U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM
FY2016 MARKETING PLAN OVERVIEW

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MISSION

In an effort to aid in the economic development of the Territory, the 21st Legislature created the Department of Tourism (DOT) on May 8, 1995 and charged it with the mission of generating tourism revenue for the United States Virgin Islands.

In keeping with our mission, the Department will market the U.S. Virgin Islands using marketplace intelligence to promote the economic growth of the Territory through sustainable tourism development coordinated with the industry and its stakeholders. The Department will aid in the development of programs, which advance the understanding of the value of tourism to the Territory. The Department of Tourism will promote the unique features of each island and develop long-term strategies using the powers and duties provided by the 21st Legislature in the creation of the Department.

ORGANIZATION VISION

The Department of Tourism will position our islands to be the premier destination of choice for travel from North America, Europe and the Caribbean with a constant eye on emerging markets. We will provide a superior vacation experience using our natural resources, attractions, activities, history, culture, food and people to promote our unique islands. Our marketing strategy will enable us to increase revenue to the Territory by focusing our efforts on areas with the highest potential for return on investment.

GOALS

The Department of Tourism has set the following core goals to ensure the fulfillment of its mission:

• To increase the number of domestic and international tourists to the Territory
• To increase the amount of visitor expenditures on a yearly basis
• To improve community awareness of the value of tourism to our economy
• To ensure the uniqueness of each island is represented in our marketing efforts
• To build brand equity and create growth opportunities for St. Croix and to maintain brand equity and increase growth opportunities for St. Thomas and St. John
COMMISSIONER’S MESSAGE

Dear Tourism Partners:

The Department of Tourism’s strategic marketing plan for FY2016 has been developed with several key goals in mind, most notably to expand our reach in markets such as the West Coast and Midwest, South America and Europe.

This important document is the result of much discussion, debate and collaboration between Department representatives, key tourism stakeholders, and our advertising, marketing and public relations advisors.

While it is intended to serve as a guide—a roadmap—for our activities in the year ahead, it is by no means a rigid, static document. We must be nimble and flexible to respond to changing market conditions, including the inevitable emergence of Cuba as a vacation option for American travelers.

The indicators point to continued growth for land-based tourism. The Territory as a whole is taking measures towards long-term agreements which will help to stabilize cruise calls to the U.S. Virgin Islands. Overall, the trends suggest increased visitor arrivals and spending by Americans, who make up the majority of our visitor arrivals.

The Department consistently seeks to expand key segments of visitor arrivals, even while we recognize that the core visitor to the Territory remains Americans seeking a warm weather getaway in a naturally beautiful location with great beaches and where a U.S. passport is not required.

Our objective is to leverage our assets to promote sub-groups of our core market to increase visitor arrivals, but even more importantly, to increase visitor expenditures.

Expanding and growing these and other niche markets will be essential to our success. The following areas provide significant opportunity for continued growth:

- Romance
- Centennial
- MICE
- Film
- Multi-cultural market
- Villas, Small Hotels

Our team is recommitting to engagement, promising quarterly partner meetings and pledging a forum for dialogue. We are also implementing changes within the Department to maximize efficiencies.

Although we always hope we never have to use it, history has proven the best offense is a good defense and, with our public and private partners, we will continue to improve our crisis communications plan.
We are resetting the dial and we look forward to 2016 with increased optimism as we enhance and grow our tourism product and of course, our experience.

Yours in partnership,

Beverly Nicholson-Doty
Commissioner
Department of Tourism
MARKET SEGMENTATION RESEARCH

While developing the strategy for FY2016, the Department reviewed data collected over the last year by the U.S. Virgin Islands Bureau of Economic Research regarding visitors to the destination. The results are as follows:

**DOMESTIC ARRIVALS (2014)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Arrivals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>63,386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>50,378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>44,142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>36,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>36,242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>31,682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>31,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>26,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>25,799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>22,041</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS (2014)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Arrivals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>10,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>6,502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1,399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>960</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our goal is always to allow our marketing funds to work as efficiently as possible. We intend to focus our efforts on these subsets of the wider populations as they are prospects that are "most likely" to travel to the U.S. Virgin Islands for business or pleasure. Our research, along with input from our partners, will allow us to develop strategies to ensure the highest return of our marketing and sales expenditures.
SALES AND MARKETING

The Department of Tourism’s mission is to enhance and extend local economic development efforts by marketing our islands as a tourist destination for those in the United States and international markets, thereby generating revenues and jobs.

To accomplish this, the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism provides a truly integrated marketing effort. The functions and services of each of our interrelated program areas – advertising, public relations, sales and product development – support the Department’s overall mission.

Our advertising campaign is designed to promote the U.S. Virgin Islands as a premier travel destination by engaging potential visitors through national and international advertising. The plan includes integration of a multimedia strategy in print and television, with a focus on digital marketing opportunities, in recognition of the increasing role of the Internet in the decision making process of the consumer.

Our public relations strategy involves the proactive outreach to the media as well as the travel trade industry throughout the US and international markets including, Canada, Scandinavia, Italy, the Caribbean, and South America. Through in-market events, press trips, familiarization tours, and social media campaigns, public relations provides first-hand promotion of the U.S. Virgin Islands travel product, and creates cooperative opportunities for our travel industry partners. Public relations also markets directly to consumers using promotional methods, in further support of our advertising efforts.

The sales strategy will focus on proactively and directly promoting the diverse vacation activities and experiences offered in the U.S. Virgin Islands to both the consumer and travel trade audiences. Sales calls, sales blitzes, reservation center trainings, along with trade and consumer shows are some of the efforts that will be employed by our sales force.

We will also leverage the reach and influence of social media channels to extend the brand message and generate awareness and interest in key feeder markets.
MARKET SEGMENTATION

For FY2016, there will be a broad-reaching integrated marketing program that leverages each of the Department’s marketing channels in tandem to reach priority segments proven to be strong revenue producers for the Territory. This program is designed to maximize efficiency and effectiveness of spend through a 360º approach.

Target Segments:
The FY2016 paid media program will primarily focus on General Travelers with higher skewing household incomes as the broader target audience.

This target is inherently inclusive of several key segments to the U.S. Virgin Islands, clustered into psychographic and demographically similar “Personas” as outlined below:

- General – Sun, Sand & Sea
- Wedding/Romance
- Families
- Experiential (Culinary, Sustainable, Nature Travel & Culture & Heritage)
- Spontaneous – Easy getaway, no passport, US currency, English
- Meeting & Incentive
- Marine (yachting, sailing, fishing, diving)
- Sports
- Centennial
- Caribbean Diaspora
- Multicultural
INTEGRATED SALES AND MARKETING (BY SEGMENT)

Based on the priority segments previously outlined, below is an overview of how the Department’s marketing channels will be utilized in tandem to engage these audiences, as well as the important sub-sets of these segments that make up the destination’s current and potential visitor base over the coming year.

Dedicated marketing tactics designed to target each segment are in place and will be updated as needed to meet changing market demands and customer purchasing behavior.

General Traveler:
- Objective: Focus on driving general awareness of the U.S. Virgin Islands brand and offerings of the islands.

St. Croix:
- Objective: Generate awareness and consideration of St. Croix among potential visitors.

Airlines:
- Objective: Promote U.S. Virgin Islands’ partnership with key airlines to U.S. Virgin Islands destinations, with a focus on driving interest in specific routes.

Film and Music:
- Objective: Increase awareness of the new tax incentives in order to generate more productions in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Centennial Marketing:
- Objective: Celebrate the Centennial transfer from Denmark to the United States and leverage the historic event to encourage travel to the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Caribbean, Multicultural and Diaspora:
- Objective: Drive consideration for Caribbean, multicultural and U.S. Virgin Islands diaspora to plan a trip to the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Bridal and Romance:
- Objective: Drive consideration of the U.S. Virgin Islands as an accessible and convenient location for destination wedding and honeymoons.

Marine (Sailing and Yachting)
- Objective: Regenerate consideration of the sailing and yachting communities to experience the U.S. Virgin Islands as a potential destination.

Marine (Dive and Sport Fishing)
- Objective: Drive consideration of diving and sport fishing trips in the U.S. Virgin Islands.
Culinary Tourism:
• Objective: Promote the U.S. Virgin Islands as a destination for “foodies” by generating awareness of authentic dining experiences.

International Tourism:
• Objective: Increase international visitation to the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Events:
• Objective: Support outreach to the M.I.C.E. program to reinforce the U.S. Virgin Islands as an event destination.

Sports Tourism:
• Objective: Generate awareness of the U.S. Virgin Islands facilities as potential host sites for sporting events. Showcase and support VI athletes.

Sustainable Tourism:
• Objective: Generate awareness and showcase the sustainable tourism initiatives taking place across the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Military Tourism:
• Objective: Drive awareness of military specific promotions for all active and retired military personnel.

Luxury:
• Objective: Entice high-end travelers to consider the U.S. Virgin Islands as a destination.

Small Hotels, Inns and B&Bs:
• Objective: Provide year-round support for the small hotels, Inns and B&Bs on the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Family Tourism:
• Objective: Drive consideration for the U.S. Virgin Islands as a family friendly destination.

Wellness Tourism:
• Objective: Develop, market and promote new and existing wellness tourism offerings within the U.S. Virgin Islands.
UTILIZATION OF MARKETING CHANNELS

The following pages contain an overview of how the Department’s national advertising, public relations, social media and sale teams will be utilized in FY2016.

National Advertising
National advertising will continue to be an important driver of the destination’s message to current and potential audiences. The following is a breakdown of how the various media formats will be utilized for advertising, including a flowchart of seasonal focus by segment.

Video:
Run of schedule national television and digital video will be planned holistically to maximize effectiveness and cost efficiencies. Planning to the strengths of each medium, television will expand the reach and awareness of the destination through run of schedule entertainment, lifestyle and travel programming. Digital video will act as a complement to television by reaching the consumer within engaging online video content. Campaign performance will be tracked through television post reports at the end of each quarter.

Digital Display:
Digital display will continue to maximize reach by utilizing audience targeting and content alignment. Display tactics, including rich media banners and mobile placements, will deliver the message to consumers in relevant and engaging environments for maximum effectiveness. Campaign performance will be optimized on a campaign by campaign basis to maximize reach against the target audience.

Digital Search:
Paid search will be designed to meet specific goals, whether they are specific cost-per-click (CPC), cost-per-action (CPA) or Brand Awareness. Search brings efficiency to the U.S. Virgin Islands by reaching people actively raising their hands and expressing interest on U.S. Virgin Islands’ offerings. The U.S. Virgin Islands is interested in driving cost-efficient traffic to the site, as well as retaining those visitors for as long as possible to provide them the most relevant information and encouraging them to book a trip to the U.S. Virgin Islands. Campaign performance will be optimized on a campaign by campaign basis to maximize reach against the target audience.

Print:
In the support of highly niche campaigns, targeted media vehicles such as print will be selected to reach this segment. This effort can be scaled depending on initiatives, however each print opportunity will be a complement to the larger target-segmentation efforts.

Radio:
In the support of highly niche campaigns, targeted media vehicles such as radio will be selected to reach this segment. This effort can be scaled depending on initiatives, however each radio opportunity will be a complement to the larger target-segmentation efforts.
**National Public Relations**

Editorial coverage offers an important communication tool to share the U.S. Virgin Islands’ branded messages, as well as its abundance and diversity of unique tourism experiences, with targeted consumers and sellers of travel. This will ensure the destination remains top of mind as potential travelers shape their vacation plans and ultimately choose the U.S. Virgin Islands.

As such, public relations will continue to play an integral role in the Department of Tourism’s marketing strategy for 2016. The Department’s PR team will continue to identify editorial opportunities through various initiatives to generate compelling and positive exposure for the Territory.

**Public Relations Objectives:**
- Continue to increase awareness for the U.S. Virgin Islands in such niche categories as culinary/heritage, bridal/romance, meetings, conventions, events, family, adventure, dive, faith, sport, cruise, luxury, yachting/sailing and sustainable tourism.
- Generate positive branding and exposure for the Department of Tourism.
- Promote the U.S. Virgin Islands as a leading destination, targeting travelers from diverse backgrounds in the United States, Canada, Scandinavia, South America, the Caribbean and beyond.

Proven results-oriented traditional public relations tactics will be used to generate earned media in print, broadcast and online outlets. This will be achieved through pitching of story ideas, individual and group press trips, media events, one-on-one editorial meetings, and other strategies.

**Public Relations Program Components:**
The public relations program will encompass a targeted approach to secure coverage in national, regional and multi-cultural markets to promote the Territory.

**Media Relations:**
- News Bureau
- Editing and Rewriting of Collateral and Press Materials
- Media placements
- Desk-side Interviews
- News Releases
- Search Engine Optimization of Releases
- Issues Management
- Thought Leadership
- Proactive Media Outreach and Pitching
- Broadcast

**Media Hospitality:**
The Department of Tourism will continue to amplify its media hospitality program in 2016 to further generate awareness through stories that showcase various aspects of the Territory. Through this program, the public relations team will:
- Host individual and group trips with media representing national, regional, trade and multicultural outlets.
In-Market Activations:
In-market activations continue to play a key part of the Department of Tourism’s marketing strategy. In 2016, the team will explore opportunities in key gateway and secondary markets to generate awareness and increase visitor arrivals.

In-market activations include:
• Hosting events for media, travel agents and tourism ambassadors
• Securing and coordinating desk-side appointments and media interviews for Department of Tourism executives
• Promoting bookable offers and packages

Strategic Promotional Partnerships:
The Department of Tourism will continue to identify strategic promotional partnership opportunities with like-minded brands that align with the Department’s brand image and message.
Social Media Marketing
As technology and social media continue to evolve, travelers increasingly seek opinions, inspiration and advice from friends and family in the digital space. In FY2016, social media strategy recognizes a tremendous opportunity to leverage relationships with those influencers and create advocates for the U.S. Virgin Islands through collaboration, partnership and personalization by sharing user-generated content to social media properties.

The social media strategy for the U.S. Virgin Islands encompasses a multi-faceted role, one that occupies a spectrum ranging from increased awareness and visibility to generating interest and bookings. Social media will be used to build relationships with consumers through social media that ultimately translates into brand engagement, bookings and ongoing advocacy.

Objectives:
- Engage potential visitors online
- Utilize targeting to reach travelers most likely to book travel to the U.S. Virgin Islands
- Deliver content that showcases the destination and informs potential visitors
- Build and maintain an army of brand advocates
- Forge strong relationships with online influencers and communities of interest
- Drive traffic to booking opportunities with strong call-to-action

The U.S. Virgin Islands’ online presence encompasses 6 social properties: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Google+ and Pinterest.

Facebook:
- Leverage as community hub for audience relationships
- Foster deep, ongoing relationships to encourage repeat visitation
- Create and maintain community of advocates
- Issue and fulfill calls-to-action
- Promote campaigns, products, content and brand news
- Create and curate a steady stream of compelling content

Twitter:
- Insert the U.S. Virgin Islands into popular, trending conversations
- Forge relationships with online influencers
- Promote timely offers, content and brand news

YouTube
- Central location for housing and distribution of video content
- Create an ever-growing library of compelling content

Instagram:
- Offer the brand’s perspective on the world using user-generated and brand imagery
- Tell the story through visual, ongoing, episodic content
Google+
• Increase SEO through regularly updated content and engagement
• Foster organic search opportunity

Pinterest
• Appeal to content collectors through authentic imagery
• Encourage engagement through contests and promotions
**National Sales**
The U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism has developed an aggressive sales strategy for both domestic and international markets.

As part of the plan to keep the U.S. Virgin Islands top of mind as the leading Caribbean destination of choice for leisure and business travel, a mix of the following will be implemented: sales calls; regional sales blitzes; trade show participation; and the training of sellers of travel and membership in key organizations.

Key industry events for FY2016 can be found on the following page.
The USVI Hotel and Tourism Association or other Tourism organizations are welcome to secure booth space for their membership representation. The Department will collaborate to ensure the partnership is seamless with imagery and collateral.
PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

Tourism Awareness:
To ensure the tourism industry in the U.S. Virgin Islands succeeds by having trained and informed personnel, the Department of Tourism will continue and enhance its successful summer internship program. The interns will be selected from the hospitality programs at the high schools and University, and will learn to market and promote the Territory for which they serve. The Department will provide the students with experience, knowledge and necessary skills. The interns will network with local businesses and establish professional contacts that may lead to employment.

Schools And Our Youth:
The Department of Tourism continues to support school programs and youth initiatives, which focus on tourism awareness. In FY2016, this initiative will include school and summer camp visits to instill the importance of tourism on the economy and the role we all play in the tourism industry. Activities will encourage the students to embrace their roles as young ambassadors in promoting the Virgin Islands.

The “Junior Ambassadors Program” builds upon the Department’s summer internship programs by embedding our brightest young students in official Department of Tourism-produced events, in-market and otherwise.

On-Island Communication:
The Department will maintain ongoing communication with the community to provide regular marketing updates through local radio appearances and organizations such as Rotary, the Hotel & Tourism Associations and The Ad Club, among others.

The Department will also conduct quarterly stakeholder meetings with partners to solicit participation, suggestions and discuss future buy-in opportunities.

Visitor Enhancement:
Improving the visitor experience will be an important element of the overall marketing plan, with a focus in the following areas:

1. Customer Service (Quarterly Training)
2. Infrastructure Development
3. Facilities
4. Creating a “Sense of Place”
5. Standards

Voluntourism:
Incorporating a "social responsibility" aspect to group itineraries is trending now in the meeting and incentives market. Companies and planners are recognizing that giving back to the community in which they are visiting is not only important economically, but socially as well. The Department will advertise the different social categories that groups can incorporate into their programs. Whether it’s an educational, health, or community-based project, the Department will surface opportunities that planners can pursue for their upcoming groups.
SPECIAL EVENTS AND SPONSORSHIPS

The Department of Tourism will continue to support special events that deliver visitor arrivals, increased expenditures and an enhanced visitor experience in the Territory, which is the primary mandate of the Department.

Applicants will be asked to provide supporting documentation, which will validate overnight stays/expenditures resulting from the event, as this information will be a determining factor for sponsorship consideration. The potential of a sponsorship from the Department is lowered if a proposal lacks precise data confirming the number of room nights/visitors that will be booked as a result of an event.

Processing time varies depending on whether the entity approved for sponsorship has a current vendor’s license issued by the Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Sponsorship proposals are required to include the following information. In order to expedite the review process, proposals must address all of the points below:

1. Overview of the event. This needs to include the marketing budget, marketing plan, target market, and expected talent, if applicable.
2. Proposed event dates. With only a few exceptions (based on ROI), the Department of Tourism will only consider proposals received a minimum of 180 days prior to the event.
3. Specific details of the sponsorship resources being requested. This may include:
   a. Funding (e.g. cash)
   b. Public Relations support
   c. Advertising placement
   d. Human resources (Volunteers / Manpower) support
   e. Other
4. Executive summary of organization or company. This overview should highlight results of other events the company has produced, and must list the organization’s leaders, including bios as well as references. A current copy of the company’s business license is required; not-for-profit entities must supply documentation of status as a charitable organization.
5. Expected promotional and economic impact value of the event. For example, include information on anticipated number of visitors, hotel rooms and room nights that will be occupied in the U.S. Virgin Islands as a result of this event, as well as the estimated food, beverage, activities, attractions and transportation spend.
6. List of all sponsors (both secured and those being solicited), including other government agencies.
CRUISE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

Collaborating with VIPA and WICO to promote the Ports of the Virgin Islands as a brand is crucial to gaining market share. Long-term agreements provide a base for consistent cruise arrivals while establishing balance and stability for private sector business development.

AIRLINE GROWTH STRATEGY

Enhancing air capacity remains a key component of our overall marketing strategy. Improving lift to St. Croix, and specifically securing a flight out of the Northeast, is a primary objective. Exploring new prospects for service to St. Thomas provides opportunities for growth.

PACKAGES AND SEASONAL PROMOTIONS

The Department of Tourism is aware its destination-wide promotions continue to be a vital contributor to the industry’s success for key seasonal periods and priority segments. During FY2016, the Department will market targeted offers in the following 10 areas:

1. Special Value
2. Small Hotels
3. Villas
4. Puerto Rico/Caribbean
5. International
6. MICE
7. Military
8. St. Croix
9. Romance/Bridal
10. Centennial