

Silver Anvil Category: 8B – Integrated Communications, Government

Entry Title: Travel Nevada’s Silver State Reset Campaign

Travel Nevada with Fahlgren Mortine

Situation Analysis: In the first half of 2020, tourist arrivals fell globally by more than 65 percent, compared with 8 percent during the global financial crisis and 17 percent amid the SARS epidemic of 2003, according to ongoing IMF research on tourism. In January of 2022, Travel Nevada, the destination marketing organization for the state of Nevada, continued to navigate the pandemic – but the travel industry was optimistic about a rebound according to some SKIFT research. There was a light flickering at the end of the tunnel (we hope).

As the largest industry in the state, tourism generated more than \$42 billion in visitor spending and provided more than 300,000 jobs prior to the pandemic, so returning to pre-pandemic levels was critical to providing a greater quality of life to Nevadans. To encourage the return to travel, state and federal agencies provided grants to tourism entities, including Travel Nevada who, in 2022, set out to launch its biggest campaign in more than two years.

Insights & Analysis: According to Travel Nevada’s own first-party integrated marketing effectiveness (IME) study, as well as third-party reports from industry organizations like SKIFT, Longwoods International and others, there was a strong opportunity to leverage the trend of transformative travel as consumers continue to seek spontaneity, new experiences and unique stays, and as society embarks on a Great Reset – a time of change, evaluation and growth.

As defined by the Transformational Travel Council (TTC), transformative travel means “intentionally traveling to stretch, learn and grow into new ways of being and engaging with the world.”

Research also suggests that localism continued to be paramount as travelers seek authentic local encounters with places and people. And new opportunities exist to leverage ways travelers can connect with locals and have a positive impact by traveling during the off-season.

Finally, consumers were seeking simple, wellness-focused experiences, driven in part by the past year’s resetting of goals and priorities and increased desire for self-transformation.

Planning: Using these insights, Travel Nevada’s PR, paid media, creative and digital teams came together to develop a “transformative travel” program that would:

- Showcase Nevada’s existing offerings and reposition them to meet travelers’ current needs.
- Strengthen Nevada’s position within its “established” and “emerging” markets, while introducing the state and gaining position in new markets, Portland and Chicago.
- Drive travel intent and visitation; specifically, encouraging visitors to **stay longer and spend more.**

The integrated team recognized an opportunity to focus on experiences and messaging in four of Nevada’s key content pillars:

- **Unusual Experiences:** Experiences that help you think differently and see new perspectives; one-of-a-kind, off-the-beaten-path experiences you can only have in Nevada. These include “Weird Nevada” offerings (Extraterrestrial Highway, Republic of Molossia, haunted Nevada), ghost towns, stargazing, car forest, uncommon overnighters (unique stays) and hot springs.

- Quirky Culture: Eclectic arts, distinctive food and beverage experiences and unique locals. Basque culture, Outdoor art (Seven Magic Mountains, Art Cars, Goldwell Open Air Museum), Art districts, Estate distilleries, Sagebrush saloons.
- True Wide-Open Spaces: More than 80% of Nevada is unfenced, totally wild, and—most importantly—public. Nevada has some of the quietest spaces in the country, according to a National Park Service analysis. At roughly 110,000 square miles, it is the 7th largest state in the country, but #32 when ranked by population. Opportunities to relax and reset in complete quietness and open space, Garnet Hill, Sand Mountain, Wildlife and animal sanctuaries, stargazing.
- Inspiring Connections: Rewarding opportunities to connect with locals and loved ones, experiences that engage curiosity - in Nevada, this meant showcasing road trips, mining and rockhounding, wildlife and animal sanctuaries, railroad history and stargazing.

Execution: Through thoughtful planning, the **“Silver State Reset”** was born - an integrated program showcasing transformative experiences throughout the state that invited potential travelers to hit the “reset” button in Nevada. Specific tactics included:

- A new micro-site with two “Reset Routes” each starting in one of Nevada’s major metro areas/flight markets and bringing travelers around the state
- A trip giveaway on the micro-site where two lucky winners would win an all-expense paid trip throughout Nevada along these routes
- Partnerships with micro-influencers in new markets who would travel those Reset Routes and showcase their first-hand experiences
- A partnership with iHeart radio in Portland and Chicago where Nevadans along the routes spoke directly with local radio personalities about these transformative experiences and driving listeners to the micro-site to enter a trip giveaway contest
- Targeted newsletters to established and emerging markets through USA Today
- Strategic media outreach to national publications incorporating “transformative travel” key messages

Evaluation: With all efforts driving to the micro-site, the team was hopeful to see a bump in web traffic during the months the campaign was live. Not only did they see a boost, the campaign **drove the most web traffic Travel Nevada had ever seen**, and saw significant results on other important KPIs:

- 50+ million impressions in Chicago and Portland
- 129,659 total contest entries (including 11,927 unique entries)
- 1.4+ billion earned impressions (including placements in Travel + Leisure, TODAY and more)

Most importantly, Travel Nevada’s IME study found that these efforts did result in more visits and increased visitor spend. According to the report, those who were exposed to Travel Nevada integrated marketing communications **spent more in-destination** (+\$1,850 per household) and **visited more often** (2.8 times versus 2.2) compared to those who were not exposed to any marketing.