



Visit SLO CAL Marketing Committee Meeting
Tuesday, September 17, 2024
8:30 am – 10:30 am
Visit SLO CAL Office: 81 Higuera St, Suite 220, San Luis Obispo, CA

1. CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: Ashlee Akers, Jim Allen, Sheridan Bohlken, Molly Cano, Cheryl Cuming, Gordon Jackson, Stacie Jacob, Lori Keller, Courtney Pene, Joel Peterson, Lindsey Roberts, Linda Sanpei, Lynette Sonne, John Sorgenfrei, Leann Standish, Jill Tweedie, Michael Wambolt

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy Cartier, Lisa Belsanti, Kristen Carlson, Whitney Chaney, Matt Halvorson, Aleigh Hogan, Mayla Lohnes, Alyssa Manno, Rachelle Ramirez, Brooke Weisbecker, Lauren Miller, Megan Leininger, Theresa Nagai

Call to order at 8:30 am

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

Public Comment – None.

Committee Comment – None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CONSENT AGENDA – *motion required*

3. Approval of July 9, 2024 Marketing Committee Minutes

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

ACTION: Moved by Peterson/Jackson to approve the July 9, 2024 Marketing Committee Minutes.

Motion carried: 14-0-2

Cuming & Tweedie abstained; Jacob arrived after vote

4. Visit SLO CAL CMO Report

Cartier shared that Cano has been hired for the VP of Marketing position and will start November 4. Cartier also went through SBP Airport updates. Highlighted was that the LAS daily flight returns October 27 and the largest plane to fly out of SBP starts on October 3 (flying to Seattle). Fall will see the busiest airport schedule ever, flying to 9 non-stop cities. Cartier also covered service update and presented the new Visit SLO CAL wall wraps that are displayed at the airport.

Cartier described Visit CA's global campaign and how they will be filming at Ragged Point in October for their new road trips TV spot. Cartier provided a Highway 1 update: Regent's Slide work has been delayed and it is not expected to reopen this year. Rocky Creek will be closed overnight for two weeks starting September 22, but daytime travelers can still pass.

Cartier provided a Michelin Guide Restaurant update and announced that Monopoly SLO CAL Edition is now available for sale. The initial run was 5,000 copies, and the publisher will print more if needed. Cartier also presented the Annual Report timeline.

Cartier noted a potential visitation data co-op. More information to come, but this would be an opportunity to buy municipality specific data. Currently Visit SLO CAL (VSC) staff is working with Tourism Economics to establish cost and reporting possibilities.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

Jackson requested a copy of VSC org chart. Cano shared that she will be scheduling meetings to hear what is important to the marketing committee members when she starts in her new role. Cartier added that Emily Rudge (Executive Assistant to the President & CEO) will assist in scheduling these meetings.

Akers requested confirmation that the Denver flights are staying the same. Cartier confirmed.

Sorgenfrei questioned where Monopoly is available for sale. Cartier responded that the game is currently available on amazon and will be sold at local stores too.

There was committee discussion about city specific and region data, about the cadence of visitation data reporting and about how VSC currently uses this data. Cartier responded that Halvorson will create a survey to send out asking what everyone would be looking to see from the co-op.

BUSINESS ITEMS

5. Ethnographic Research

Cartier outlined the key takeaways from the ethnographic research. The main finding was that a laid-back vibe and slower pace is synonymous with SLO CAL. Additionally, sheer diversity within the region helps differentiate SLO CAL. Many interviewed also discussed the culture of respect towards people, land, art & craft.

Staff is currently looking at dates in October to get shoulder season data. Findings will be used to inform brand creative that will be presented at the Marketing Retreat next March.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

6. Unpacking

Cartier presented Unpacking SLO CAL shoot details for Episodes 2 & 3. Filming is to start September 18. Cartier also shared the talent for these episodes and the destinations that will be included (San Luis Obispo, Pismo Beach, Highway One Road Trip, Paso Robles, Atascadero & Arroyo Grande). In total the shoot will last seven days, cover 20 locations, include four influencers and a production crew of ten.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

Sorgenfrei asked about talent rights. Peterson clarified the question to see if VSC has rights in perpetuity. Cartier responded that the talent from the first episode was for two years.

7. Wine-O-One

Cartier shared the upcoming wine-o-one campaign. VSC is working with Paso Wine Alliance and Travel Paso to capture a new narrative on wine. The focus is on education and entertainment geared to a younger generation that makes wine feel approachable.

Cartier went over the asset breakdown: uncorking (knowledge) + unpairing (understanding) + unrivaled (destination). Pensara is leading the effort with social first framework. Four vineyards will be featured, creating a suite of assets. Will also include social polling for questions that should be addressed in the assets. Filming will take place in November and the campaign will roll out mid-January. Focus on Paso Robles but will tie in entire destination including Edna Valley.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

Akers wondered about sober curiosity, and if it was part of this conversation. Cartier replied that craft cocktail, craft brew, sober curiosity and wine are all areas to cover, but this campaign is focused on wine. Sorgenfrei brought up wine's competition with dispensaries.

Jacob highlighted that the idea is to lean into the approachability of the region and to return to the culture of wine – coming together with friends/family at the dinner table. Sanpei shared some wine trend research findings. Sorgenfrei added the role of sweet wine in helping to introduce wine to a new audience.

8. Sustainably SLO CAL

Cartier provided a campaign update on Sustainably SLO CAL which will highlight stories that are naturally occurring in the region. The campaign focuses on inspirational travel content to encourage people to come to SLO CAL for these experiences. Cartier requested committee members to share ideas on lodging partners that can tell the sustainability story. The Camatta Ranch and Niner videos were played.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

9. Marketing, Travel Trade & ESC 2050 Update

Halvorson gave an overview of PR coverage from July & August and recapped the PR & social media Mixer (with the next Mixers tentatively scheduled for December 3 and March 11). Halvorson also provided information about the upcoming San Diego media market mission on September 19.

Halvorson shared owned media updates. Simpleview has been acquired by Granicus and VSC will continue to have a strong relationship with Simpleview/Granicus. Cartier added that account/day-to-day will stay the same, some leadership will likely change. Halvorson shared website updates from July & August which focused on optimizing the partnership path and overall clean up. SEO services moved to SEMrush in July (previously used Simpleview). Next steps on the website are revamping location landing pages and revising the event calendar.

Halvorson presented the in-kind sponsorship pilot program which officially launched September 3. Cartier added that applications close at the end of September for the first round, and to reach out to Manno (Partnership Engagement Manager) for more information.

Halvorson went over consumer newsletter performance for July & August. Staff will continue to include deals and events in upcoming months. Interest-based newsletters are to come.

Weisbecker spoke to July Social Media highlights including significant growth and a 25% increase posting cadence. August highlights include a dip due to Olympics-focused content and the Instagram algorithm shift. Weisbecker also recapped the August social media Mixer and shared some key takeaways from Instagram's algorithm change.

Halvorson reviewed paid media results for June & July starting with the Always on Campaign performance to-date. The campaign saw a strong click to session ratio, exceeding the monthly goal by 41%. Halvorson also shared data for each creative message. Cartier highlighted unpacking performance. Halvorson went over creative highlights for each layer (awareness, consideration and intent).

Carlson announced VSC partnership with Tourism Exchange and that there is an upcoming supplier workshops to help expand bookable experience and accommodations for international tour operators and travel agents. Cartier added the need to have more bookable product to round out selling the destination. 31% more lodging is coming online in the next six years, and many are flags, so now is the time for mom-and-pop partners to get their product bookable.

Carlson shared that VSC hosted a Bonotel FAM with 18 hotel site tours across five destinations and many new contracts are underway. Carlson also explained how VSC is participating in a Hotel Beds co-op with Visit CA. The campaign lasts six months and will run in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, UK, France and Germany. This co-op is limited to include eight destinations and VSC is the only Central Coast destination.

Carlson also showed a new 12-day fly/drive SLO CAL itinerary by Ocean Holidays which was the result of a FAM trip. The new VSC Sales video by Pensara was also played. This new video will be used for meetings & trade.

Chaney shared ESC 2025 updates. Chaney announced that the Cal Poly Endowment Scholarship was rewarded and showed the Committee the new SLO CAL Welcome pin cards. VSC is looking at alternative host platforms for the customer service program. Lastly, Cheney highlighted that the Events & Festival Strategy working group is reconvening in November.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

Jacob asked who else in the room uses Simpleview. Wambolt responded the Morro Bay currently uses them for their website.

Sanpei asked how the roll out with continue if the in-kind sponsorship pilot is extended. Cartier replied that the applications will go out approximately two seasons in advance to allow staff time to promote the event.

Keller asked what the revenue share is for Tourism Exchange. Carlson replied 12-18%, but in international it is pay to play. 93% of SLO CAL experiences are not bookable online. Hotels are better, but many are only available on one OTA.

Next Meeting Marketing November 12, 2024

ADJOURN: 10:00 AM