Santa Maria Valley Tourism Marketing District (SMV TMD)

Advisory Committee Minutes
March 20, 2019
3:00 p.m. (Best Western)

DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED

Advisory Committee: Jean-Luc Garon, Ryan Swack, Jerry Patel
Absent: JP Patel, Susan Garcia
City Staff: Jason Stilwell
Chamber|Staff: Glenn Morris, Jenn Harrison, Yarely Corona, Cheryl Cuming
Guests: Robert Oaks, Max Tucker, Seth Foster, Ricardo Herrera, Micky Patel, Ketan Panchal, Mark VandeCamp, Cherag Patel and Nilesh Patel (Hampton Inn)
KPS3 | Team: Rob Gaedtke, Rachel Curran, Andy Walden

Call to Order by Chair Jean-Luc Garon at 3:08 p.m.

Public Comment None

Consent Calendar: Minutes and Financial Report
Cheryl noted the correction to Mark VandeCamp’s last name. Jerry noted on the financials that he would like to see an increase of $20,000+ in the 2019 | 2020 budget for event support. Glenn clarified that we rolled monies into the current FY budget from the prior FY. A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes and the financials. Motion: Jerry and 2nd Ryan. Motion carries.

Business Items
KPS3 Team Report:
Rob noted that overall web performance was on a steady climb with almost 11,000 monthly sessions and 1,749 conversions. Search visits were up 52% YoY.

Rachel shared the PR coverage with 24 stories since July 2018, including KUSI San Diego. Rachel also noted that we have seen increased web traffic interest from San Diego since our segment in Good Morning America ran. Atlas Obscura (travel-based site) features our SMV native content with 5.3 million unique monthly visitors and created 530 new email subscribers.
Rachel shared our new e-newsletter design and reviewed our video asset strategy to develop more content for Instagram TV (IGTV), YouTube, our website and our social platforms. The focus is to develop a story-driven video to encourage engagement and time-on-site. In the current FY, we will produce four 3- to 5-minute videos (12 total) with 240 15-second clips. Rachel reminded the AC that all assets are available for their use. The content calendar highlights included BBQ, wine, beach and AG/farmer’s markets.

**Discussion Items**

**2019 | 2020 Marketing Plan outline:**
The AC discussed goals - How we continue to evolve. Rachel reviewed February analytics with 699 unique hotel PVs and 249 outbound clicks to hotel websites for total conversion of 948. Nilesh asked about tracking to determine if someone booked a room. Glenn noted prior discussions where the AC agreed not to pursue a booking widget. Glenn asked for feedback on the current environment and lodging insights from the past 12 months. Max said “better than normal year”. Glenn noted the 3 best years historically were 2016/2017/2018 and 2019 appears slightly softer.

JP wants to ensure the focus is on marketing ‘heads in beds’ and that any AC member must pay into the assessment and be an owner or designated lodging representative. He re-emphasized that he wants funds to be invested in marketing efforts only and is concerned that there is a future opportunity for City Council to change the focus. Paul Patel comments that he was initially opposed to the TMD, and he is in support of it as long as it remains focused on ‘heads in beds’. The AC agreed that this discussion should continue and be placed on the March agenda to focus on structure and membership. Ricardo noted that there is new inventory in both Buellton and Lompoc. Ryan comments on the need for more development and the impact of lodging stay from the Enos Ranch project. Glenn noted STR shows strong ADR though occupancy is soft. Ryan commented that properties are ‘chasing rate’ as we come into Spring.

Rob & Rachel discussed the overall strategic approach – balancing content that draws an overnight visitor while supporting our brand pillars. Rob asked the AC “the what of visitor are we looking to attract?”. Ricardo asked about the key card promo, and Jenn confirmed we need to expand touchpoints. Jean-luc noted Los Angeles and Orange County folks are coming for the wine. SMV is an ideal home base for wine tasting. Andy noted that the wine country page is in the top 5 most visited pages on our website. Cheryl asked the AC if they would support a specific message around a “$500 Wine Weekend” as we can differentiate SMV as one of the only places in CA where you can enjoy a wine weekend for less than $500. Keeping in mind ‘more for less’ could mean money, time or whatever appeals to each visitor. Jean-luc noted that need to balance messaging as money is not always the challenge.
Andy shared the proposed web enhancements, including features like a weather page and what to pack (Every season is the best in SMV). Our goal is to push web visitors to sub pages and drive engagement through interest content. We will also look to cross promote lodging to drive more conversions. Andy explained SEO-clustering – a way to organize content and index it for Google to increase our ‘authority’ on site to drive SEO.

Rob provided an updated on the swirl machine and noted that it will be presented to the public at the May Vintner’s Festival event...bringing swirl ‘til you spill to life.

**Research considerations:** Rachel review research proposal which will help us further define our new FY target market. Max asked what we might learn from this additional research investment, and Ryan noted opportunity around “Bakersfield beach” to market to those that are not yet coming. I was suggested that Sports tournament opportunities can benefit SMV in the shoulder season. Jason noted that 6-8 fields are in the future plans for the city. Jean-luc asked how we will pick our marketing and Rob confirmed that as the conclusion of the research, it will help define markets based on ‘heat-mapping’ responses and identifying 3 to 4 locations. This data will inform the overall media plan that will be presented in July (following the approval of the full marketing plan at the May meeting). Nilesh asked about competitor market analysis, and Rachel confirmed that focus will be on identifying what people we should target based on their interest match to SMV.

**Committee Structure:** Glenn noted that the AC will need to identify a Chair, and Vice Chair, at the May meeting as Jean-luc’s officer term will be ending.

**Action Items**

**Pole Banner:**
Update provided by Glenn, noting pole banner hardware is ‘owned’ by the Elks. The cost to replace the hardware will be researched. It was suggested we identify 50 pole locations around town and look to place them from mid-June to November, and then again from January through April.

**Updates**
- Chairman’s Report: None.
- VCB/TMD Report: Jenn provided annual report noting the city presentation will be done in September. Yarely touched on LA Travel Show noting 400 new email subscribers. The San Jose Travel Show is coming up. Jenn shared details on IMM New York with 24 appointments in 1 day. Craft cocktail contest went well. Wine Trolley should kick-off on Mother’s Day weekend. Vintner’s Festival is weekend of May 4th.

**Committee Member Reports:** None

**Good of the Order:** None
Future Agenda Items:
• 2019|2020 Marketing Plan
• Pole banner details

Adjourn at 4:50pm

Next meeting:  Wednesday, May 29