

**Utah Office of Tourism  
Board Meeting  
Friday, April 9, 2021  
Online ZOOM Meeting**

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**Members Present:** Kym Buttschardt, Jim Powell, Mike Taylor, Glen Overton, Brian Merrill, Dirk Clayson, Elaine Gizler, Greg Miller, Shayne Wittwer

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**Members Excused:** Lance Syrett, Sara Toliver, Dean Cox, Nathan Rafferty

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**Staff:** Vicki Varela, Julia Barnhouse, Becky Keeney, Dave Williams, Andrew Gillman, Anna Loughridge, Rachel Bremer, Celina Sinclair, Denise Jordan, Flint Timmins, Jody Blaney, Kelly Day, Lorraine Daly, Melissa Kinney, Bianca Lyon

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**Visitors:** Jonathan Smithgall, Ryan Overton, Kylie Kullack, Adam Whalen, Chris Newton, Elizabeth Piper, Eric Thompson, Hannah Saunders, Jaclyn Osterloh, Jake Millard, Joan Hammer, Justin Anderson, Kevin Lewis, Lee Banov, Lizzy Duffy Anderson, Maria Twitchell, Martin Stoll, Megan Griffin, Molly O’Niell, Monique Beeley, Nancy Volmer, Natalie Randall, Natasha Fisher, Nicole Parara, Raelene Davis, Randy Rhodes, Robert Stephenson, Samantha Browning, Sara Otto, Scott Sorenson, Steve Neeleman, Sydnie Furton, Tom Love, Adriana Chimaras

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**WELCOME**

Kym Buttschardt called the meeting to order.

**MINUTES**

**MOTION: MIKE TAYLOR MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE FEBRUARY 12, 2021 MEETING THAT WAS HELD ONLINE VIA ZOOM. JIM POWELL SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Vicki Varela, Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism (UOT), reported on the following items:

- Legislative Session
  - Legislators are responsive to the Red Emerald Strategy and for the industry as a whole. \$100M was allocated to Outdoor Recreation infrastructure.
  - \$2 billion in federal stimulus money will be allocated in April 2021 to Utah.
  - We are starting to see Rachel Bremer’s hard work paying off in her work with International Tourism. She has helped travelers keep Utah at top of mind.
  - Tourism Infrastructure Fund – Proposing \$5M fund that will be managed by our destination development team to help communities with wayfinding signage, plazas, etc. to revitalize main streets in our industry.
- Hospitality, Sales & Marketing International has awarded us with a bronze for our “Go With a Guide” series, and recognized Sandra’s great work. We received a silver award for our Between Campaign and a bronze award for Small But Mighty.

## RED EMERALD CASE STUDY

Steve Neeleman, Founder and Vice Chairman, Healthy Equity, Julie Millard, General Manager, Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort and Jake Millard, Sales and Marketing Manager, Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort gave the following update on their Red Emerald Case study ([presentation](#)):

- Zion Ponderosa Overview
  - Family-owned ranch resort
  - Ranch purchased in 1962. Resort operated since 1995
  - Mission: “Share our love of Zion with every valued guest”
  - Vision: “Keep ranch in family by achieving economic independence and growth”
  - One of larger employees in Kane County
- Important evolution of our business
  - Jake took over lodging inventory management in 2018 with charge to “increase revenue & profitability.”
  - Team realized that increased length of stay led to:
    - Higher guest satisfaction
    - Lower work intensity/less staff, fewer laundry loads, more guides and outfitters referrals.
  - Jake began experimenting with requiring longer stays and working closely with reservation agents to “push guides & outfitter referrals to justify longer stays.”
  - Results
    - Increased average LOS by over 30% from 2018-2020
    - 2020, despite losing over \$1M of reservations in Spring, most profitable year ever
    - Higher average Net Promoter Score, increased from 40 in 2018 to 57 in 2020
    - Less staff, lower water use, bigger staff bonuses
    - See presentation for their study results.
  - Red Emerald Conversion Toolkit
    - Invest in a yield management system for making reservations. With significantly more profit associated with a Red Emerald transformation, business owners have more flexibility to offer discounts for longer stays.
    - Partner with local guides, outfitters, restaurants, and other hidden gems to refer guests, make commissions and improve guest satisfaction.
    - Hire a concierge or partner with other businesses to invest in a shared virtual concierge who knows where to find the hidden gems. Also, consider creating suggested itineraries for multi-day stays
    - Consider increasing minimum night stays, especially during peak visitation times.
    - Reservation agents should be trained to strongly recommend longer stays so guests can find the hidden gems in the local area. Again, pre-planned itineraries are helpful.
    - It is also critical that business owners engage with county and state tourism and outdoor recreation to leaders to organize efforts to improve and expand Red Emerald “hidden gems” infrastructure. Hiking and biking trails, restroom facilities, parking access, shuttle systems, visitor centers, picnic areas, and other investments can pay big dividends in encouraging guest to stay longer and do more. This infrastructure can be paid for by state & federal grants and county tourism mitigation dollars.

## UTAH TOURISM INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION UPDATE

UTIA Executive Director, Natalie Randall, gave the following update:

- Tourism Conference is confirmed for August 10-13, 2021 in Ogden Utah. Nominations for the Tourism Hall of Fame has been opened.

## MARKETING COMMITTEE REPORT

- **Marketing Committee Report**

- International Update – Rachel Bremer, Global Markets Director, Utah Office of Tourism ([presentation](#)):
  - 2019-2024 Projected International Visitor Growth
    - Utah: -4.4%
    - US: -6%
  - 2020 YOY Visa spending is down internationally and domestically
    - International: -67.8%
    - Domestic: -11.9%
  - Flights
    - AMS resumes May 27<sup>th</sup>, 4x weekly. Daily service resumes June 5
    - CDG daily service resumes July 1
    - YYZ daily service resumes June 5
    - China
      - United Airlines -SFO-Seoul-Shanghai
      - AA-Dallas-Seoul-Shanghai
      - Delta – Shanghai-Seattle
  - Industry Updates
    - EU tour operators are pre-selling and marketing for the '22 season now
    - Positive vaccine rollouts in the US have improved US sentiment
    - Report some bookings in September and October '21
    - Pent up travel demand and interest in the Western US
    - China Trade is planning marketing for '22
  - Consumer Marketing
    - International marketing kicked off March 1<sup>st</sup>, targeting UK, France, and Germany markets with Southern Utah messaging.
    - So far, we are generating over 18 million impressions, nearly 27k click and 2k post impressions
    - Partners: TripAdvisor, Expedia
    - Via TripAdvisor's placements, those 54-hotel booking break down per below:
      - 40 bookings from UK
      - 14 bookings from Germany
      - \$236 ADR
      - 164-day Avg Booking Window
      - \$108k in hotel revenue
      - Australia marketing began April 1<sup>st</sup>, where we are messaging Utah's ski and winter product.
    - Mexico-Park City Delta Voucher Co-op Marketing Campaign
      - Timeline – January 18,2021 – March 12, 2021
      - Platforms – Facebook and Instagram

- Social Media
  - Paid Social
  - Always on organic
  - EU,CA,AU/NZ
- Ski+ and Southern Utah+ Winter Campaign Updates – Molly O’Niell, Strategist, Struck; Jonathan Smithgall, Vice President Digital Marketing and Media, Love Communications; Andrew Gillman, Tourism Creative and Content Director, Utah Office of Tourism ([presentation](#)):
  - Digital Summary:
    - The Ski+ campaign generated over 763k post impressions, for a total PIR of .60%
    - There were 628k hotel searches amounting to a total observed hotel revenue of \$9.1M. This is a 33% increase from our last board meeting and a 17% increase compared to last year.
    - Our CTV campaign generated more than 295k pageviews and an arrival lift of 120%.
    - SMARI Advertising Research: Ski+ Highlights
      - Ad rating improvements over prior year – Mountain Time continues to excel at communicating key messages and generating interest
      - Consumer media habits continue to evolve: live broadcast TV was surpassed by streaming video for the greatest share of media consumption
      - Ad awareness grew to 61% over prior year’s 53% attributed to stronger creative, and effective targeting
      - Ad aware households grew to 6.8M. This is up from 2.3M in the prior year
      - Media buy efficiency improved to \$0.49 per ad-aware household
      - Likelihood to travel to Utah for a snow leisure trip is higher for those who are ad-aware
      - Advertising awareness grew to 61% and reached 6.8M target households
    - Year-over-year growth: ad exposed page views
      - We monitored an average increase of 39% across key DMO partner in this year’s campaign compared to last year.
    - Pre-roll performance
      - Our Another Season video ad is performing the strongest in both hotel bookings and post ad exposed pageviews.
    - Top Performing Creatives by Post Impression Rate
      - Starting with Post Impression Rate, we saw V2, V3 and V5 drive the strongest levels of ad-exposed visits.
    - Top Performing creatives by Booking Efficiency
      - We noted the strongest efficiency in driving bookings coming from the V2,V3 and V5 creative units.
    - OpenSnow: Campaign Highlights
    - Endemic Native: TripAdvisor
      - The social media post developed for Utah’s Ski plus campaign ran over 8 weeks and garnered 537 likes, 181 comments and 568 shares.

- Ski+ Booking Performance Over Time
  - We have seen booking efficiencies spike toward the end of the campaign, as overall bookings taper off.
- YouTube Performance
  - Arctic Sled Dogs, Insider's Guide to Park City, and the :15 second Ski More spot were the top performing YouTube assets, driving the most impressions over the campaign.
- Ski Content Performance
  - Combined our native advertising generated more than 127 pageviews and accounted for roughly \$5.7M in total observed hotel revenue.
  - Targeting Epic and Ikon Pass visitors resulted in a stronger time on page than simply behaviorally targeting skiers.
- Website Ski Content Performance
  - Visitors to Ski content on VisitUtah.com have booked an estimated \$9.75M in hotel revenue since October 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - KPI's
    - +37% increase in sessions
    - +69% itinerary pageviews that started with a Ski+ session
    - +88% travel guide downloads that started with a Ski+ page
    - +12% growth in sessions lasting at least 4 minutes.
  - Takeaways
    - We saw planning content emerge as new high performing strategies
    - Campaign landing pages and responsible travel page visits rely on paid spend
    - Not receiving organic traffic for resort specifics
    - Content that is statewide or broadly regional tends to be our most competitive organically
    - Articles have value in the native space, but not a lot of traffic from Google
    - Site visitors not looking at both Ski and WISU content in a single session
    - Top markets for Site Sessions
      - Denver: +195%
      - Houston: +193%
      - Las Vegas: +191%
    - Mountain Time Page
      - Change in traffic distribution
      - Decrease likely due to promoting direct CTAs to pages with COVID context
- Southern Utah+ (Winter) Campaign Update
  - The Southern Utah+ Winter campaign delivered more than 119k pageviews for VisitUtah.com
  - We tracked more than \$2.4M in hotel revenue from people exposed to this campaign. This is an increased 18% YOY and results in an estimated revenue of \$33M.
  - Top Performing Creatives by Post-Impression Rate

- Bryce, Dark Skies and Gen V1 all performed roughly evenly, with Gen V2 not too far behind. The Zion creative saw the lowest PIR.
  - Top Performing Creatives by Booking Efficiency
    - Booking efficiencies tell a slightly different story, with Gen V1/V2 outperforming national park creative, although this is better explained in forth coming time-series charts.
  - Website Winter in Southern Utah Content Performance
    - Visitors to Southern Utah Winter content on VisitUtah.com have booked an estimated \$1.9M in hotel revenue since December 1<sup>st</sup>.
    - KPI's
      - +74% increase in sessions
      - +971 itinerary pageviews that started with a WISU session
      - +239% travel guide downloads that started with a WISU page
    - Takeaways
      - Year-over-year traffic increases show need for thoughtful growth plans
      - No evidence that a growth in WISU impacted a growth in Ski visitation on the website
      - New content creation sets us up well for next year for expanded distribution next year.
    - Top Markets for Site Sessions
      - Denver: +98%
      - Houston: +156%
      - Las Vegas: +84%
    - Winter in Southern Utah Page
      - More distributed visitation across campaign
      - 64% increase in page views YOY
    - Intercom Chat
      - 73% of conversations related to Southern Utah between September 15-March 15
      - Top Topics: National Parks, Hiking, Zion, Permit, Road Trips and Camping
    - Paid Search
      - First year launching a dedicated WiSU PPC campaign
      - Campaigns focused on winter-specific topics, knowing that SouthernUtah+ was still live through winter months to satisfy searches that weren't seasonally tagged.
  - Southern Utah+ Campaign Update
    - The Southern Utah+ Winter campaign delivered more than 73k pageviews for VisitUtah.com
    - We tracked more than \$2.48M in hotel revenue for an estimated revenue of \$33.5M
    - TripAdvisor
      - 4 trip guides

- Off the I-70
    - Traverse Utah’s GSE Region
    - The Other Zion
    - Explorer’s Guide to Southern Utah
  - Red Emerald POI’s
  - 100% SOV
  - Tourism Sentiment Brand Study
- AFAR
  - Interactive map hub
  - 4 regional journeys
  - Off-peak and lesser-known experiences
  - Responsible visitation
- Outside Online
  - Dark Skies
  - Ancient Times, Today
  - Deep Travel
  - Inclusive, Accessible and Soul-awakening
  - Adventure to Give
- Zartico Update – Denise Jordan, Marketing Analytics & Research Manager, Utah Office of Tourism:
  - Denise provided a live walk-through of the Zartico platform, specifically the new geo location data. To view this portion of the meeting please [visit the meeting video recording here](#) (password: K49%lixJ)
- Social Media – Lizzy Duffy, Senior Strategist, Account Lead, Sparkloft Media; Elizabeth Piper, Senior Strategist, Influencers + Ambassadors, Sparkloft Media; Jaclyn Osterloh, Account Director, Paid Media + Analytics, Sparkloft Media ([presentation](#)):
  - Strategy
    - Awareness
      - Increase awareness of Utah in key markets as measured by impressions +CPM
      - Increase interested for Utah in key markets as measured by 3-second video views
    - Interest
      - Increase interest for Utah in key markets as measured by video views up to 75%
      - Increase interest for Utah in key markets as measured by engagement
    - Action
      - Increase traffic to Visit Utah’s website as measured by clicks/CPC
      - Increase visitor revenue, length of stay, and spend as measured by partners
    - Affinity + Advocacy
      - Increase positive sentiment for Visit Utah, positioning the brand as a resource
      - Monitor sentiment for conversation around health, safety, sustainability
  - Interest-Based Audience Opportunities
    - Female travelers

- Gen Z
- Luxury Spenders
- Bipoc Travelers
- Influencers
  - Tiffany Nguyen
    - Showcase the variety of experiences in Southern Utah's lesser-known communicates through authentic, social-specific creative
    - Demonstrate Utah's commitment to responsible and thoughtful travel inspiring like-minded travel photographers
  - Francesca Murray
    - Black female traveler introducing her audience to snow and winter sports as a first-time skier
    - Mix of adventure, urban and self-care experiences play well with a wide audience
  - 840,151 impressions
  - 46,206 video views
  - 33,822 engagement
- International Social
  - Strategy
    - Focus on top funnel, start-of-trip planning inspiration
    - Factor in trip planning timelines + seasonality to media promotion
    - Provides insights + toolkits to market representatives monthly.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Kym Buttschardt – co-op applications are live at the end of May and end June 30, 2021. Interviews will be held in July 2021 and all awards will be announced at the August board meeting.

Jim Powell – November – April season is 25% down, but isn't as bad compared to December 2020. The loss of Sundance was a challenge.

## **MEETING ADJOURNED**