

## Part One:

Bob Gilbert (00:08):

Welcome to Tourism Heads and Their Tales, a podcast series that invites travel and tourism leaders and influencers to share their take on key industry issues. My name is Bob Gilbert and I'm the general manager for the tourism and destination marketing practice at the award-winning strategic marketing agency, Eddy Alexander. My career spans over three decades in the travel and tourism industry where I've had the privilege of working with iconic brands and so many amazing colleagues who in their own ways are pushing the industry forward and using tourism to increase understanding, access, and quality of life. For those who work in travel, those that love to travel, and the communities that benefit from travel, I'll be bringing you into the conversation with top professionals who are shaping the industry, all with their unique tales and perspectives that they're ready to share with you. Welcome to another freshly brewed edition of Tourism Heads and Their Tales, brought to you by the award-winning agency, Eddy Alexander. I am so delighted to sit down with Nancy Mammana, CMO, chief Marketing Officer of New York City Tourism and Conventions. Now, I'm sure that most of our listeners are aware of the new brand, but before we learn more about that, Nancy, welcome and please share your background and career journey that brought you working alongside Fred Dixon marketing, the city that never sleeps New York.

Nancy Mammana (01:42):

Thank you so much and thank you for having me. It's my pleasure. I had a fairly circuitous route to this position, but somehow my strange background makes sense here. It's a little full circle. I was a dancer in my younger days, and I still actually do competitive ballroom dancing, and it's been a constant in my life from the time I was a child. And while I was in college in Syracuse University, my friends and I started a dance company Dance Works, which is now the largest club sport on campus. So I could say I accomplished something in college but we really had a good time doing that, and I wanted to do whatever that was as a career and pursued a performing arts administration master's degree at NYU, and I landed in the marketing department of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and that's the only place I wanted to work.

Nancy Mammana (02:32):

I was, you know, I'd always been a fan since I was a child, but I landed in the marketing and PR department, and I kind of just focused there for a long time while I was working at the company, but company wasn't in the financial shape that it's in now. We were, it really was tough times. So after a while, I needed to move on, just, you know, again, for financial reasons and growth reasons, and I began working in travel. So I worked at Kenard Cruise Line in the marketing department for a while, and then I went agency side for many years working in marketing partnerships, sports and entertainment activations over the course of many years. Did a lot of work with Pepsi Staples, American Express, Master, Merck Consumer Care, all sorts of things. And I did become somewhat of a generalist in marketing, opening up the New York office for an agency within Omnicom that is based in LA and Dallas.

Nancy Mammana (03:21):

So I worked on a wide variety of clients. I did some work with Starwood Hotels doing product placement and entertainment marketing for them. So I continued to touch travel along the way. Then I left there, I went to the NBA for time, and after that began working more back in the entertainment space. So I, I kind of went back and forth between agency side and client side. And then just prior to coming here, I, I

really felt I needed a change after 10 years at the marketing arm, and I wanted to pursue my passions. And one of the things I'm very passionate about is food in addition to dance. So I worked as the head of marketing East Coast and for Orlando at Patina Restaurant Group, and we were a member of NYC & Company, formerly known as, and I got to know the organization really at that time, but I was primarily active in the restaurant week work that we did, obviously working at a restaurant group, but I, I didn't really have a sense as to the depth and breadth of what the organization did.

Nancy Mammana (04:18):

Our CEO was on the board, so we had a little bit more of an understanding, but it really wasn't until I got here that I understood really what destination marketing was all about. I've touched a wide variety of industries. It's still marketing no matter what it is, but I really obviously was pleasantly surprised that in this role, I can really touch every industry that I've worked in in the past. I've always worked in New York City, so at this point now I'm five years in, I think I've interacted with all of my former employers in one way or another, whether it's Pepsi as a client, the NBA, I brought Judith Jamison onto the board of New York City tourism. We support Alvin Ailey's activities. So for me, it's really nice because I'm able to, you know, revisit all of my favorite places and things and people I've worked with in the past, because in this role, I'm fortunate enough to really have a pretty wide purview of what's happening in New York City. And so it, it has come full circle for me, and it just makes the, this role really does make sense. Well, and I guess, so I went round and about, I hope I answered the question. No,

Bob Gilbert (05:23):

Absolutely. And I think, you know, it's interesting as I talk to so many destination marketing influencers, CMOs, CEOs, presidents, they all have very fascinating stories that brought them to where they are. I was talking with one guest that we had some months back, and he was a tank commander. Wow. And, literally he was a tank commander and ended up as a CEO of a destination over on the Western US. So there are many different tales, which is really the, you know, how we got the name of the podcast series, tourism Heads and their Tales, and every tale is different. So, no, it's fascinating. I love the stories, and I guess that's what we are in the destination marketing world. We are storytellers. So share with us, Nancy, the story behind the rebranding, and again, I use that word if it was a rebranding or re-engineering, I know that you had the old brand for many, many years, maybe a dozen years, maybe longer, but New York City tourism and conventions rolled out in the spring of this year. First of all, why, and then what did the process look like? I could imagine it was enormous.

Nancy Mammana (06:40):

Yeah. Well, firstly, I would call it a rebrand for sure. We were NYC and Company about 26 years. We were named as such as part of the Bloomberg Administration's decoupling of many of the city's agencies. So the Sports Commission, New York City Marketing, New York City Convention and Visitors Bureau were you brought together. And then, we basically split apart as NYC & Company, and the naming convention and the logo design that was used for NYC & Company were by design meant to ladder up to a family of brands under what we call the chunky NYC. So as you walk around town, as you see things like building permits and parking tickets and all kinds of things that NYC, that sort of fat NYC was meant to unite all the city agencies. And although we're a private agency with a city contract, we do get grouped in with many of our other city agencies for things like this.

Nancy Mammana (07:39):

So we took that on at that time, and over the years, while it's definitely served us well, and it is iconic to a large degree, it also created some challenges for us. Firstly, it's very vague. It doesn't necessarily convey what we do by saying New York City & Company NYC & Company, lots of permutations, NYC & Co people were calling us, you know, all sorts of different versions of that name. But it didn't really, so we didn't have a lot of consistency and it didn't really say what we do. And there's also, as you may know, a clothing store called New York & Company, and you would be surprised how many people would send Fred and I emails on LinkedIn complaining about their customer service experience in the third average store.

Bob Gilbert (08:24):

I could imagine.

Nancy Mammana (08:26):

All the time. And so there's that level of ambiguity as well. So we wanted to take the opportunity to create clarity and speak about ourselves in a more obvious way, and also create some consistency in how we have branded ourselves over the years. We've created numerous sub-brands underneath that, we had a separate tagline for our convention sales business called "Make It NYC." So that was used as a brand throughout all their materials. Our URL was "NYC Go," just to add further confusion. So we didn't have, you know, what we would consider to be a best practice situation from a branding perspective. However, to do this properly, we knew we needed outside resources to help support our in-house design team. And we were really unable to afford it until we received a large grant from the American Rescue Plan. That was really enabling us to finally have the opportunity to revamp our brand, revamp our website to be more efficient so that it can serve our mission more effectively. So thanks to that opportunity and that funding, we were able to take both of those projects on at the same time, but we had to do it quickly. So towards September of 2021, we had to really quickly get into gear on an RFP, making sure we did the right due diligence with finding the right partners for both projects. And we had to award it by the end of the year. So that way we, you know, we were within guidelines of the funds. Right. So it was a little bit of a crunch.

Bob Gilbert (09:58):

There was a ticking clock right? On the ARPA funds?

Nancy Mammana (10:01):

It was, it was, yeah. And that was, that was a challenge. Part of that funding was going to be used for a TV campaign to jumpstart the recovery, which we had never been able to do. So we were also RFP-ing media agencies to support a buy at that scale because our, our current agency was more suited towards smaller spends and digital buys. But we were finally doing broadcasts. So we needed another media agency, and we needed a production partner for the TV spot. So all of these RFPs were going on at the same time. And that was a little hairy, but we got it done. And so we launched it, it took about a little over a year. We started in January of 2022, and we rolled out the new branding in March at our annual meeting in 2023, we partnered with a company called Two by Four.

Nancy Mammana (10:48):

They've done quite a bit of iconic work within New York City quite a bit in the arts and culture space. And they were an absolute pleasure to work with. They really were true partners with our team. And the evidence of all that, not only was it a very pleasant experience, because they happen to be very nice

people, but they're also very talented. And the fact that we're seeing the brand come to life and the new branding extrapolating across different usages and from things like out-of-home signage to trade shows, it's working so nicely. And I think that's testament to the work they did with us, that all the elements and the tools that we created within the toolkit are working so well. We've gotten such great feedback from it, and we continue to discover new ways of making it come to life today, which is also really gratifying.

Nancy Mammana (11:38):

So with them, we were able to create not only a mark, which is a new identity for the company, but also we changed all of our URLs. We have a new illustration style, a new font that we created, a grid that you could see in a lot of our creative, and all other types of elements that now hang together for the first time. And it's been really exciting to see. But yes, it was over a year in the making because we had quite a bit of research to do stakeholders to speak with. We engaged our board, our members, our staff. We worked with City Hall to make sure that we actually had the permission and the blessing to move away from the current logo and name, which we received, which was, you know, great early on. But we needed a lot of inputs and we had to make sure we were very thoughtful on the process and what was informing. So as part of this exercise, we also came away with a more refined mission statement and brand strategy, which we use on a daily basis to, to help guide us.

Bob Gilbert (12:39):

You know, it's interesting the framework that you've just outlined. I mean, at the core is that creativity and the design element and your partner, you know, has that kind of creative background to be able to tie together form and function because it has to talk to so many different cohorts that you have internal, external, and that's not an easy and easy task. What would you say was the toughest piece of this? Was it education? Was it working with the city, working with your stakeholders, the board? What were the, the heavy lifts within that process?

Nancy Mammana (13:21):

Well, I think we have many constituents, those I just mentioned and then some in terms of our partners and such, but getting alignment between our board and our, some of our key members and our key staff members. You know, that sometimes these kinds of things can be very subjective. People say, I like it, I don't like it. You know that this is art and this is the way it goes with any piece of creative. But being able to have our strategic compass work alongside us so we could objectively say, this is what it needs to do. And does this do it or does it not? Is what kept us, I think, on track. And we had a few great options. We couldn't make a quick decision, but we needed to make sure that it had the right heft to support everything it needed to do. And we had to make sure that we had buy-in, you know, even if you don't necessarily like it, does it achieve what it needs to achieve? You know, that's not always an easy conversation to have. People get very passionate about their creative opinions, so I would say it wasn't as terribly, I don't want to say it wasn't difficult because there was a lot involved, but it wasn't, it wasn't a situation where we had a challenge hitting us every week. Right.

Bob Gilbert (14:35):

More managing so many different moving parts. To bring them all together at the same time to meet your, the Gantt chart that ultimately has a release date that kind of brings everything together that, you know, you are aligning all of the different participants, if you will, in the process, all aligned with the, with the vision. And then once everybody's aligned with the vision, then the rest of it is I'll say piece of cake. But I know that it, it certainly was not a piece of cake.

Nancy Mammana (15:07):

Well, you know, we, yeah, getting alignment is sometimes is, you know, usually the thing that takes the longest. So, I mean, we, we had to have a lot of conversations. I mean, to the nth degree. I mean, should it include the work convention? Should it just say tourism? You know, how do we make sure that it, you know, is broad enough for corporate contracts and, you know, short enough to be used across consumer social media channels. So you need to do a lot of things. We just wanted to make sure the name was the same across all. So I think we found a good compromise. I mean, we typically use the New York City mark for our consumer communications and our consumer channels, or NYC tourism, that's our URL and all of our social, but for convention sales membership and more corporate documents, we're New York City tourism and conventions. Right. But it's the same family. And we have made huge strides in the name of a cohesive brand system, but that took a lot to get there. So lots of conversations. I would say that's where we needed to take more time to get there. But it was good because we ended up with a better product in the end. Yep. So yeah, if I had to isolate any time, I think it was in that alignment phase, but we got through it and I think we were better for it.

Bob Gilbert (16:15):

And you're out the other side now.

Nancy Mammana (16:18):

Yes. Easy to say now.

Bob Gilbert (16:20):

It's easy to say now. Right. But I think that as you go through these kinds of processes, and I've been involved in a few things like this, but not as large as what you have had there, you know, within New York City and all of the, you know, I guess including, well, I guess Manhattan is part of the five boroughs that you have. But you always look at things and think, well, you know, next time you say, no, I don't want to do this again. But, you know, you learn and it is an educational experience at the same time. But in terms of your structure and, and funding, how, how are you structured and funded? What is the, the makeup of the organization?

Nancy Mammana (16:59):

Well, from a funding perspective, half of our contract, give or take, is funded through City Hall. So we report in to Deputy Mayor, Torres-Springer. And we do get funding from the city and we apply that to certain, areas of our business. And the other half we raise roughly, so we have member dues, we are a membership based organization, so there are about 1800 to 2000 businesses that are members at any given time who pay dues for us to market the city on their behalf and Right. Give them opportunities for training, bringing them into the market. There's all sorts of member benefits that we offer. And then we have sponsorships, that my group was in charge of. MasterCard has been our corporate partner for the last four years and things like that. Sponsors of programs, overarching endemic partners, all of that sort of thing. And then we saw advertising on our website. So we are doing whatever we can to increase our private revenues as our city budgets have been cut alongside all the city agencies that were also cut. So we're doing whatever we can to shore up our budgets from private revenue for that reason, so that we can maintain the core of our mission activities.

Bob Gilbert (18:09):

So it's a blended, private public entity, if you will. I don't know if that's the right term.

Nancy Mammana (18:16):

Yes. We are technically a private agency with a city contract. Yeah. But we're a nonprofit (c)(6) and we also have a foundation, the New York City Tourism Foundation that is a (C)(3) and our gala that we recently had on December 4th, along with a few other things, raise funds for that foundation. And we give microgrants to small culturals throughout the five boroughs. And, during the pandemic, it was particularly a lifeline for many to keep their seasons going. And ultimately, arts and culture are what make New York City, you know, so unique and distinctive. We try to do what we can to support at that level through the foundation.

Bob Gilbert (18:55):

Thanks for listening to part one of this episode. Tune in next time for part two. Please like subscribe and leave a review. You can also visit [EddyAlexander.com](http://EddyAlexander.com) to learn more about our tourism, marketing, and destination management services, and read some of our recent case studies.

## **Part Two:**

Bob Gilbert (00:08):

Welcome to Tourism Heads and Their Tales, a podcast series that invites travel and tourism leaders and influencers to share their take on key industry issues. My name is Bob Gilbert and I'm the general manager for the tourism and destination marketing practice at the award-winning strategic marketing agency, Eddy Alexander. My career spans over three decades in the travel and tourism industry, where I've had the privilege of working with iconic brands and so many amazing colleagues who in their own ways are pushing the industry forward and using tourism to increase understanding, access and quality of life. For those who work in travel, those that love to travel, and the communities that benefit from travel. I'll be bringing you into the conversation with top professionals who are shaping the industry, all with their unique tales and perspectives that they're ready to share with you. So let's rejoin with Nancy Mammana, CMO, Chief Marketing Officer of New York City Tourism and Conventions. So you mentioned before your board, what is the makeup of the board, what is their background and kind of businesses that are represented on the board, which are different from the stakeholders. Right. But I guess at the end of the day, any business in New York and the boroughs are stakeholders, but what is the makeup of your board?

Nancy Mammana (01:34):

We have a fairly large board. We have about 85 people on our board and it really, yeah. And it's a cross-section. We have leaders throughout every sector of tourism and hospitality on our board in general, managers, heads of sales, marketing, operations, all sorts of titles. But ultimately we have every tourism and hospitality sector represented. So that's hotels, cultural attractions, restaurants, retail, Broadway, Off-Broadway performing arts. And then we have sometimes bids and chambers represented. We have representatives from City Hall that rotate on and off the board. So we really feel like we have true thought leadership represented. And particularly during the rebrand, we sought a lot of input and the board really did guide us and it was very much an interactive process. We wanted to make sure the board not only felt happy with the end result, but they felt that they were invested and had a voice in that. You know, as we look at new funding models, et cetera, we are in advocacy. We are very much continuing to engage the board in that way too. So we're very lucky and we try to, you know, leverage their expertise as much as we can.

Bob Gilbert (02:45):

Right, I would imagine then, you know, I was going to ask you if you have a separate committee of stakeholders, but with a board of 85, I probably don't see the necessity.

Nancy Mammana (02:56):

Well, we do have board committees. So we have, you know, a smaller group that help us attack things on a sort of subject by subject basis. And we try to meet quarterly with all of them. So tele committees, culinary committee, which is chaired by David Burke and Tren'ness Woods-Black of Sylvia's Harlem. We do live events. We have a hotel committee. I probably mentioned retail. We do break that down because a little bit more, palatable to meet with a smaller group of, you know, 10 to 15 people to solve issues and attack, challenges.

Bob Gilbert (03:28):

Who is your current chairman of your board?

Nancy Mammana (03:31):

Charles Flateman.

Bob Gilbert (03:32):

Oh Charlie, what a great guy I know Charlie. You know, he's one of those individuals, number one, he has such a personality, such charisma. You know, he's that blend between creative and business.

Nancy Mammana (03:47):

For sure.

Bob Gilbert (03:48):

And I've met with him on a number of occasions actually in the past, and I've enjoyed him. He is just a wonderful character, wonderful person.

Nancy Mammana (03:58):

He is.

Bob Gilbert (03:59):

So what are your key metrics and have they changed post pandemic?

Nancy Mammana (04:06):

Yeah. Traditionally, like most DMOs I think were measured on visitation, but we are also focused on, I guess we would call it destination management, where we're wanting to make sure that not only are we getting people here, but we're dispersing the economic benefits throughout the five boroughs in a very equitable way. And we're not just driving to a couple of key iconic locations, but we're unveiling and introducing travelers and potential travelers and locals too, for that matter, to all the hidden gems throughout the five boroughs. We have one of the most diverse food scenes in the world in Queens. We need to make sure we tell people about that. You can't just tell people to go to Queens, you know, you've gotta tell them why. And that's a very compelling reason. But it's our job to tell stories and to make sure people know about it.

Nancy Mammana (04:58):

And I've lived in New York my whole life, and there continue to be new things that I find out who the work our team does, which is exciting. We are very lucky and that we have so much product here that we feel our job is to help people navigate all the things to do. There's so much abundance. And again, even if you live here, it's overwhelming. There's so much to do. I mean, in restaurants alone, but then when you start to think about shopping and cultural, it's a lot. And that's a huge advantage for us. So we want to make sure that we are offering up our help, which we are really a bunch of locals ourselves, our staff, you know, we are passionate New Yorkers, and we want people to know where we think they should go and how to best navigate all the different things there are to do. Whether we do it on a neighborhood, by neighborhood level, or by sector. All the best places to see art, all the best places to see live music, you know, cutting across every borough. So we spend a lot of time not only with our programs, but with our content and our storytelling, and finding other local New Yorkers whose voices we would like to amplify, who tell the story of New York in a very authentic way. So we, we want to make sure there's visitation, but we also make sure there's exploration.



Bob Gilbert (06:11):

You know, it was interesting, I remember is some years back, when Fred Dixon unveiled, really, it was a focus on the boroughs and putting them, each of them, all the five boroughs in the spotlight to bring them to the table, which was really interesting because it had not been done before. And this is kind of an extension of that because you're, you're absolutely right in terms of, we may look at a borough, but then you look, you brought up Queens. I used to live in Queens, but that's another story in another lifetime. But it was so diverse and it had this neighborhood, that neighborhood, this neighborhood over here, which was so distinct and different from each other. And each of them had their own stories and history and culture and traditions. And so you multiply that by all the five borough. I mean, it's a very compelling storytelling art, if you will. But let me, let's talk about why people come to New York. And I think it was in 22, you had, and this is a mind boggling number, but I think it was 56 million visitors. I live in a, in a city of 9,000. So to think of welcoming 56 million is inconceivable, but it's New York.

Bob Gilbert (07:37):

There's a couple of questions I have here. You are on the world stage. So your competition, you know, isn't necessarily San Francisco or Miami or Los Angeles, but it's London, it's Paris, it's, you know, Rome. It's all of the major cities of the world that you compete with. But in terms of visitation, I read about some phenomenal rebounds. What is your year looking like in terms of pace? Yeah. Over last year.

Nancy Mammana (08:11):

So the latest forecast we have, this was as of end of October, is projecting 61.8 million visitors in 2023, which is 9% over 2022. And 93% recovered to 2019. For 2024, we're projecting 64.5 million visitors, which would take us to about 97% recovery and a full recovery in overall visitation by 2025. So we're saying for 2023, 61.8 and 2024 is 64.5. So we had a little bit of a slow down in the forecast, given what's going on in the world and from a geopolitical perspective as well as, you know, recession-ish activity. So inflation. But we're still progressing really nicely. So we're happy about that. And again, when we talk about 97% next year, we're pleased with the pace.

Bob Gilbert (09:08):

Well, you know, when I review STR Smith Travel Data, I have to spell it out now because I don't want to confuse it with short term rentals, but with Smith Travel Research and looking at hotel data, there are some cities in the US that are really suffering. New York is just streets ahead. Well, what do you think is the reason for that tremendous growth?

Nancy Mammana (09:35):

Well, I think we're fortunate in that our downtown area, you know, people live there too. So when remote work came, it certainly impacted Midtown, but you still have people living in midtown. So there was a, maybe a little bit of a more rapid recovery. Not to say we weren't impacted by it. We, we continue to be right. But people are coming in a little bit more often and people live here. So I think it's a slightly different issue in some other cities where the downtown is really a commercial area, not residential. And when that goes away, then things start to really impact the surrounding areas. So we're lucky from that perspective. And I think that we just have a history of being a very resilient city. We've seen bad days before, certainly. Little has risen to the level of the pandemic in terms of, you know, how far reaching the impact was and how long it lasted.

Nancy Mammana (10:31):

It was enormous. But I think we just tend to be very scrappy, as individuals. We are very resourceful and creative people, much like many other cities. But we just have, I think that resilient spirit that you can never count New York City out no matter what happens. We're not at a hundred percent yet, but we're going to be. And, I think that's just who we are. And we're very lucky that we do have a lot of product here, that there are people living here in all areas of the five boroughs to help kind of support. And it really is about our people, I think in the end that keep the city going.

Bob Gilbert (11:05):

Right. So I would imagine that leisure is the leading segment and I want to kind of focus on that and then we'll talk about business travel and conventions or my markets. Are there cohorts that are among the leaders in terms of the segments that you market to and that are responding to your messaging that are coming back to New York since the pandemic? Are there specific cohorts that you see are responding better? You know, what are the, the cohorts within leisure that are responding to your messaging?

Nancy Mammana (11:43):

Well we are, so there's a couple of different answers to that question. We have campaigns that we do as we call our global tourism campaign that we partner with airlines, tour operators in our top feeder markets, have a call to action that is a booking on their channel. So booking a flight, booking a package, and we drive the majority of the traffic to their site to capture that conversion that is ongoing. Then there's separately, where are people coming from? What areas of the world? Our top 10 markets haven't changed drastically throughout the pandemic. The thing that has been, I think had the major impact is China not coming back as quickly as we had hoped and China was our number two market, but we did see growth in markets like India, and Brazil. So I think from a geographic perspective, we still see the same players.

Nancy Mammana (12:36):

UK number one, Canada, Mexico, France, Italy, Spain. So we're, we're still seeing, I think the same markets tracking, as our top. We did see growth in those other markets, as I mentioned. And you know, we were fortunate in that we were added to the approved destinations list for China just before going on a sales mission and trade show, ITB Shanghai most recently in September. So we're still watching that market. There are issues with air capacity via the wait times. The war in Ukraine has an impact as well in terms of flight routes. You know, having to go around Russia and not being able to go across Russia. Therefore the flights cost more and there's all kinds of complications there that are delaying the full return. There are Chinese visitors coming, but it's not as quickly, I think across Asia. It is not as quick of a rebound as we had thought, but, but it is happening. So that I think contributed to a little bit of the delay there.

Bob Gilbert (13:34):

Right. In terms of the international, are there any markets that have rebounded stronger or is it really a question of the top? Half a dozen are still the top half a dozen in terms of visitation. You know, the UK normally is at the top of that pile and then, you know, you have the, I sometimes count Canada and sometimes don't because they can, you know, they can drive into New York state across the border. But, you know, the UK, France, Brazil, Italy, Germany have, have predominantly been in, you know, the top half a dozen, has that ranking stayed the same.

Nancy Mammana (14:12):

We've seen nice growth from Brazil. We have seen nice growth in India. Many of the Indian visitors are, we call VFR, visiting friends and relatives, but they are coming. We've seen nice growth in Germany, and France, Canada and Mexico are always at the top of the list and they remain there. Yeah. I mean, really very early on they started coming back. UK dipped a little bit, but they're still on the top 10 and they tend to be repeat visitors and we are seeing them, rise back up again. So I, I don't see a huge departure in the top 10 lists, which is great. Again, the only variable being China.

Bob Gilbert (14:45):

Understood. So staying on the leisure segment, in terms of demographics, I mean, you were probably the leaders in terms of your outreach to LGBTIQ+, I have to struggle to keep up with the acronyms, but other demographic groups, psychographic behavioral groups that you are seeing a good response to your messaging?

Nancy Mammana (15:13):

We really do speak to a wide variety of audiences and I think that speaks to the product that is in New York City, that we really do have something for most everyone. So we continue to populate our LGBTQ+ vertical with content. We certainly heavy that up around pride, but we keep it all year round to cultivate those audiences. We also have content packages on our website, the Black experience and NYC Latino and Asian experience and NYC that we, again, lots of caring and feeding go into those content platforms to draw in those audiences because we, have, again, so much available to visitors looking for that type of cultural experience throughout our neighborhoods. We also talk about, we're talking a lot about value and value travel as well as luxury. There's quite a bit of luxury product here, so we have efforts going on that are specific to that demographic. Whether you're talking about a splurge on your anniversary or something super, super high end and exclusive and kind of off the menu. That's a wide spectrum. So yeah, we're focusing on all of that family travel and we continue to do that again Because we have experiences that relevant to all of those audiences. So we're just doing what we can to make sure that our messaging represents that and our content is continued to populate and target those audiences on an ongoing basis.

Bob Gilbert (16:32):

Right. How do you collaborate and partner with other stakeholders in the tourism industry to promote a mutually beneficial relationship?

Nancy Mammana (16:44):

What types of stakeholders do you mean?

Bob Gilbert (16:45):

So, well, as an example, I know that you have a really good, strong relationship and partner with folks like Niagara Falls, USA, you know, are there other destinations perhaps, that are either within New York state or outside that there's some kind of mutual beneficial relationship that you work with?

Nancy Mammana (17:09):

We have city to city partnerships that we do on a regular basis, where there is a, like-minded objective or learnings that could be had from each other or mutual need. We have done those many times with lots of different destinations. Most recently we actually had a, what we call a City-To-Island Partnership with Discover Puerto Rico, which was terrific. We've done it with Madrid, with Amsterdam, Shanghai,

Tokyo. We've done it all over the world. And, you know, it takes different forms, but we're very open to that. We think we always have something to learn for each other, and we've talked about it, perhaps doing more of it domestically as well, but we tend to do them internationally most often. But we are again talking about it domestically now as well. But we've always found that to be beneficial and typically even if it's just an exchange of media assets, there's something to be gained.

Nancy Mammana (18:02):

And we try to expand them wherever we can to include the sharing of best practices and information, especially coming out of the pandemic. I think this industry is, is a fairly cohesive, tight-knit group of individuals who really enjoy working with each other, especially our, our colleagues within the state. And I think that became particularly apparent during the pandemic when we really all needed each other needed to share. We were all going through the same thing every destination was, and just handled it perhaps in slightly different ways. But, you know, none of us can do the jobs we were hired to do in the beginning, especially when we were in lockdown so we all had to be resourceful and I think we're sure stronger the more we share. So I think that that went a long way in even further tightening the cohesion. And we are really open to collaboration. So we do it all the time. And again, feel like there's always something to learn. So we're always interested in those types of things and have a long history of it.

Bob Gilbert (18:58):

Well, you, you gave some great examples that surprise me in terms of, you know, relationships with international destinations that, you know, ultimately we know will benefit both of you, but Will will benefit New York. And so I think it's, it's kind of interesting and intriguing that you work with Puerto Rico because of the, the number of Puerto Ricans that live in New York and so you work with Leah Chandler? Yes,

Nancy Mammana (19:26):

Yes.

Bob Gilbert (19:27):

We interviewed her a couple of months back and it was a great podcast. I love those kinds of out of the box thinking there's no box. In fact, you know, there's no guidelines. You kind of searching for something new and innovative, which I guess is that's what New York is. You used the word scrappy before, but you know, I think you kind of blend that scrappiness with innovation and creativity and you get something special, which is, you know, certainly what, what you have within New York and, you know, with the five boroughs. So what are your greatest challenges in achieving your objectives? What are those things that, I use the term keep you up at night, but what do you see are the greatest challenges?

Nancy Mammana (20:16):

Well, for us, it really boils down to our funding model. It's not in an ideal place because of the way we're structured and we really are looking ahead at different ways of growing our budget. Our budgets have not been raised, in 12 years, so there aren't too many agencies that you could hire that don't raise their retainer top years. So, you know, it's, it's a challenge because we really do quite a bit in-house, which is, you know, sometimes more efficient. And so there's a lot of work, there's a lot of need, again, we have 17 rep offices, we do quite a bit internationally, which means things are needed to support that work. Obviously we need to create content for our channels to do our work and also attract advertisers.

There's a whole ecosystem that we create, bringing member value top of the list, making sure that we're telling the story of our members in our city.

Nancy Mammana (21:12):

All of that requires resources. And we don't really have today in place a structure that supports the growth of that. And with the budget cuts, it is particularly challenging at this moment. So that's the tough one. And if it continues without additional funds from wherever they come from, you know, we are going to have to probably really focus our priorities even further. Because we won't be able to maintain this level of work. We've been fortunate and that we have received grants from both federal government as well as the city and state. So that's been a lifeline for us and we hope that that continues and we continue to have many irons in the fire. But that's a big challenge for planning purposes. And also just, you know, understanding how we can grow without that set in place. We are limited in what we can accomplish. So that's a fairly substantial challenge, but we work through it. But that's a, as a marketer, that, that's the thing that keeps me up at night.

Bob Gilbert (22:09):

I have a similar story that I was working at Choice Hotels and responsible for global sales and intermediary marketing, and my CEO at the time said, your goal is to increase your distribution channels without increasing your costs. So it was, it was like, okay, but that was, but again, I mean, you will shine because of your innovation and creativity in terms of, you know, making ends meet. But I do understand the challenges. You know, you spoke about, you have, was it 19 international reps?

Nancy Mammana (22:47):

17. Yeah.

Bob Gilbert (22:48):

17. I'm sorry. And you know, they're like children in terms of they all need feeding and they're all needy and they all want, which, you know, is understandable, but it's not easy to be able to manage that family and all the different, different aspects of, of what you are trying to achieve in broader terms. What are your thoughts on the future of destination marketing per se? I know the term is like a movable feast. The term changes from sustainable marketing, destination stewardship. I mean D-M-O, D-M-M-O. But, in terms of it being destination marketing, what are your thoughts on, on the future?

Nancy Mammana (23:33):

I think now, God willing, we're on the other side of the pandemic and it was a very challenging time where I think we were all just trying to keep the lights on and recover. And so I think we're now on the other side of that so we can start really going back to more of the stewardship pieces of it. We do that anyway because of the wide breadth of experiences that we have. But I think we have to just make sure that we're really keeping a close eye on the disbursement of traffic. We wanted to bring visitors back. I think we've all basically done that to varying degrees. And now that they are back, whatever economic challenges may be ahead for us, for the most part, people are traveling. We need to just keep, keep our heads down and continue to work hard to make sure that they're getting the full story of New York City and that it is being dispersed throughout the five boroughs.

Nancy Mammana (24:30):

So that's sort of economic equity and exposure and making sure that we're managing the flow of tourism and the traffic of tourism, and dispersing it properly is, I think now back to, you know, the top of the list, which it always has been, but I think we were in a little bit of triage mode, all of us during the pandemic. And we can really continue to focus on that now that we have more mass visitation happening. So I think it's just going to be about, for us, we have great content, we have to just make sure people see it. That's where the budget cuts are challenging, when it impacts our media dollars and our ability to share the content and share the messaging. So we try to make up for that with various types of barter partnerships. And again, we are scrappy, we lean on our global communications team, so earned media plays a huge role there.

Nancy Mammana (25:24):

Influencers, social media. We're using everything at our disposal because we want to make sure that we can help stewardship, spreading those messages out there and making sure that people are going where we'd like them to go and managing the destination from that standpoint. So I think that was always important, but it's certainly going to be a big priority in the new year for us as it continues to be. So we certainly support the iconic, especially for our first time visitor. You know, we want you to experience all of the iconic attractions and places to go, but if you're a repeat visitor, if you're a little bit more intrepid, there's so much more to discover on top of that, not in place of that. And that's what we're trying to focus on more than ever. And again, I think now we're in a position where we really can keep our eyes focused on that.

Bob Gilbert (26:13):

Well, fantastic. Well, you know, you mentioned, you know, the spreading the news and you certainly are a fantastic advocate for spreading the news with New York City tourism and conventions. I think that's a song in there somewhere, spreading the news. But I won't sing. Nancy, you have been a wonderful guest. Thank you very much indeed.

Nancy Mammana (26:39):

Thank you so much for having me. I so appreciate being able to speak with you.

Bob Gilbert (26:46):

We hope you enjoyed today's episode. Please like thumbs up, subscribe and leave a review. You can also visit [EddyAlexander.com](http://EddyAlexander.com) to learn more about our tourism, marketing, and destination management services and read some of our recent case study.