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2022-2023

*Sales & Marketing Plan*



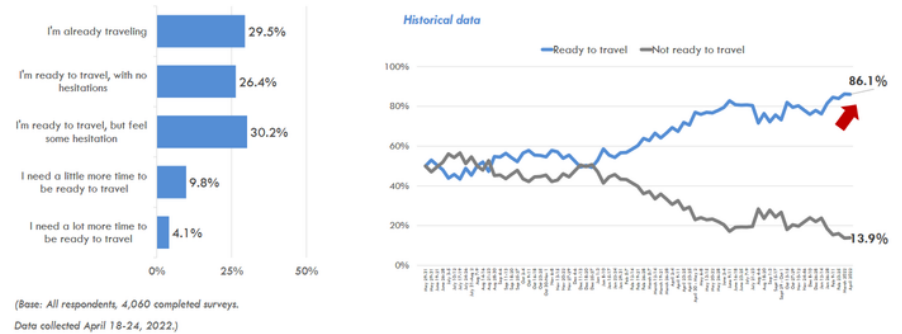
# Executive Overview

After every storm the proverbial dust settles, and a new landscape appears. Winston-Salem's travel and tourism industry has weathered a once-in-a-lifetime storm and is now poised to cultivate a future of promise, prosperity, and recovery. Our confidence is fueled, in large part, by a stronger and swifter than anticipated return to travel.

## TRAVEL STATE-OF-MIND

Destination Analysts

Question: When it comes to getting back out and traveling again, which best describes your current state of mind? (Select one)



Historically during dips in the economy and consumer confidence, travel is the last “luxury” item on the consumer spend list. Fortuitously, the pandemic-induced travel restrictions created an overwhelming pent-up demand to travel and are now propelling visitors’ zeal to travel.

Correspondingly over the last year, we are realizing higher than projected hotel occupancy and revenue with a healthy forecast for this trajectory to continue.

However, this forward momentum teems with a realistic and lesson-learned attitude. Now, more than ever, we have a profound understanding and renewed appreciation that there is no such a thing as “back to business as normal.” While the negative ripple effects of the last two years are fewer, fainter, and flattening, our world, and therefore our approach has changed. The most notable shift is the reshuffled drivers of overnight hotel visitation from primarily convention and corporate to leisure transient. Understandably, while mass gatherings were deemed “off-limits,” consumers were compelled to take control over their lives and to travel – even if just to destinations a short drive away. Mid-sized, centrally located cities such as Winston-Salem proved to be the panacea to pandemic fatigue.

We believe our solid foundation of geo-targeted leisure advertising and strong earned editorial mentions ultimately paid off for us at this critical crossroads.

Therefore, the 2022-2023 plan is constructed as a forward-looking strategic vision interlaced with rebalanced, nimble, and adaptive tactics focusing on leisure marketing investment more than ever before.

It's important to underscore heavier investments in leisure marketing doesn't mean leisure only. Most notably, it's a hard-working approach that supports all of Winston-Salem's market segments, including sports, corporate, and especially our meetings and conventions audience. A heavier investment in radio and television broadcast in our strongest visitor feeder markets of Charlotte and Raleigh are also where a concentration of convention clients and corporate constituents reside. Additionally, the meetings business is beginning to return to pre-pandemic levels.

Another positive post-pandemic by-product is the influx of new residents into the Carolinas, many of whom relocated to these larger metropolitan markets. We will therefore saturate television and audio broadcast outlets with an increased frequency of messaging to entice and invite our new neighbors to Winston-Salem who are eager to explore their new backyard. As their audience squarely aligns with our visitor profile, we will work with PBS-NC and in-state cable television outlets, as well as public radio broadcasting throughout the Carolinas.

We are using a similar broadcast media strategy to begin building and growing our destination awareness in the larger and emerging target markets, such as Metro Atlanta and Capital Beltway (Northern Virginia, Maryland).





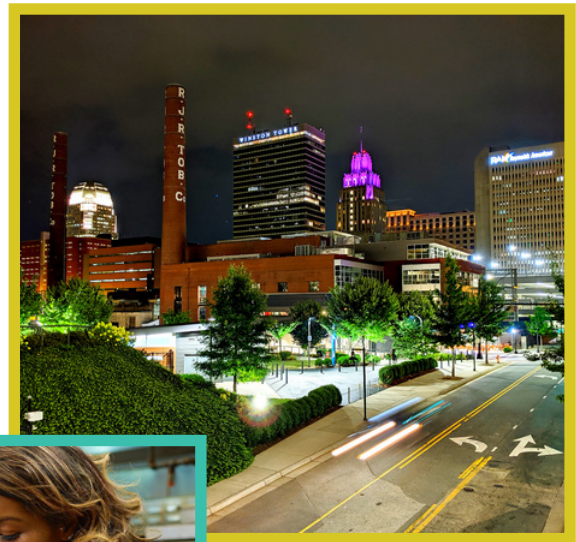
Increasing our frequency while expanding our geographic footprint in print publication advertising is a key tactic, but with a twist. The marked strategic shift is narrowing the number of lifestyle publications we work with and increasing the frequency of placements. Publication partners such as Our State Magazine, Garden & Gun, SouthPark Magazine, and Atlanta Magazine are a few highly targeted ones that perfectly mesh with Winston-Salem's brand vision and messaging.

Powerful destination marketing is only as strong as its ability to deliver on its brand promise. Visit Winston-Salem's brand is baked into its tagline, Look Forward, Travel Back. That said (and even though Winston-Salem historically enjoys a higher level of repeat visitation), a base of new visitors needs to be cultivated for our destination to grow, prosper, and weather future storms. This means that our destination requires new reasons to travel here. Yet, therein lies one of Winston-Salem's biggest hurdles, a hurdle destination marketing organizations cannot clear single-handedly. That said, we have "creatively repackaged" several Winston-Salem core attributes and authentic experiences such as our ten craft breweries, first-class art offerings, architectural hallmarks, and the beloved Moravian culinary trail. However, to grow and remain competitive, Winston-Salem must look for new products, attractors, and compelling experiences.



The double-edged sword is the inability of our existing attractions to hire or re-hire employees which has created a roadblock to getting them fully reopened and robustly back on the visitor experience track. Most notably, Old Salem Museums & Gardens cites that lack of staff-build back as a prime example of the post-pandemic fallout and their inability to increase hours of operation.

Being fully staffed is also a challenge for our restaurants, hotels, and meeting facilities, thus negatively impacting the quality and timeliness of customer service. Visit Winston-Salem remains committed to working alongside elected officials, area educators, and hospitality industry leaders to support existing infrastructure while developing new ways of elevating the caliber of careers in the travel and tourism realm.





## Meetings & Conventions

**S**taffing-up is a critical goal, especially with the recent completion of an extensive refresh of Benton South and the Gallery Ballroom at the Benton Convention Center. We are emboldened by the recent and steady return of convention contracts, as well as the corresponding increase in delegate attendance. The meaningful “refresh” of the 43,000 square feet of meeting space at Benton South enables our sales team to promote greater flexibility to new and repeat convention clients. Working closely with the HVMC sales and operations teams, Visit Winston-Salem will showcase the Benton with bold new advertising images, as well as an immersive 360 virtual video experience, put on hold during lock-down and awaiting completion of the refresh.

Bringing planners into Winston-Salem is also a key deliverable on the team’s to-do list. Most notably, the Visit Winston-Salem sales team secured the hosting honors for the prestigious Association Executives of North Carolina in Summer 2023. With the green light to gather again, Convention Sales has assembled a full calendar of trade and appointment shows as well as one-on-one meetings with customers and clients throughout 2022-2023.



## Research

Understanding and respecting customer sentiment is always important. Over the last two years, national and state industry research was our beacon in the storm and constant compass guiding the tone, timing, and tenure of our messaging to visitors, customers, and industry and community partners.

Now that travel is roaring back, it is imperative that Visit Winston-Salem reignites its own research initiatives in a bold way.

Confidently, we will re-engage Gray Research Solutions to reinstitute our comprehensive Hotel Lodging Survey as well as its companion Intercept Survey. Together this quantitative and qualitative analysis provides the Visit Winston-Salem team and our industry partners guideposts to what is and will continue to drive overnight hotel stays in Forsyth County.

Although planned for but tabled last year, we are glad to work with Visit NC's tourism research team in partnership with Zartico Insights, a research program designed to gain key information about out-of-state as well as resident visitation. It will provide us with visitor volume, the purpose of travel, and the origin market monthly.

Research also comes by way of our Google Analytics. On an ongoing basis, Visit Winston-Salem continues to monitor monthly website analytics, examining such data key performance indicators and metrics for website flow, page views, time on site, and geographic source markets.



## Digital Marketing and Website

**A**fter an extensive search process spearheaded by Visit Winston-Salem's Marketing Committee, Visit Winston-Salem is partnering with Miles Partnership as our new website development, design, and digital marketing agency. With more than 40 years of experience exclusively in the tourism industry, Miles is a dynamic and strategic marketing partner that will take our current website to a higher level of efficiency, effectiveness, and performance.

This analysis is coupled with our targeted digital advertising and paid search campaigns that drive website visitation and enhance our research findings.



Based on our extensive work with other DMOs, the unique challenges and opportunities that face your destination and an initial SEO audit, our custom approach to redesigning and developing VisitWinstonSalem.com is based on the following three key pillars:

1

**Amplify Content to Support the User Journey:**

We will bring your content to life in ways that reflect the brand, connect with consumers in engaging ways across devices and enhance your destination's digital footprint through smart SEO strategies.

2

**Improve Accessibility to Serve All Audiences:**

Building the new VisitWinstonSalem.com with accessibility in mind adds an additional layer of usability—a key goal highlighted in your RFP.

3

**Continuously Optimize for Ongoing Evolution:**

Our approach to developing a new VisitWinstonSalem.com will ensure your digital platforms are flexible and future-focused to allow for continued optimization.



## *Public Relations & Earned Media Efforts*

**W**orking across all market segments and audiences are our concentrated public relations and earned media efforts. An added boost to the coming fiscal year is the honor of Winston-Salem hosting 45 members of the Eastern Chapter of the prestigious Society of American Travel Writers. Hosting SATW is the culmination of thoughtful planning and the opportunity to showcase our destination firsthand to top-notch, national travel and culinary journalists.

Working in concert with the Visit Winston-Salem team, our national public relations firm, Hayworth PR will coordinate in-market individual media visits with print and digital influencers as a crucial component of our plan. Meeting media outlets and generating additional media ink in our “emerging” markets, ie. Greater Atlanta Metro, as well as the Washington, DC, and Capital Beltways, are top priorities.

Highlighting history, creating new ways to increase the spotlight, and telling Winston-Salem’s diverse stories and destination offerings are omnipresent in every tactic. The richness in our destination's past, present, and promise of its future are what will enable Winston-Salem to continue to shine.



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By Betsy Cribb | March 08, 2022

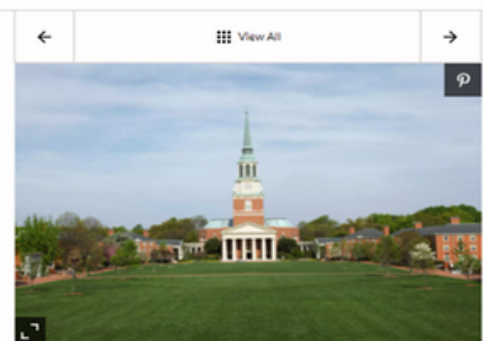
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#### 18. Winston-Salem, North Carolina

The place that gave us Krispy Kreme doughnuts and Texas Pete hot sauce is as entrepreneurial and imaginative as ever. In 2021, we declared the Demon Deacons' hometown a "City on the Rise," thanks largely to Innovation Quarter, a downtown research district that comprises 1.6 acres of green space, 5 academic institutions, 90 companies, and 20 miles of connected greenway.

Plan your trip.



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