

Morro



Bay

**Tourism
Marketing Plan
Fiscal Year 2017-18**



Put Life on Coast

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MORRO BAY MARKETING PLAN OVERVIEW

Marketing Approach for the 2017-18 Fiscal Year

To ensure Morro Bay achieves its growth awareness goals for the 2017-18 year, the Morro Bay Tourism Manager in conjunction with Mental Marketing conducted two interactive planning sessions with key Morro Bay tourism stakeholders who included hoteliers, retailers, City Recreation Department and outdoor activity companies. In addition, we researched current tourism trends, analyzed current fiscal year campaign results, database profiles, and key findings from a 2016 Visit SLOCAL awareness study Morro Bay Tourism commissioned that focused on where our visitor is coming from and what they spend their money on.

As a result new ideas were generated, and new approaches are being formulated for 2017–18 campaigns. We know that we have to remain nimble and stay up to date on market forces that can be a factor in decision making when implementing programs and tactics. For example, after Highways 41 and 1 were closed due to rain and mudslides our team quickly analyzed target audiences and refocus marketing outreach to best reflect Morro Bay’s accessibility. Our team is working hard to help grow existing events and foster new events in Morro Bay that generate overnight stays and help increase occupancy during mid-week and shoulder season. We are actively working with our tourism partner retail, restaurant and rental businesses to create added-value passports that incentivize travel during shoulder & mid-week, which helps increase sales and city sales tax during slower times.

Public Relations, Vetted Journalists and Tour & Travel Trade Shows.

Actively fostering relationships with journalists that hit the correct demographic is a priority. We have space for 25 vetted journalists to visit Morro Bay. Making sure that the dollars we spend on tour and travel trade shows draw the best results possible to increase group business and media awareness. 2016-17 we attended several travel & trade shows nationwide to help grow our press exposure. For 2017-18 we will focus on the two shows based in California and will alternate year over year doing the national shows.

OBJECTIVES & TARGET AUDIENCES

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- a. Increase overall occupancy & hotel/motel revenues, especially during midweek and shoulder season
- b. Create opportunities to positively impact sales tax businesses & drive economic development in the City of Morro Bay
- c. Midweek – be more aggressive
- d. Extend the number of average hotel/motel room nights beyond 1.5
- e. Help incrementally increase the hotel/motel Average Daily Rate (ADR)
- f. Bring exposure to Morro Bay as a viable domestic and international destination for individuals and groups
- g. Assist with the development and growth of competitions and events that attract overnight guests
- h. Positively grow transient occupancy tax (TOT) for the City of Morro Bay

TARGET MARKET APPROACH 2017-2018

The goal to increase overall occupancy & hotel/motel revenues, especially during midweek and shoulder season was carried over from the previous fiscal year. With assessment dollars being stretched further, and the closure of Highway 1 in Big Sur, the expectation to influence more business during midweek and shoulder season is even stronger this fiscal versus last. By looking at the historical data and taking into consideration the differing travel trends, the tourism department found three key factors in its analysis and decided to move focus of targeted markets from all 3 – 4 hour CA drive markets to Santa Barbara and south into the Greater Los Angeles and surrounding area, San Juaquin Valley all the way south into Orange County and San Diego County. These key factors are:

1. How to best leverage MB marketing dollar and increase conversions
2. How to help mitigate an anticipated drop in international tourism from San Francisco Intl Airport by growing core markets
3. Tourism research commissioned through Visit SLO CAL and database profiles analysis that indicate these markets spend more and visit more

2017 TOURISM TRENDS TO LEVERAGE FOR MORRO BAY

1. FIT

- The growing segment of Foreign Independent Travelers is strong and they stay multiple days. With Hwy 1 being closed to the North we are focusing our tour and travel trade towards the FIT market out of LAX. SFP continues to be a good hub for us but with the closure the FIT travelers have dropped off and they need to grow from Los Angeles, Phoenix and Las Vegas.

2. Families are traveling throughout the year

- Morro Bay's # 1 lifestyle market: Traveling Families. Morro Bay has all there is to offer for families Targeting family travel with campaign messaging throughout the year

3. Multigenerational travel continues to grow

- Partnering with Vacation Rentals and bringing them into the TBID will expand marketing funds to leverage this travel trend

4. Target Millennials

- Fun, hip, unique adventures that they can't find anywhere else? Morro Bay speaks to the Millennial.

5. Mine Data and Analytics

- Continue SEO contract to help fine tune website analytics
- Track through web analytics exposure for VR/RV's through our marketing efforts
- Working on growing database to target higher income levels, more sophisticated traveler
- Knowing that segmentation is more sophisticated than ever for 2017, Mental understands that prospect email can be highly effective acquisition channels when fully integrated with all campaign strategies: geo/lifestyle cohort targeting, campaign creative, paid media, public relations, social media and existing database.
- Explore a new web platform to be introduced in 2018-19 with the inclusion of VR/RV.

6. Technology: mobile is king!

- Engage, engage, engage. Did we mention engage with your customer, no matter where they are? Mobile is king in the travel world and we partner with the most sophisticated digital ad networks

that use top analytical tools to find 1) What are the profiles of people visiting our website and ultimately booking a room? 2) What creative is working best? 3) How can we get more bookings for less?

7. Lifestyle Marketing with Emphasis on Experience Continues to Make Sense

- Lifestyle marketing is targeting different lifestyles that audiences are drawn to. Whether we target outdoor enthusiasts, health nuts, nature lovers, or foodies, this approach allows for targeted media buys and niche PR efforts based on these common interests. This approach targets different ages from millennials to baby boomers, and all ages in between based on their lifestyle, and brings them together for a common cause

8. Solo/Female Travel

- Wellness travel, mindful travel, yard sale aficionados. Women are traveling solo and in groups more than ever and Morro Bay has everything they are looking for. Let's make sure they get to know us.

9. Sharing Economy/co living

- According to Bjorn Hanson, clinical professor with the NYU Preston Robert Tisch Center for Hospitality and Tourism, "The amount of new (hotel) projects being launched is almost double what it was in 2014," so hotels are not going away, but how do we include the Airbnb's and VRBOs? Through PR we can show that Hotels/motels in Morro Bay can accommodate this type of guest.

10. Ecotourism

- Morro Bay has been an ecofriendly destination for decades, but as eco awareness gets to that tipping point of saturation in the marketplace, more and more people want to engage with the destinations they are traveling to. They want docent led tours about the cormorant rookery, they want coordinated beach clean ups, they want to set good examples of how to interact with nature for their children. Morro Bay will engage at a higher level through the city Parks and Rec department and work to include coordinated events and tours of this nature.

11. Virtual Reality Experiences for Travel – Rich content goes to the next level

- Video taken to the next level, the virtual reality of 360 degree video allows the visitor to feel what it's like to kayak in the harbor with the rock looming large over the water as the sun sets in the distance. First person video, what a fun idea.

INTEGRATED MARKETING PROGRAMS & STRATEGIES

As your full service marketing agency of record, we look forward to integrating all aspects of Morro Bay Tourism marketing efforts. Throughout this fiscal year, the agency team will manage a multi-layered destination brand marketing program that integrates paid, earned and social media strategies to accomplish the strategic goals for Morro Bay. The program sustains the most productive advertising channels that demonstrate lodging conversions and also tests new media channels to deliver midweek and shoulder season travelers more efficiently. The paid media plan identifies travelers by their interest and lifestyles and engages them throughout their travel planning cycle. To capture the attention of travelers in the early stages of awareness, the program maintains public relations efforts that place Morro Bay top of mind with priority travel and lifestyle media.

PROGRAM 1: CONVERSION FOCUS
DIGITAL/EVENT/SOCIAL MEDIA PLAN & PROMOTIONS CONCEPTS

OVERVIEW: Morro Bay is poised to take the digital outreach and results to the next level increasing impressions, conversions and other metrics using digital campaign strategies and tactics and adding in another level of event outreach through LA Times and LA Magazine. The digital universe offers a direct link to conversions tracking lifts in UVPMs, occupancy and an overall increase in TOT. All campaigns are audited post-run to insure all paid media placement was used correctly or credits are received back for missed runs.

STRATEGY: Develop strong seasonal campaigns using display, eblasts, text ads and native ads targeting lifestyle groups in geo-targeted southern and eastern CA markets to increase UVPMs, track bookings and conversions, and increase database of visitors.

TACTIC 1: MEDIA FOR MORRO BAY

For tourism and hospitality clients our media assignments have included strategic planning, negotiations and management of all media channels including outdoor, broadcast, print, pay per click, travel ad networks, TripAdvisor, streaming media, co-operative, native content, database-driven email programs, mobile ad networks, social media advertising and retargeting campaigns. Mental Marketing recommends using the following proven media outlets to get the best digital results for Morro Bay's seasonal tourism campaigns.

AD TAXI

AdTaxi's Marketing Campaigns are custom built to connect clients to their target audience through the most effective media channels based upon the client's campaign goals. AdTaxi is a Google Premier SMB (small business) Partner and purchases valuable inventory with industry leading brand safety and fraud prevention technology, eliminating bots. AdTaxi accesses robust 1st party and 3rd data to match each impression to the right audience. Instead of delivering a set number of impressions at a set CPM, this Magellan Performance Based program maximizes the budget dynamically across all ad groups. Magellan evaluates the price and performance of each impression against the metric that matters most to Morro Bay's campaign, and adjusts budgets accordingly to maximize booking conversions for the budget.



ADARA

Through Adara's 80+ partnerships with the world's largest travel companies including Delta, American Airlines, United Airlines, Hertz Rental Car, Wyndham, Best Western and RoomKey, ADARA has unparalleled access to Morro Bay's tourist target. When compared to the total internet audience, ADARA's custom traveler segment is 2.2x more likely to travel to California. Thanks to their contractual relationships with their partners, they have over 1 billion traveller profiles and they collect search, booking & itinerary views in **real time** directly from the source to track and report travel patterns to our client's destination.





TRIP ADVISOR

Trip Advisor is the world's largest travel site and the top planning resource for global travelers to plan and have the perfect trip. In more than 34 countries and 21 languages, the site offers travelers trusted advice from real travelers and seamless links to booking tools. The site generates more than 260 million unique monthly visits. Trip Advisor enables Morro Bay to reach predisposed audiences researching and planning a trip 46 days in advance. This year they're sponsorship includes the added value of content development, and page updates not offered before.

LOS ANGELES TIMES/LA MAGAZINE

From microsites and videos to infographics and articles, native content propels custom messaging. According to the LA Times, viewers of content marketing articles and executions are:

- 70% of people want to learn about products through content, rather than traditional advertising
- 61% of consumers say they feel better about a company that delivers custom content and are also more likely to buy from that company
- Digital newspaper content reaches 78% of (online) adults

FACEBOOK/INSTAGRAM

As more travelers are devoting more of their time on Facebook and Instagram, Morro Bay will leverage the precise targeting, competitive rates and excellent track record for central coast destinations. To target the self-employed traveler with flexible schedules, Mental will manage targeted Linked In campaigns with the midweek message.

YOUTUBE VIDEO SPOTS

YouTube is owned by Google and is the second largest search engine in the world. It has a variety of targeting options that help you reach the right customer for your business. You can target by age, gender, location, interests and more. Not only great for brand awareness, we've executed tourism campaigns with a CTR of 25% at a cost of .11 per click. We think Morro Bay is perfect for this medium.

GOOGLE ADWORDS

Google AdWords and Display enable Morro Bay to reach relevant visitors on relevant websites with the right message when it matters most. Google AdWords shows how many people notice the ads and what percentage click to visit MorroBay.org. With the tracking tools, you can even see the actual booking goals the website is generating as a direct result of ads. Morro Bay can test ads, try new search terms, pause shoulder season campaigns and re-start when desired. In addition, the Google Match program enables Morro Bay to serve specific digital ads to existing email subscribers and the travelers with the same matching profiles.

CHUTE

Chute's social posting tool works seamlessly with the Chute platform, ensuring alignment across Morro Bay's social media platforms. Whether searching for content using the most powerful visual search engine available, obtaining consent with Chute's industry-leading UGC rights management system, scheduling daily posts to our social channels, or even advertising on Instagram, Chute Social provides a simple solution. The first end-to-end user-generated content marketing solution that streamlines UGC search and discovery, curation, rights management, publishing, and brand insights. This new contract will allow us to grow our social media platform and exposure faster than before.

VISIT SLO CAL, CCTC, VISIT CA PRINT CO-OPS

VSLOC and CCTC offer website and email opportunities that are low hanging fruit on the tourism tree. These local and regional partners offer vetted digital leads to their partners as their websites and database models attract consumers looking to visit the Central Coast. Morro Bay can leverage this low cost opportunity to gain referrals and grow its database. Also, both of these organizations offer co-op print opportunities to leverage when the time is right and currently Visit CA is working with Time Inc. on a digital plan, which may offer some great opportunities.

TACTIC 2: DIGITAL PROMOTIONS TO LIFESTYLE & GEO TARGETS

1. MORRO BAY EVENT PROMOTIONS WITH TARGETED SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS AND EBLASTS

In an effort to grow awareness not only of Morro Bay as a destination, we are planning strategic event promotions that will grow awareness of ongoing and new events specific to Morro Bay focusing on the ones that offer overnight booking opportunities. These event promotions will include booking calls to action and coincide with PR promotions and the seasonal digital and social media campaigns. This is the proposed timeline and events focus:

1. **August send to promote September:** Avocados & Margarita Fest, Taste of the Grove and Concerts on the Bay
2. **September send to promote October:** Maritime Month – Harbor Fest, Fishing Tournament, Surfboard Art Festival
3. **October send to promote Nov/Dec:** MB Triathlon, Dusk to Dawn Triathlon, Soupabration, Tall Ships, Boat Parade, 12-days of Christmas
4. **January send to promote winter:** Winter is for the birds
5. **March send to promote April:** Kite Festival, Soar events, Citywide Yard Sale
6. **April send to promote May and June:** Car Show, Memorial Day, Mid-week business

2. SEASONAL TARGETED DIGITAL CAMPAIGNS

These seasonal campaigns focus on growing bookings in the shoulder season and on growing mid-week business as the high season ramps up. These campaigns focus on Morro Bay as a great vacation destination and offer incentives (added-value) to book lodging and activities in Morro Bay. The following are the projected campaigns and timelines:

JULY 2017

- **Campaign:** Branded Digital Ads

AUGUST 2017 – OCTOBER 2017

- **Campaign:** Fall is Full of Fun in Morro Bay
- **Offer:** Free Bottle of Wine w/2 night stay at Participating Hotels Sept - Oct

NOVEMBER 2017 – DECEMBER 2017

- **Campaign:** Kids Get Free Stuff campaign
- **Passport Offer:** Free Kids Related Goodies, Activities and Passes

JANUARY 2017 – FEBRUARY 2018

- **Campaign:** Winter is for Birds
- **Passport Offer:** Save on Restaurant Offerings

MARCH 2018 - APRIL 2018

- **Campaign:** Aaaaahhhhhhhh! Spring is Finally Here!
- **Passport Offer:** Save on Springtime Activities

MAY 2018 – JUNE 2018

- **Campaign:** Midweek Lodging and activity Specials to increase midweek bookings March - August
- **Passport:** Save Mid-Week with Restaurant and Activities Passport

PROGRAM 2: GROW BRAND AWARENESS AND ENGAGE PUBLIC RELATIONS & ORGANIC SOCIAL MEDIA

PUBLIC RELATIONS GROWS BRAND AWARENESS

Since April 2014 Mental Marketing has executed strategic public relations programs to increase awareness of Morro Bay as a visitor destination through third party endorsements from bloggers, travel writers and editors from California feeder markets and primary national audiences. The programs we used to raise awareness included media relations inviting niche lifestyle travel journalists to Morro Bay, developing itineraries showcasing activities targeted to their audiences in family fun, outdoor adventure, culinary, wine and beer, and getting back to nature. Over the past three years we have seen a tremendous growth in media awareness and demand for information and hosted visits to Morro Bay.

Results Matter: In fiscal 2016-17 Mental garnered over 4B in earned media coverage (feature stories, press clips and pickups), an increase of +66% YOY, and the ad value of that earned media was \$17.6M, an increase of +155% YOY. Things are looking really great regarding destination awareness growth for Morro Bay. Let's keep this momentum going!!

STRATEGY: Build brand awareness and keep Morro Bay top of mind in the travel, lifestyle media and daily news press by inviting approved primary and secondary targeted media to come stay in Morro Bay in return for feature stories, coordinating top journalists FAM trips, acquiring press feature coverage, landing pickups through PR Newswire media partners, which in turn increase SEO and search spider links back to MorroBay.org.

TACTICS:

1. **Research, Write and Distribute Press Releases:** Research newsworthy story ideas unique to Morro Bay to engage the media supporting ad programs, lodging packages, special events and happenings in Morro Bay. Monthly press releases are distributed to the core marketing firm’s proprietary list of over 3,000 travel writers, as well as over PR newswire to meet the above objectives.
2. **Visiting Journalist Program:** A highly effective component of the PR strategy is hosting top journalists on FAM trips. Throughout all the targeted outreach programs, Mental will continue to invite approved primary and secondary targeted media to come stay in Morro Bay in return for feature stories. This outreach strategy is designed to target specific travel, adventure, food, wine, baby boomer, family, pet friendly and lodging journalists and invite the top media that will produce the best results and meet our strategic PR goals.
3. **Lifestyle Pitches to Niche Media:** Public relations helps grow brand awareness and allows for lifestyle targeted approached to our audience. This outreach strategy is designed to target specific travel, adventure, food, wine, baby boomer, family, pet friendly and lodging journalists and pitch them story ideas based on their editorial calendar. Invite the top media that will produce the best results and meet our strategic PR goals.
4. **Out of Market Media Shows:** Visit California and other travel writer associations offer Media Events throughout the year where Mental attends on behalf of our clients. This is a proven tactic that provides us an opportunity to pitch the Morro Bay brand directly to travel and lifestyle media. Costs cover registration, travel expenses, media entertaining, and Mental’s time, including some desk side meetings at the Visit CA events.

West Coast Media Missions this fiscal year:

Month	Market	Cost
2017		
October	SATW National Convention	\$2,500
2018		
(TBD)	Visit CA - LA	\$2,500

5. **Partner Media Pitches:** Work closely with our Vet and respond to all media inquiries from Morro Bay, Visit SLO County, CCTC and their international offices, Visit CA, SLO Film Commission, SLO Wine and the Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance, among other sources. Respond to public relations queries initiated through the CTTC and their international offices, individual journalists and publications.

RELEASE CONCEPTS:

- **July:** August 5 is national oyster day, but it’s always oyster day in Morro Bay

- **Events to include:** Water sports, Sailing Lessons, Taste of Grove, Avocado and Margarita Festival and hotel promotion
- **August:** New Concerts on the Bay starts during September Wine
 - **Events to include:** Concerts on Bay, Siren Music, Avocado & Margarita Fest, Wine Month events
- **September:** Maritime Month Celebration
 - **Events to include:** Harbor Festival, Surfboard Art Festival, Virg's fishing tournament, Maritime Month events, Lighthouse Century
- **October:** Kids Get Stuff Free
 - **Events to include:** Morro Bay Triathlon, Dusk to Dawn Triathlon, Soupabration
- **November:** Tis the Season
 - **Events to include:** Tall Ships, Boat Parade, By the Sea Productions, 12-Days of Christmas, Holiday Events
- **December:** Winter is for birds
 - **Events/Activities to include:** Self-guided nature tours, butterfly habitats, where to bird watch, Bird Festival
- **January:** Winter is for Love Birds
 - **Events to include:** Oyster Tuesdays, Monday Mind Walks, MB Estuary Poetry Contest, Volunteer programs, Monarch Grove Tours, Bird Tours
- **February:** Spring Break
 - **Events to include:** MB Museum of Natural History Spring Fling, Wellness Events
- **March:** Soar into Spring in Morro Bay
 - **Events to include: Events:** Kite Fest, Kite Boarding, Paragliding, Land Sailing, City Wide Yard Sale
- **April:** All things cycling for bike month
 - **Events to include:** Locals favorite trails, where to rent bikes, what hotels have bikes, BMX track
- **May:** Best Morro Bay Midweek Vacation Ideas for families, guys, girls, and couples
 - **Events to include: Events:** Cruisin Morro Bay Car Show, Miracle Miles for Kids, Rock to Pier Half Marathon
- **June:** 4th of July in Morro Bay – what's new this summer
 - **Events to include:** Art in the Park, State Park Docent Tours, Rock to Pier Run & Half Marathon

SOCIAL MEDIA SOLUTIONS DESIGNED FOR ENGAGEMENT

Mental offers extensive experience developing integrated social media strategies to increase awareness, collaboration, engagement and conversion of your core visitors. Being a tourism focused marketer on social media is all about showing travelers the experience, and allowing them to envision themselves there. People want to know what is available to them for a better travel experience, in real time, but they don't want to be "sold" the information.

Great daily content through partnerships, visual impacts, and information about upcoming events and marketing promotions are great, but most importantly, sharing our fan's images, posts and more. NOTHING helps Social Media thrive more than letting Morro Bay's fan base know that they are important, we're paying attention to them, and we think what they're saying is important enough to share ourselves. **KEEPIN' IT REAL**

STRATEGY: 60% PULL AND 40% PUSH CONTENT

60%: Pull marketing “pulls” the consumer to engage through response, interest, inquiries, and transactions, through the use of actionable and experiential digital content i.e. social posts, blogs, e-newsletters.

40%: Push marketing “pushes” content to the user using persuasive calls to action to get them to respond through discounts, special offerings and ads.

TACTICS:

- Calendar content posts across all channels on monthly/quarterly basis, integrated with campaigns and outreach efforts
- Increase engagement, reach and frequency by increasing pull content, posting photos of real life in Morro Bay
- Develop strategic local social partners through other highly social active groups and organizations ie Central Coast Women for Fisheries, MB National Estuary Program, MB Harbor Dept/Coast Guard, Whale Watching
- Strategic sharing with group pages specific to upcoming events
- Partner with area photographers to feature the picturesque values of Morro Bay visitors love, and highly engage with
- Create a powerful social sharing initiative to make sure fresh, topical content about Morro Bay is regularly found and shared in the proper context
- Create integrated lodging specials and packages to promote on social media
- Promote Geo-fencing midweek during shoulder off Hwy 101 in SLO.

**PROGRAM 3: REALIZE RESULTS
TRACKING AND QUARTERLY REVIEWS**

Mental will execute all assigned activities including creative, content development and production of all deliverables. Mental’s team executes all assigned activities including creative, content development and production of all deliverables. Mental’s team will work closely with the Morro Bay leadership on an ongoing basis including deadline management, weekly calls and campaign updates. Mental will be available for in person meetings as frequent as Morro Bay requires.

Our comprehensive monthly public relations reports include: press release distribution coverage, outreach activities, recent media coverage with links and metrics, visiting journalist status and pending coverage. To ensure budgets are carefully maintained, we provide an agency program budget worksheet in Excel, Mental Marketing will create an annual agency budget worksheet listing all scope of work deliverables that show expenses as they incur, as well as brief campaign status summaries with each monthly agency invoice.

Mid-year review: The mid-year review of programs allows for new promotions, emerging story angles and budget shifts to be identified and addressed accordingly.

BUDGET 2017 –18

Account Management, Coordination	\$36,000
Creative Services, Ad Creation, Website Campaign Updates	\$39,000
Social Media Planning, Execution, Reporting	\$24,000
Media Buys, Ad Placements	\$235,000
Public Relations Plan, Outreach and Reporting	\$66,000*
Total	\$400,000

** Hard Costs for Public Relations Trade Shows, and Media Hosting Not Included in Fees; Distribution Fees included*