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Who We Are

Pursuant to Public Law 11-15 Section 5, Public Law 13-5, Public Law 13-9, and Executive Order 03-02 of March 10, 2003, the Marianas Visitors Authority shall promote the orderly growth of the CNMI tourism industry.

It is our mission to promote and develop the Northern Mariana Islands as a premier destination of choice for visitors from throughout the world while providing a maximum quality of life for our people. We nurture and encourage cultural interchange and environmental sensitivity for visitors' enjoyment and for our children's children.

Headed by a Managing Director and Deputy Managing Director along with division managers in Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. As of September 2020, the MVA has 11 active and 22 furloughed employees.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Marian Aldan-Pierce, Chair	Gloria Cavanagh, Vice-Chair
Chris Nelson, Treasurer	Agida Quitugua, Secretary
Viola Alepuyo, Director	Tom Liu, Director
Ivan Quichocho, Director	Masato Tezuka, Director
Warren Villagomez, Director	

MANAGEMENT

Priscilla M. Iakopo, Managing Director
Judy C. Torres, Deputy Managing Director
Tatiana Babauta, Product Development Manager
Carol DLG Chargualaf, HR & Admin Services Manager
Martin F. Duenas, Community Projects Manager
Kuen-Hee Han, Tour Guide Certification Manager
Lenette Maratita, Procurement Officer
Joanne Paraiso, Chief Accountant
Brenda Repeki, Acting Marketing Manager
David Atalig, Acting Rota Field Office Supervisor
Benedicta Borja, Tinian Field Office Supervisor

MVA in FY 2020

The Marianas Visitors Authority is the primary economic driver of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. It is the Marianas Visitors Authority's duty to aggressively promote The Marianas and attract visitors to our islands by working hand in hand with our off-shore offices in Korea, China, Japan, and Taiwan. After the devastation we suffered from Typhoon Yutu, We began to see a rise in our visitor arrivals in the early part of FY 2020 marked by a 609.9% jump in November arrivals from November 2018. Our hopes were kindled with the launch of Skymark Airlines' regular flights into The Marianas and we continued to see rises in visitor numbers in December and January.

Then the effects of the historically unprecedented COVID-19 PANDEMIC reached our beautiful shores. The rising arrival numbers started to dwindle in February and in March we saw a decrease of 85.2% in arrivals compared to March 2019, and only 45 visitors in April. By July, the majority of 189 arrivals were coming in from the United States. These low numbers translated into a crisis for the hotel industry and related businesses meaning the MVA has now lost our main source of funding since there is no Hotel Occupancy Tax to collect.

In early March, the MVA employees were put on 64-hour pay periods. By the end of April, the MVA was forced to terminate or suspend many of its contracts and make a very hard decision to furlough nearly 70% of our employees. Only 11 managers of different divisions remain. However, without any flights and the hotels still closed or vacant, the MVA may need to make further adjustments.

Despite these setbacks, marketing efforts to keep The Marianas in the minds of potential travelers continue with destination videos, webinars and social media. To counter the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic, The Marianas as a tourist destination needs to keep a relevant online presence to attract potential travelers and stand out among other beach destinations. Providing virtual experiences of The Marianas gives tourists a glimpse of the cultures and natural beauty of The Marianas to create a positive emotional response which will increase demand for The Marianas once they are ready to travel again.

WHAT DID 2020 LOOK LIKE?

IN THE MIDST OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

LOCAL and INTERNATIONAL MARKETING



- Nov. 19, 2019—Skymark Airlines' inaugural flight to the Marianas marked the airline's first International route. Skymark offered special fares as low as \$38 one way to commemorate the occasion. This also meant more travel opportunities for the locals.
- 2020 PATA Gold Award entry "Launch of Hope: Skymark Airlines."
- August 28 –20, 2002—22nd Annual Nippon Domanaka Festival, The Marianas Dommanka received the Outstanding Award-highest ranking for all overseas teams-among 373 dance troupes. The virtual festival received 500,000 initial online views

PUBLIC SAFETY & AWARENESS



- CNMI Health Declaration - At the outset of COVID-19, the MVA worked with the COVID-19 Task Force and other government agencies to develop and produce the health declaration forms to ensure safety of our community and visitors.
- Oct. 20, 2019– Submission of MVA's first ever Citizen-Centric Report to the CNMI Office of the Public Auditor.
- Jan. 10, 2020—First-ever Professional Development training for all MVA employees.
- Jan. 28, 2020– Coronavirus prevention meeting in partnership with the CHCC, other government agencies, travel partners, tour agents and HANMI: highlighted ways to prevent the virus migration.
- May 2020-August 2020—In consideration of the pandemic, fees for tour guide certification badge renewals were waived and given six-month extension of expiration date upon renewal.
- U.S. Department of Interior awarded Technical Assistant Grant in the amount of \$202,000 to MVA for visitor data collection and analysis system.
- Approved for \$7.5 million from the HUD-CDBG-DR
- Marpi area sites went through assessment and renovation. Forbidden Island Lookout was repaired.

VIRTUAL PRESENCE

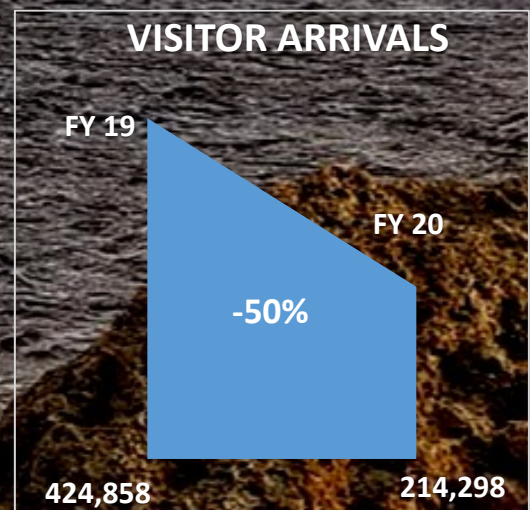
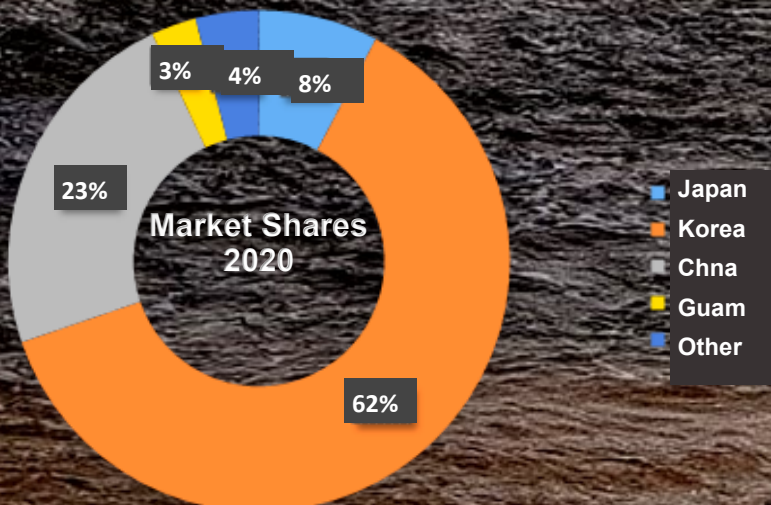


- Stronger and more consistent social media presence along with more updated visuals: "Dance Your Way Through the Marianas" garnered much attention. Other efforts include PATA Travel Mart participation through webinar and B2B meetings and video introduction featuring MVA's Managing Director as part of virtual booth in 2020 PATA Travel Mart
- **#StayHomeMarianas Campaign**—In partnership with MARPAC, the virtual event #ChowMarianas encouraged safe home cooking by sharing local recipes and #ColorMarianas - created interest in The Marianas among our youngest visitors.
- Deer Meat for Dinner came to the CNMI - Promotion of the Northern Islands - The channels of social media program "Deer Meat for Dinner" were used to reach 6.7 million followers with video and photography coverage of the Northern Islands with emphasis on fishing and hunting. Additional exposure was gained through on- and off-line channels.
- Industry Updates—The MVA in consort with MVA Offshore offices have been sharing weekly Industry Updates to keep our legislators and members informed of COVID-19 status, Travel Trends, Media and local updates.

COMMUNITY EVENTS



- February 15-16, 2020—16th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival drew hundreds of bikers and visitors to the island.
- The last MVA Signature events held in FY 2020: Saipan Marathon 2020 was on March 14, 2020 boasting 737 registrants with 542 runners. It was also the first time to include 5K course to the Marathon.
- Spearheaded by Lady Diann Foundation, Project Haligi has been going strong with numerous participants adding their original artwork to utility poles on all three islands with Rota exhibiting salient cultural/historical pieces.



OUR FINANCES

REVENUES and SPENDING FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019 (audited)

Where does the money come from?

Pursuant to Public Law 18-1, Hotel Occupancy Tax (15%) constitutes the MVA's entire budget. From the tax collected 80% is given to MVA and 20% to Retirement Fund. Out of MVA's 80%, 2.5% goes to Department of Finance for enforcement and 2% (total of 6%) goes to each municipality of Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

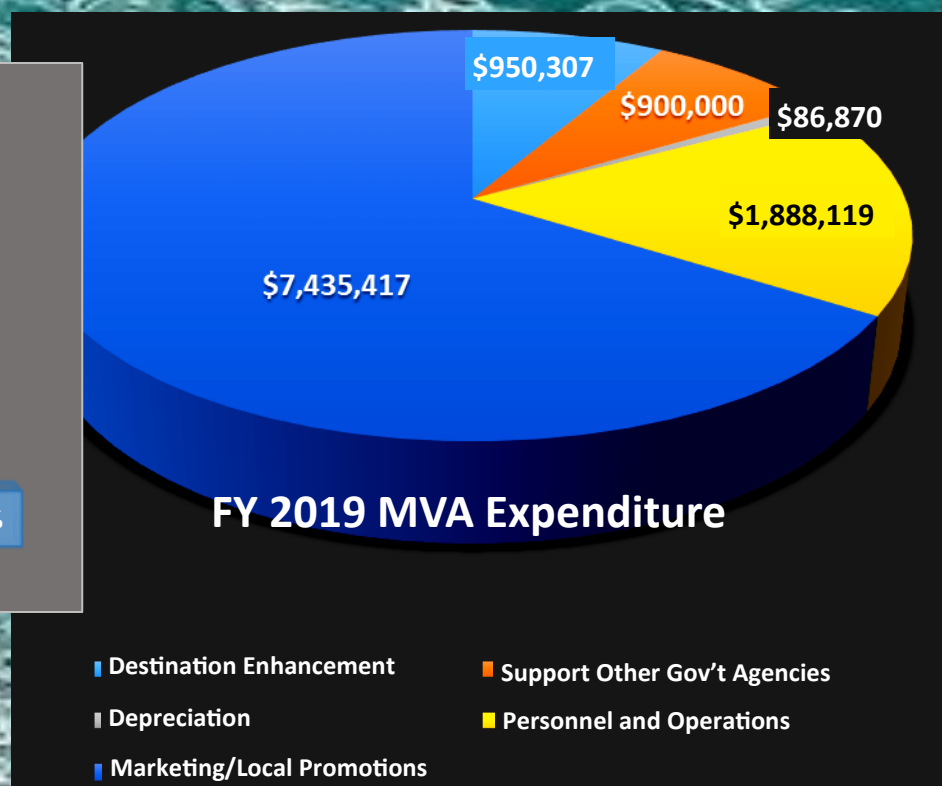
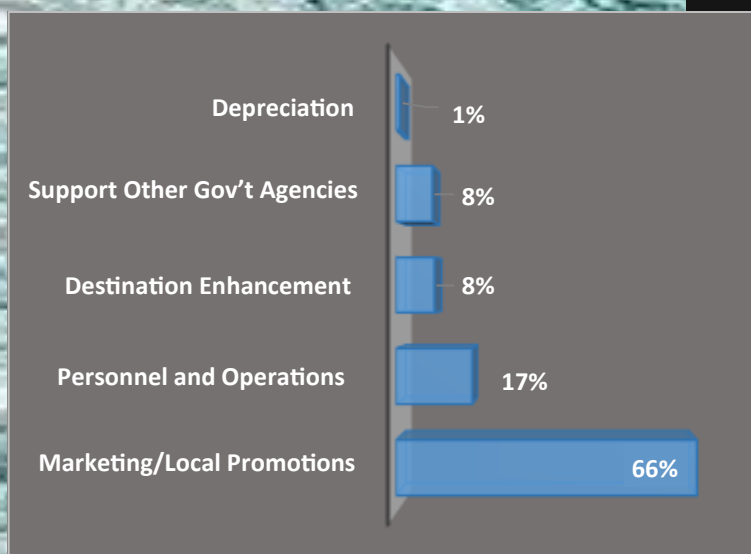
FY 2019 Total Revenue \$12,319,992

FY 2019 Total Expenses \$11,260,713

AMOUNT NOT RECEIVED from the CNMI Government by end of FY 2019:
\$6,149,517

Where does the money go?

The biggest challenge in FY 2019 was receiving timely allotments from our central government. It left MVA with no choice but to make the difficult choice of cutting local and international marketing, destination enhancement projects as well as community events.



WHAT IS NEXT?



CHALLENGES AND PLANS



WHERE'S THE MONEY?

Timely release of MVA allotments and receiving the earmarked funds from the CNMI central government will help the driving engine of the CNMI economy (MVA) continue promoting our beautiful islands.

FURLOUGHED STAFF



As it is still unsure when the travel industry will regain its position, it is essential that the MVA continues to keep its offices open to provide services and continue working with partners for the reopening of tourism. Upon the return of tourism and to assure seamless continuance of promotions and projects, it is important to recall all furloughed staff.

LEASE RENEWALS



The larger issue at hand is the impending lease expiration facing many of our hotel partners. However, Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan will now be known as Crowne Plaza Resort.

LET'S CLEAN UP



This downtime in tourism gives us a great opportunity to do much needed repairs and clean up our most visited areas. The MVA is working to do assessments and receiving strong public/private partnership support. Local residents can also help by cleaning the beaches and being more conscientious about trash.

KEEP THEM COMING!



We are working with COVID-19 Task Force and the Governor's Council of Economic Advisors in creating a "Travel Bubble" between The Marianas and source countries. We are working with several airlines and travel agencies in South Korea in creating a Marianas Travel Campaign.

SEEKING OPTIONS



2020 has proven to be a challenging time for everyone not just The Marianas. To compound the matter PL21-35 has removed MVA's earmarked funds to appropriations leaving us with a mere \$2.6 million in the budget for FY 2021. To meet our most basic needs, we are looking into other grants. The 2020 TAP grant award hopefully will be a harbinger of more funding to come.

NEW TRAVEL NORM



There's no going back to the way things were; we are all going to have to accept the new normal in travel. As such, it's not just a matter of getting the tourism industry's engine restarted. Instead, we along with our industry stakeholders must understand what has changed, and what will best position the industry to grow together and become a driving force once again in the new normal. We must aim to recover stronger and more sustainable from this crisis.



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