markets that are otherwise cost-prohibitive.

- **Support community partners**

VK will continue to be a resource for local community partners by providing marketing opportunities, digital program leadership and tourism research.

- **Align efforts with state initiatives and co-op opportunities**

VK will leverage partnership opportunities offered by the State to expand campaign messaging into markets that would not otherwise be reached within existing budget parameters.

*\*VK will continue to partner with the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development's initiatives in key markets including Atlanta, Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas-Houston, St. Louis, Charlotte, Raleigh-Durham, Birmingham, Huntsville and Greenville-Spartanburg.*

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## Target Definition & Segmentation (Demographic & Geographic Focus)

From the analytics that have been collected over the past several years, Visit Knoxville knows the basic demographic makeup of individuals visiting and interacting with the website. Over the next year, we will enhance this data gathering process through a conversion study, a Sojern Digital Travel Trends and Behaviors Report and Quancast audience measurement program. This information will paint a more vivid picture of the target audience and help the marketing team further optimize and target campaign messaging and ad spending.

### Leisure Travelers

Demographic Profile: Overall		Male 41%	Female 59%
18 – 24	M	4.5%	F 8.5%
25 – 34	M	9.8%	F 14.5%
35 – 44	M	7.6%	F 11.8%
45 – 54	M	8.3%	F 9.0%
55 – 64	M	7.0%	F 10.4%
65+	M	3.8%	F 4.7%

The core audience is clearly defined within the parameters of these metrics as females 25-64, while males 25-34 also have a strong prevalence.

### Geographic Profile: Top Markets for Website Visitation

1. Knoxville
  2. Nashville
  3. Bowling Green, KY
  4. Charlotte, NC
  5. Atlanta, GA
  6. Chicago, IL
  7. Washington, DC
  8. New York, NY
  9. Tri-Cities, TN
  10. Chattanooga, TN
  11. GSAR, NC/SC\*
  12. Philadelphia, PA
  13. Lexington, KY
  14. Dallas-Ft. Worth, TX
  15. Raleigh/Durham, NC
- \**Greenville/Spartanburg/Asheville Region*

### Meeting Planners

While it is possible to develop the demographic profile of the leisure traveler, the “meeting planner” is more market specific. At Visit Knoxville, we rely on sales activities such as FAMs, trade shows, site visits and face to face networking with the planners to secure business for Knoxville.

### Market Demographics by Industry

Agriculture	Hobby
Corporate	Scientific/Engineering
Education	SMERF (Social, Military, Ethnic, Religious, Fraternal)
Environmental	Sports
Fine Arts/Culture	State Associations
Government Agencies	Trade

### Segmentation

In recent years, Visit Knoxville has targeted marketing programs to a universal audience. As part of a new strategy, VK will expand impact by tailoring messaging to specific subgroups. By providing relevant messages to smaller, niche audiences, VK aims to better engage consumers and increase conversion rates. To do this, VK will use segmentation methodologies to organize consumers into various types that behave in fairly predictable ways, making it easier to design programming and messaging. The principles behind the structure of the segmentation model are illustrated in the table below.

Target Type	Goal	Method	Message
Geography	Attract first time visitor	Referrals, e-mail	What’s New
Infrequent visitor	Increase frequency of visits	SEM, banner ads	Deals
Short-stay visitor	Increase length of stay	Banner ads	Grouped activities
Preferred trip activities	Increase number of activities	Social Media	Requested user-generated content
Niche interest	Increase certain type of activity	Social Media, e-mail	Focused content

## Upcoming Research & Analytics

In August 2015, Visit Knoxville will conduct a modified conversion study to determine the effectiveness of current advertising and follow-up materials in converting viewers into travelers. Visit Knoxville collects a great deal of data via website traffic and digital advertising response. The conversion study will paint a more vivid picture of the target audience that actually elected to visit Knoxville as a result of advertising. This will assist the marketing team in tailoring future messages to this target and target “look alikes”.

Additional research will be provided via the Sojern Digital Travel Trends and Behavior Report. This report will be provided as added value by Sojern, the media partner currently running digital ads for VK. The report will be delivered in September of 2015 (with data from August 2014-July 2015) and will contain actual consumer behavior trends amalgamated from various OTAs and travel engines.

### Analytics Reporting

Visit Knoxville will continue to collect and analyze web and marketing analytics through a monthly leisure marketing performance report.

Web Analytics allow VK to pinpoint exactly how the website is performing. They enable VK to track how people have initially located the site, how they behave once they are on the site and why they leave. This information allows the marketing team to tweak and improve the quality of content on VisitKnoxville.com so that VK can provide visitors the specifics they are seeking and, in turn, improve conversion rates.

Marketing Analytics enable VK to delve deep into how its marketing activities are performing. Understanding this data allows VK to streamline its marketing efforts, minimize waste and assess ROI.

### Quantcast Data

Quantcast is a large data processing company that specializes in website audience measurement. Quantcast relies primarily on tracking pixels installed on the pages of websites to measure audience data, which is then used to compile visitor profiles and build a detailed picture of a website’s audience. The data obtained from these pixels are then paired with browser cookies and modeling is carried out in order to generate visitor profiles.

Visit Knoxville applied the Quantcast pixel tracking system to its website in April 2015. The marketing team has begun studying the data and drawing key insights to further enhance ad targeting and real time bid management.

## Brand Awareness & Sentiment Surveys

The marketing team at Visit Knoxville is continually seeking ways to raise awareness and create positive sentiment in the mind of travel intenders.

To measure the effectiveness of our efforts in these areas, we will execute year-over-year brand awareness and sentiment surveys. These surveys aid the marketing team in determining gains in awareness among the target audience and significant shifts in the sentiment surrounding the Knoxville brand. In fiscal year 2015-2016, we will execute a baseline survey prior to the launch of the new brand identity and subsequent campaign. The baseline will allow us to determine increases and decreases over time as the survey is repeated in subsequent years.

**Visit Knoxville will use these insights to establish a long-term brand positioning statement, a comprehensive picture of high-converting target audiences, and a marketing and communications platform that will result in increased conversion rates.**

*For more information on any of the above, please contact the VK Marketing Department.*

## Marketing & COMMUNICATIONS TIMELINE

### July 2015

Organize and conduct modified conversion study

### August 2015

Organize and conduct brand awareness and sentiment baseline survey

### September 2015

Delivery of Sojern Digital Report: 12-month Analysis of Digital Travel Trends and Behavior for the Knoxville Market

### October 2015

Development of Knoxville brand positioning statement

### November 2015

Community partnership plan onboarding

### December 2015

Concept new marketing campaign based on research results and new brand positioning statement

### January 2016

Finalization of creative units for new campaign and community partnership program

### February 2016

Launch new campaign and community partnership program

### March – June 2016

Track new campaign and community partnership program results

## Staying Tuned-In to Trends & Implications

Remaining dialed-in to current travel trends and demographic habits allows VK to tailor marketing strategies and messaging. The following trends and implications are key to the development of this year's (and future years') plans:

### TREND

**Impact of Millennials:** Millennials are of obvious and growing importance to the tourism industry and have distinct characteristics that should be considered:

- More interested in urban than resort destinations
- More likely to travel in pursuit of favorite interests or activities
- More likely to travel with friends in organized groups
- More likely to solicit recommendations on travel destinations and activities from social media networks, blogs or writer's personal accounts

### IMPLICATION

Visit Knoxville will craft messaging and offerings that cater to this unique set of characteristics, including emphasis on urban amenities, niche activities and group offerings. Social media, blogs and earned media will focus messaging, in part, to this target audience.

### TREND

**Powerful Seniors:** Seniors are a large and powerful consumer group that has the disposable income to travel. They prefer relaxing experiences, quieter destinations and excellent service.

### IMPLICATION

While Knoxville has many festivals, events and activities to promote year-round, it is also a great environment for a nice, relaxing weekend getaway full of Southern hospitality, fine dining and entertainment. These aspects will be communicated to the senior audience through a more traditional media mix.

### TREND

**Rise of Conspicuous Leisure:** Conspicuous leisure, or the signaling of social status through consumption of experience rather than through consumer goods, is also more prevalent than ever. People, and not just the affluent, see unique experiences as social currency. The dominance of social media – and with it the widespread sharing of vacation photos with friends, families and colleagues – has fostered this trend.

### IMPLICATION

The sharing of positive experiences unique to Knoxville through social media is vitally important in developing it as a preferred travel destination. Aggregating these experiences under a common banner will help extend this reach and build authenticity.

### TREND

**Growth of Creative Tourism:** Creative tourism is travel directed toward an engaged and authentic experience with those who reside in the destination. Unique experiences with local craftsmen such as micro-brewers, painters, printmakers, glassblowers or musicians are what this audience craves.

### IMPLICATION

Visit Knoxville will work with community partners to collect information about these types of experiences and disseminate it to the various niche audiences through digital and earned media communications.

### TREND

**Visuals are the New Language of the Digital Era:** The rise of Instagram and photo sharing on Facebook speak to this. Travel is uniquely suited to visual media. Content marketing -- especially through social media -- has been driven primarily by images, and now brands across the spectrum are adopting visuals as the primary way they speak to their users in digital media.

### IMPLICATION

Visit Knoxville will continue to use visuals as its primary form of communication across social/digital media. VK will tap travelers' photos, videos and social networks for its marketing materials as frequently as possible. Moving forward, VK will challenge itself to share engaging visuals that not only portray a place, but also elicit emotion from the viewer.

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