

UTAH OFFICE OF TOURISM
Board Meeting Minutes
Friday, February 9, 2023
World Trade Center Utah, Salt Lake City

Board Members Present Lance Syrett, Nathan Rafferty, Jared Berrett, Kym Buttschardt, Lesha Coltharp, Mike Taylor, Sara Toliver, Jennifer Wesselhoff, Shayne Wittwer

Board Members Excused Brian Merrill, Greg Miller, Glen Overton, Jordan Smith

UOT Staff Jody Blaney, Rachel Bremer, Ben Cook, Lorraine Daly, Zach Fyne, Kim Heys, Denise Jordan, Becky Kenney, Liz Wilson Peck, Arianna Rees, Sandra Salvas, Erin Smith, Vicki Varela, David Williams, Heather Zang

Public Nan Anderson, Julie Comstock, Breck Dockstader, Sydnie Furton, Crystal Garza, Jim Grover, Joannie Hammer, Todd K. Jenson, Ethan Koehler, Kylie Kullack, Tom Love, Dallas Miller, Natalie Randall, Deveney Reber, Hannah Saunders, Jonathan Smithgall, Ryan Starks, Maria Twitchell

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Lance Syrett called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone and asked the head table for introductions.

MINUTES

MOTION: Mike Taylor motioned to approve meeting minutes for the January, 13, 2023, meeting that was held in West Valley City. **Jennifer Wesselhoff** seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

GOVERNOR’S OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Ryan Starks, Executive Director

- Previously served on the Tourism board and marketing committee. Offered respect, appreciation and understanding of the work that everyone who represents various destination marketing offices (DMOs) completes.
- In a new role for just a month and good conversations with Vicki, and we are dialed into the industry. Stated you have an advocate and a friend in me here at the Governor’s Office of Economic Opportunity. At the State level, we need to be conscious of the importance of tourism and it certainly plays a very crucial role to our economy.
- We are developing some goals and strategies as an office. We have the chance to be better at storytelling and at our collateral. Our website is going to undergo some changes.
- Excited to work with you and will support in any way that I can. I welcome the partnerships and have an open door. If I or our team can do anything to support the industry, please let me know.

MANAGING DIRECTOR REPORT

Vicki Varela, Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism

- Acknowledge Sara (Toliver). Recently attended her Athena luncheon and it was a great example of leadership and creating relationships in a community.
- UOT staff updates: Flint Timmons has left our team after great work as the first destination development lead. Nan Anderson has agreed to consult with us and make sure our destination development projects stay on track during transition.
- TOUR (Tourism and Outdoor Recreation) caucus had a kick-off dinner and two meetings. It is an exciting milestone that builds on the work of many to bring together people who care deeply about tourism and outdoor recreation to have thoughtful conversations.
- Open house for Kelly Day tomorrow afternoon to celebrate her years of commitment. Hoping all can join.

INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

Rachel Bremer, Tourism Global Markets Director, Utah Office of Tourism

Zach Fyne, Global Markets Specialist, Utah Office of Tourism

Hannah Saunders, Love Communications

- Transcontinental flights are back. In April, Eurowings is returning to two flights per week. Air Canada flight has paused but it will return in June. Mexico and other Canadian flights are going strong. Work continues to expand the international flight options.
- Europe energy prices and inflation continue to rise. Euro value is lower than the U.S. dollar and exchange rates are the biggest factor. But Western Europe is still one of our biggest markets. The lack of snow in Europe has benefitted us.
- We expect flight capacity in the Australian markets to be back to where it was in mid-June of 2019. Delta has expanded their reach through the Los Angeles connection.
- Canadians are traveling and back to our 2019 numbers - both flight and drive.
- China did open up their group, packaged tours to 20 countries this week but the U.S. is not part of that. Their individual travel is open for sales in China. Visas are open but there is a backlog for the U.S. Visas and there are flight capacity problems as well. It is a slow recovery and we are watching market volatility.
- Based on the Brand USA survey, 86 percent of those surveyed in India are ready for international travel and to come to the U.S. There are delays in getting Visas. Our embassy staff have been very slow, and it is taking up to a year to get the first appointment. The recovery is on our end - them getting to us. They want to come here more than any other country. This is in the U.S. Travel Association's radar.
- The international team continues to work with travel trade partners and international tour operators with the ultimate goal to increase visitation, tell our story, improve the visitor experience and increase our share of global markets.
- It takes effort, time and money for our DMO partners to go into international markets. We participate in international sales markets, familiarization tours in various markets, trade shows and organizations meetings to assist them.
- Social media is not one size fits all with international markets as they all interact with social media channels differently. We task our international representatives to put together customized posts for their markets and work with Sparkloft for inspiration and help to boost posts across Facebook and Instagram.
- Each of our markets have their own Facebook and Instagram (not Tik Tok). India's numbers are out of the norm and the way they interact with social media is very different and intense.
- Hosted two content creators from India recently and able to build a marketing strategy out of this targeted content. Customizing is much more impactful.

- Consumer marketing launched Fall 2022 in France, Germany and U.K. Work with partners Tripadvisor (for U.K.) and eDreams (for Germany and France) and build on successes from last year. Delivered 10 million impressions and a click through rate (CTR) of .16%. Seeing 5,000 post impressions visiting visitutah.com and our partners. Almost 4,000 hotel searches and \$62K in hotel revenue.
- Updated banner sets in January to include The Mighty 5® focus
- We partner with Brand USA on consumer marketing so we get a little extra funding which helps stretch the marketing dollars to reach several countries.
- International public relations efforts prioritize quality visitation and increasing Utah's share of global markets. We hosted a UK cycling media familiarization (FAM) tour that resulted in a series of articles in Cycling Magazine.
- Worked with ski partners for Germany Ski FAM in 2022 that resulted in reaching niche audiences with beautiful spreads in international publications.
- International team prioritizing responsible visitor education and messaging.

TRAVEL TRENDS

Jonathan Smithgall, Vice President Digital Marketing and Media, Love Communications

Becky Keeney, Director of Strategy, Utah Office of Tourism

- Average American household is paying \$400 more a month in expenses, due to inflation.
- Statistics are showing Americans are still concerned with recession coming and not comfortable spending extra.
- Percentage of people that feel comfortable spending on travel is lower in January 2023 than it was in January 2022.
- Top deterrent to travel is "travel is too expensive". But our destination is a great value on the return of investment. A great strength for us to lean into. December 2022, nine percent of Americans are traveling outside of the country.
- Consumers are driving when traveling because flying is too expensive, and Utah has a powerful drive market.
- We do have more people leaving the U.S. for vacation.
- Travelers are looking to take more trips and stay longer than they did in 2022. American travelers are feeling optimistic.
- Where people went in December, National Parks did see recovery from the same time last year.
- Quality time with friends and family, creating memories and experiencing new places are priorities for travelers in the next year.
- More than 40 percent of respondents said they'd target February for a ski vacation.
- Snow quality and access are the most important priorities for those taking ski vacation. Utah has a competitive advantage.
- Almost 44 percent of travelers may change their spending behaviors due to the current financial situation.

MARKETING COMMITTEE REPORT

Southern Utah+ 2022/2023 update

Ben Cook, Director of Marketing & Communications, Utah Office of Tourism

Julie Comstock, Associate Creative Director, Struck

Jonathan Smithgall, Vice President Digital Marketing and Media, Love Communications

- Fourth year of being active with this campaign, and this year is the most efficient campaign as an increase of 42 percent for ad exposed page views.
- Increased spend on connected television and have 171,000 exposed page views with retargeting focus.
- Top performing markets average daily rates consistent where destination furthest, spend the most. New Yorkers spent \$192 per night and are valued travelers.

- The native campaign is the biggest driver of intent and inspiration to travel. It had 196,000 page views and an average of 5 minutes engaging with articles.
- Southern Utah connected television blitz is to inspire travel for our Spring and Summer months and the campaign has done very well with a 110 percent increase from last year on ad exposed page views.

Northern Utah+ 2022/2023 update

Ben Cook, Director of Marketing & Communications, Utah Office of Tourism

Becky Keeney, Director of Strategy, Utah Office of Tourism

Jonathan Smithgall, Vice President Digital Marketing and Media, Love Communications

- The April-June 2022 campaign generated \$23 million in hotel revenue and this is only year two of the initiative.
- Looking to the 2023 campaign, unique messaging for our destination is urban and outdoor experience.
- Budget has increased this year and flight dates will be 4/15-6/30/23.
- Goal is to grow Northern Utah communities brand awareness and inspire trip planning.
- Adding pre-roll and display tactics to keep Utah top of mind with exposed audiences and driving quality bookings.
- Campaign includes aggressive earned and owned media channels and great public relations efforts with more than 30 targeted publications.
- Social media - three-pronged approach - influencers, ambassadors and organic posts.
- Website and emails will be focused on Northern Utah basecamps. Rich content will be developed to support the campaign.

MOTION: Kym Buttschard motioned to approve the \$715,000 budget for the Northern Utah+ 2022/2023 strategy. Sara Toliver seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

UTIA UPDATE

Natalie Randall, Executive Director, Utah Tourism Industry Association

- Priorities for the legislative session include transient room tax (TRT); and, TRCCA (Tourism Recreation Cultural Convention Airport) tax act which is three taxes underneath that - restaurant, off highway vehicle (OHV) rental, short-term vehicle rental.
- Maintain what we have but continue conversations as anticipated need for more EMS (emergency medical services), search-and-rescue support and mitigation efforts.
- Also alcohol policy and restaurant portability piece made into omnibus bill.
- Short-term rentals is an ongoing conversation and industry priority is to insure the taxes are collected, remitted and distributed to the appropriate jurisdiction.
- Support the layers and conversations around outdoor recreation as it is a key sector of industry.

PUBLIC COMMENT/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Breck Dockstader announced the Fort Desolation musical festival in Torrey, June 8-10.

Lance Syrett reminded everyone that the Bryce Canyon Centennial Celebration is in June, and noted Love Communications has been working very hard on it.

MEETING ADJOURNED

The next board meeting will be Friday, April 14, 2023 at 10 a.m. It will be held in Helper, Utah.