

Visit

Sitka

2016 | 2017 | 2018  
3-YEAR Strategic Marketing Plan



**“People travel for a variety of reasons: to escape, explore, understand and participate. But at the core of the experience lies the destination – the place that hands something to the traveler to keep forever and share with others.”**

**(USAID. Tourism Destination Management: Achieving Sustainable and Competitive Results, 03/2013).**

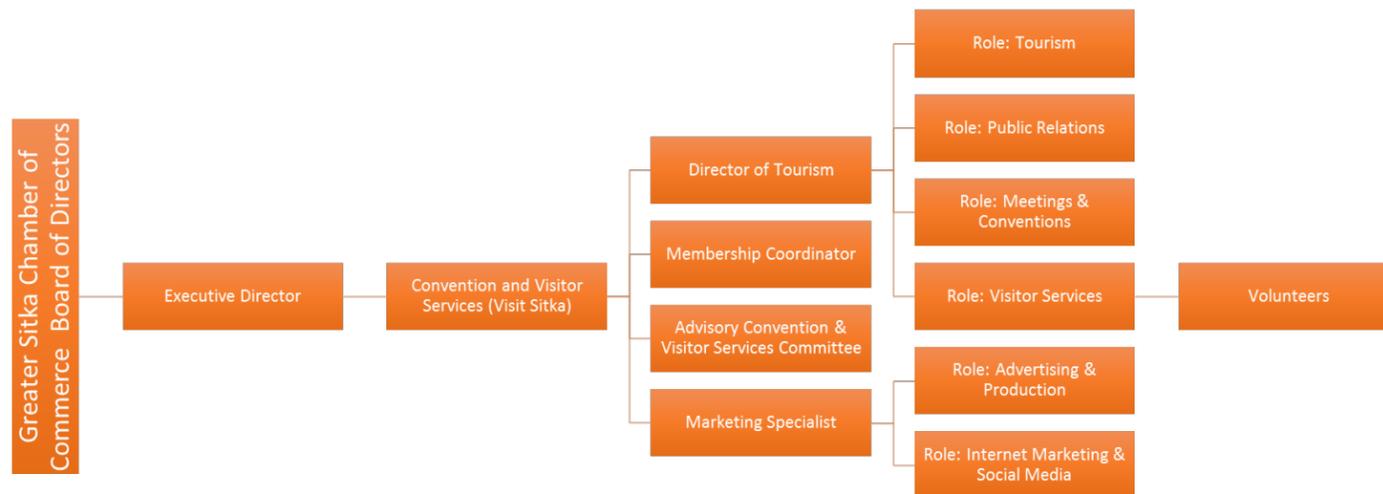
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## Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce

The Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce links businesses with other leading Sitka area business members, officers, leaders and managers, and elected officials to enhance economic growth and development. Through involvement in and attendance at chamber events, local business leaders are better connected with other business professionals outside of their regular schedule.

The Mission: The Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce is a voluntary organization of business and community leaders who promote, support, and facilitate commerce and economic growth in the community.



## Background

The Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce has been contracted by the City and Borough of Sitka to promote Sitka as a travel destination supporting an important local economic driver. In 2013 tourism poured \$3.72 billion into Alaska's economy including \$78 million in tax revenues to local municipalities and \$1.24 billion in labor income. With 1 in 11 Alaskan jobs within the visitor industry Sitka has a vested community interest in tourism development. (McDowell Group. Economic Impact of Alaska's Visitor Industry, 2012-2013 update).

In the Sitka Chamber's new role as a destination management organization (DMO), the contracted convention and visitor services will be known as **Visit Sitka**. DMOs look at the whole tourism industry in a place, facilitate private/public sector and other stakeholder collaboration, care for the tourism value chain plus develop programs for telling a unique destination story and becoming warm hosts for visitors no matter the purpose of their journey.

This three-year strategic marketing document will guide Visit Sitka's work scope and Investments. It will serve as a blueprint for staff and committees developing specific annual work plans for marketing programs within budget and metric constraints. A strategic marketing plan aims to boost Sitka tourism brand awareness and visitation revenues while maintaining and increasing non-resident travel to and spending in Sitka.

## Current Foundational Marketing Plan

Due to the forward nature of destination marketing including advance book budgetary savings; Sitka's former DMO (Sitka Convention and Visitors Bureau) has many foundational marketing elements currently active. These include a fully redesigned Annual Visitors Guide, travel trade show booth commitments, Sitka branding/wayfinding project, interactive website, a suite of HD 1-minute videos and 30-second commercials highlighting Sitka's sectors of travel interest, social media engagement on Facebook, YouTube and Pinterest plus the "BackRoads Alaska" collaboration with Haines CVB to promote cruise ship visits to the less-frequented ports of Sitka and Haines as well as other historical knowledge.

Visit Sitka will leverage all of these assets during our start-up phase to transition smoothly to the new CBS contracted DMO model. Fiscal prudence, proven success, promotional continuity and efficient implementation logically dictate building and expanding on the currently laid down strategic marketing foundation. (See Appendix A). Hence this iteration of the strategic marketing plan while integral to Visit Sitka's development remains fluid during this change to Sitka's new DMO business model. While the strategic marketing plan provides a roadmap for annually developed work plans of Sitka specific marketing tactics; further work remains for Visit Sitka startup model in strategic framework, mission and objective, annual work plan, trends/implications and internal structural supports such as committees and staffing. Revisions will address these areas as needed.

## Developing & Implementing the Brand

Visit Sitka efforts will focus on re-engaging Sitka's contracted destination brand/wayfinding firm and respective local advisory committees to complete work on a unique and authentic destination identity for Sitka which in turn will inform wayfinding design. Completion of project includes a branding guidebook, implementation plan and relevant signage throughout the community. Once in place strategic market planning can incorporate brand vitality and engagement along with further innovation to take full advantage of branding product. Beyond the initial launch Visit Sitka will promote the brand with continued efficiency and integration. Efficiency factors heavily with limited marketing funds which may be mitigated by integration as well.



## Initial Guiding Principles

**1) Do what the community cannot do for itself.** Visit Sitka will provide a marketing platform to promote the Sitka brand.

**2) Leverage previous plans and partnerships; focus on market development.** Visit Sitka will promote the Sitka brand to target audiences and build on trusted partnerships to maximize marketing reach.

**3) Evaluate program measures and return on investment (ROI).** Visit Sitka will track and evaluate marketing impact on attracting visitors.

**4) Support membership businesses/organizations and the wider local economy.** Visit Sitka will provide resources to membership businesses and others through marketing options, new branding/wayfinding final development and implementation, web leadership, education opportunities and dissemination of tourism research materials helpful to the success of their endeavors.

**5) Develop Web and Social media expertise.** Visit Sitka will continue to improve its web/social media through ongoing professional development to promote targeted, timely and cost-effective brand messages.

**6) Align with regional and state CVBs, DMOs plus Alaskan and U.S. Travel leadership.** Visit Sitka will maximize marketing resources by collaborating with regional and state destination marketing organizations, industry advocacy groups and governmental economic development efforts on local, state and federal levels.

## Marketing Objectives & Strategies

**Four key objectives will guide Visit Sitka's scope of work over the next three years.**

**Objective 1:** Platform - To build a brand platform that supports members and the community of Sitka beyond individual efforts; Visit Sitka will continue to focus advertising on Sitka's abundance of interests including culture/history, wildlife, outdoor adventure, fishing, arts, culinary and developed attractions. **Actions:** Advertising & Brand, Cooperative Marketing, Research, Travel Trade Shows. **Metrics:** B2C + B2B Web site (sitka.org) traffic, membership numbers.

**Objective 2:** Brand - Implement and develop brand equity to drive economic impact and ROI while connecting and engaging with consumers in Sitka brand across all media landscapes. **Actions:** Media, Partnerships, Earned Media. **Metrics:** Advertising awareness, incremental spending and ROI, Visits to Sitka, Brand vitality metrics, Visit Sitka Web site traffic.

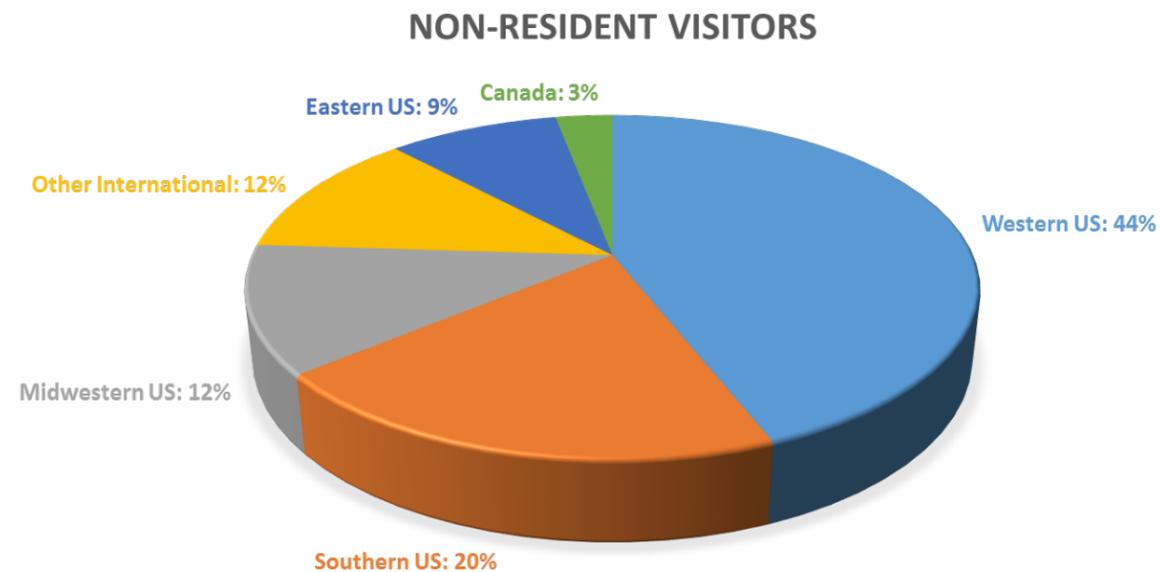
**Objective 3:** Engagement - Deepen relationship with consumers to move beyond providing information and inspiration to engaging potential Sitka travelers during every stage of the travel cycle across a range of devices to create new and repeat visitation to Sitka. **Actions:** Content, Distribution, Social Media, Visitor Center & Welcome Kiosk, Volunteers. **Metrics:** Visit Sitka Web site (sitka.org) traffic, Social media followers and interactions, Social buzz and sentiment, VC&WK foot traffic.

**Objective 4:** Meetings and Conventions - Take advantage of the Meeting/Convention industry's position as a key driver of tourism that produces higher spending levels and seasonality reduction while generating income, employment and investment. **Actions:** Target State-wide & Regional Marketing, Advertising, Volunteers, Meeting Planner Guide, Travel Trade Shows. **Metrics:** Convention and Meeting numbers, Request for bids, Advertising awareness, Visit Sitka Web site traffic.

## Target Markets

Domestic: Most of Sitka’s non-resident visitors come from two geographic regions: the first is the Western U.S. at 44% with the second being the Southern U.S. at 20% of visitors. (Alaska Dept. of Commerce. Alaska Visitor Statistics Program-Visitors Profile, summer 2011). Approximately 80% of visitors to Sitka arrive via cruise ship with the remaining coming via air and ferry (AK Dept. of Comm. AVSP-Summary Profiles/Regions & Communities, summer 2011). The current foundational marketing targets primarily the Western region and destinations within non-stop flight range of Seattle. One notable exception is Seatrade Cruise Global, the cruise industries authoritative professional showcase, with 51 cruise lines and operators from 92 countries represented.

With further market research Visit Sitka will continue to focus on the primary markets but also seek to develop secondary markets including domestic long-haul and international. To increase impact of limited marketing dollars, Visit Sitka will utilize segmentation strategies to better understand different consumer types and employ targeted programs that enhance brand satisfaction and consumer response. Segmentation methodologies organize consumers into a variety of types with these guiding principles: target type, goal, method and message. Annual work plans will contain details.



## Measuring Impact

Visit Sitka intends to meet metrics outlined in CBS Convention and Visitors Service contract to the best of its ability as well as explore new research models and benchmarks. Again due to limited funds large industry indicators such as total visitor volume, market share and visitor spending statistics available through Alaska Dept. of Commerce reports may predominate. For more detailed specifics such as brand awareness, incremental travel and spend, and ROI from advertising placements; Visit Sitka will look to develop low-cost analysis options as measuring the impact of investments in the travel industry is not easy with limited funds.

## Putting the Plan Into Action

The three-year marketing plan serves as an overarching path for Visit Sitka’s purpose in the coming years. As annual work plans develop within budget and metric parameters, this roadmap will guide staff and inform marketing programs and target market efforts. As a flexible document, revisions will be made as necessary to accommodate new business realities or changes in priorities.



Sunset Celebration Weekend Menlo Park, CA

## Appendix A: Current Marketing Strategies

### Objective 1: Platform

- Profiling audience and segmentation to ensure that ad targeting is effective across all platforms
- Re-purposing content for both print and digital applications
- Continuing cooperative marketing efforts to leverage funds + pursuing joint ventures
- Offering promotional opportunities to members

### Objective 2: Brand

- Collaborating with partners to ensure the promise of Sitka specific marketing is executed
- Providing high quality, highly informative print material to prospective visitors
- Selecting cost-effective media supporting overall goal of attracting a diverse mix of visitors
- Creating awareness of Sitka as a year-round destination for independent visitors
- Marketing annual events
- Fulfilling and tracking responses sent to Visit Sitka through print ads
- Exploring emerging tour market opportunities
- Increasing brand identity through advertising and attending consumer trade shows

### Objective 3: Engagement

- Working toward personalizing the visitor experience
- Increasing interest in Sitka as a travel destination and inspiring a desire to visit through highly attended and targeted consumer travel shows
- Participating as a marketing partner with Southeast Alaska Tourism Council (SATC) and fulfilling all independent leads for Sitka generated by the program
- Providing walk in service on Lake Street & seasonal service at kiosk under O'Connell Bridge
- Continually updating the Visit Sitka website with fresh content and photos
- Maintaining social media sites for Visit Sitka such as Facebook and Pinterest

### Objective 4: Convention and Meeting

- Targeted advertising to in-state meeting planners
- Listings on meeting planner RFP request websites
- Attend strategically targeted meeting planner association regional meetings in our target market areas
- Attend educational trade shows for continuing education
- Update all meeting and convention information for Sitka

## Visit Sitka Contacts

Visitor Information Center: 104 Lake Street

Visitor Information Kiosks: O'Connell Bridge Dock, Harrigan Centennial Hall

Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce Office/Mailing Address: 104 Lake St.

Website: [www.sitka.org](http://www.sitka.org)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/VisitSitka](http://www.facebook.com/VisitSitka)

Pinterest: [pinterest.com/VisitSitka](http://pinterest.com/VisitSitka)

Local Phone: 907.747.8604

Toll-Free: 800.557.4852

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Visit **Sitka**