



PUERTO RICO OUTPERFORMS COMPETITORS AS A DESTINATION AMID THE PANDEMIC

Google search data and a share of voice media analysis prove that Discover Puerto Rico and local tourism industry efforts in 2020 outperformed competitors despite the global pandemic, setting the destination for a great recovery in 2021 and beyond

San Juan, Puerto Rico, February 3, 2020 – Discover Puerto Rico, the Island’s non-profit bipartisan Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), today announces results and significant positive impact from its deliberate marketing strategies in 2020, despite the global pandemic halting global tourism. A creative and targeted strategy was executed to keep the Island prominently in travelers’ sights for when it is once again safe to travel. When many DMOs across the world became paralyzed given the uncertainties of the impact of COVID-19, Discover Puerto Rico alongside local industry partners persevered with data-driven insights to guide the destination’s marketing strategies to keep Puerto Rico top of mind.

“Through December 2019 and into our high season in early 2020, Puerto Rico saw record-breaking numbers. The pace of recovery was a historic feat but in 2020, COVID-19 decimated the global tourism industry and as we focus on recovery, we’re already seeing high levels of pent-up demand from travelers eager to return to the Island as seen by third-party data sources,” said Brad Dean, CEO of Discover Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico was positioned for great success in 2020, achieving impressive accolades like being a part of more than twenty (20) top “places to go” lists for 2020 in reputable press such as Forbes, Condé Nast Traveler, Huffington Post, NBC News, AFAR, just to name a few. After the seismic activities in January, which was a prelude to COVID-19, Discover Puerto Rico remained agile and efforts were turned to overdrive to ensure accuracy of the Island’s state paired with responsible and creative messaging to break through, which has led to:

- **PUERTO RICO BEING THE MOST POPULAR DESTINATION SEARCHED FOR FUTURE TRAVEL.**
 - In March 2020, Puerto Rico was one of only three global destinations whose search traffic from those in the U.S. grew, according to Google Analytics. All other destinations declined in search during this month.
 - The Island was also one of the top destination searches from April 1 to May 12, 2020, according to Hopper.
 - According to Expedia data in first half 1H of 2020, San Juan was one of the 10 most-searched-for destinations for flights, for the July-Dec. 2020 period.
 - In January 2021, Puerto Rico was the most popular destination searched for in the second half of 2020, based on Google Search data trends published by [Go Koala](#).

- **PUERTO RICO OUTPERFORMING COMPETITORS IN MEDIA SHARE OF VOICE (SOV)—HOW OFTEN THE DESTINATION IS REFERENCED IN A POSITIVE LIGHT ACROSS FREE PRESS BASED ON NEWS AGGREGATOR TOOL TALKWALKER.**
 - Puerto Rico led Bermuda and Aruba in overall destination mentions with 6% positive share of voice, despite a \$10M lower comparative spend on tourism marketing.
 - Puerto Rico led the Dominican Republic, Aruba and Bermuda owning 10% of the conversation when it came to mentions of future travel. This is significantly impressive given comparative marketing investments are \$43.5M, \$36.5M, and \$35.9M respectively.
 - Puerto Rico led Aruba and Bermuda, owning 10% of the conversation when it came to health and safety measures.

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The proven third-party results above are due to strategic efforts that positioned Puerto Rico positively amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. While tourism advertising was paused around the world, communications and news media never stopped. The efforts below were activated to ensure proper and responsible engagement with would-be travelers throughout the year to set the destination up for a faster recovery.

- **VIA CREATIVE AND RESPONSIBLE COMMUNICATIONS, THE DESTINATION GARNERED 16 BILLION MEDIA IMPRESSIONS, EQUATING TO APPROXIMATELY \$284 MILLION IN AD VALUE.**
 - Developed a thorough, phased COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan.
 - Activated strategically and quickly to become the first destination to market comprehensive virtual travel experiences, which has been recognized by several leading industry publications as best practice in destination marketing during the pandemic, including Skift, PRWeek, PR news, among others.
 - Dialed up earned media relations efforts, resulting in approximately 480+ press placements in top lifestyle, travel, trade, MICE and consumer press like the New York Times (39 times), Washington Post (6 times), Wall Street Journal (7 times), Condé Nast traveler (62 times), Travel & Leisure (88 times), USA Today (67 times), BuzzFeed (6 times), Forbes (48 times), Bloomberg (13 times), just to name a few.
 - Saw equitable coverage throughout the year between metro and non-metros areas to highlight the entire destination.
 - Implemented a tailored influencer program that inspired future travel and hosted virtual “press trips” for the leisure and MICE audiences.
 - Partnered with small business owners and local organizations such as Brands of Puerto Rico and Conservación ConCiencia on creative programs around Small Business Saturday and an Adopt a Coqui gifting activation that garnered 364 media impressions, equating to approximately \$5.6 million in ad value and donations and purchases for these organizations.

- **INCREASED DISCOVER PUERTO RICO WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA TRAFFIC AND ENGAGEMENT.**
 - Despite a year of volatile search demand for travel-related terms, DiscoverPuertoRico.com achieved 7.5 million+ pageviews (up 52% from 2019), almost 207,000 partner referrals (up 26% from 2019), and a 2:42 average time of the website (up 53% from 2019). Additionally, the website saw an increase in the total number of organic keywords it ranks for on page one by 93% on desktop search and by 122% on mobile search, compared to 2019.
 - The website ended the year with more than 1.6M total organic sessions – 200% more than 2019.
 - Increased eNewsletter sign ups by 84%.
 - Have seen Year over Year increases in users from all major social media platforms such as Facebook (137,266 up 58%), Instagram (7,832 up 211%), and Twitter (7,042 up 139%).

- **STRONG SALES PIPELINE GIVEN DOUBLED-DOWN COMMUNICATIONS WITH MEETING AND EVENT PLANNERS.**
 - Future sales pipeline of potential business is currently \$244.1M, 79% increase from when Discover Puerto Rico was initiated.
 - Generated 448 MICE qualified leads, an average of nearly 9 leads per week.
 - Contracted \$50.1 Million of group business for future years.

“While a turbulent year for the entire global tourism industry, these results are setting up the destination for a greater and faster recovery in 2021,” mentioned Dean. “Along with the public and private sector, we are committed to continue working together to safeguard future visitation to the Island as tourism is a critical sector for the economy.”

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