



City of Santa Barbara
Airport Department

Meeting: 09/19/18
Agenda Item No. 9

DATE: September 19, 2018
TO: Airport Commission
FROM: Aaron Keller, Interim Airport Director *AK*
SUBJECT: FY2018-19 Airport Media Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

That Commission receive a presentation about the FY2018-2019 media plan.

DISCUSSION:

Santa Barbara Airport has marketed its air service offering to Central Coast residents for many years, typically using traditional advertising media such as print publications/newspapers, TV and radio ads, transit advertising and sponsorships. In conjunction with the adoption of a new strategic marketing plan in 2017, the Airport's advertising investments were re-evaluated in light of changes in consumer media behaviors, specifically the proliferation of online media consumption. A revolutionary shift has taken place which has rendered traditional media such as magazines and newspapers less effective at reaching some intended audiences.

Internet Advertising Pilot Project

As a result, the Airport launched a pilot project in early 2018 to test not only the reach of internet advertising, but also the degree to which this advertising could be tied to real-time bookings on airlines serving Santa Barbara Airport for a measurable return on investment that is typically difficult to achieve with traditional media.

The Airport invested in an advertising program targeting consumers who were actively searching the Internet to investigate travel options and/or potentially book a flight to or from the Santa Barbara area (including Ventura, Santa Maria, Santa Ynez and San Luis Obispo). The Airport chose an internet advertising placement firm, Sojern, which is focused specifically on the travel industry. Sojern partners with travel companies including airlines, online travel agencies, hotels and rental car companies to collect anonymized (non-personally identifiable) traveler profiles based on consumers' search and booking behaviors on these travel sites. The company utilizes the data to target travelers and deliver advertising across a number of media channels. In the first effort, potential travelers searching real-time for travel to or from the Central Coast area were presented an advertisement for Santa Barbara Airport's air service options. If a potential traveler clicked on this advertisement, they were linked to the <www.flysba.com> website.

From the SBA website, a traveler could click on the link for one of the airlines serving Santa Barbara. If a traveler then booked a flight on American Airlines, Alaska Airlines or United Airlines to or from Santa Barbara Airport, this action was recorded along with the purchase price of that ticket. The results of this campaign were very encouraging as it provided the first opportunity to directly co-relate advertising to actual ticketed passengers and bookings. The ability to directly measure the impact of advertising is a tremendous benefit in discussions with potential future air carriers because of its measurability. The success of the campaign was measured in both number of impressions (or views), “click-throughs” (meaning a visitor clicks on an ad through to the Airport website) or if the individual clicked through to an airline website and completed a booking. The program also shed light on how far in advance typical bookings are made so that future advertising can be more carefully timed to this planning window.

The quantified results are as follows:

- 107,882 flight searches to/from Santa Barbara
- 3,358 transactions totaling 5,960 total flights
- Avg. domestic ticket price: \$519.42
- Total Estimated Traveler Spend: \$1,744,212
- Return on Investment: \$49.83: \$1

Based on the success of the initial trial, the Airport decided to expand its internet advertising effort in FY2019.

FY2019 Media Selection Process and Results

In order to make the most effective overall advertising choices with a limited budget, the Airport issued a Request for Qualifications in early 2018. Interested media outlets were required to provide evidence that their format was effective at reaching the Airport’s target audience. The Airport received 26 proposals, including from two firms specialized in travel industry internet marketing, Sojern and its closest competitor. After in-person presentations, the Airport staff and its marketing firm evaluated and scored the proposals. The final media line-up consists of a continuation of the KEYT partnership, banner ads in the local e-newsletter Noozhawk, bus transit ads on MTD, along with a new internet program with Sojern. The expanded Sojern program will use both banner ads of different sizes and locations, as well as short video clips to attract viewers. The Airport is also discussing with Sojern the development of a customized algorithm that would track when a potential traveler books a flight to/from another airport instead of Santa Barbara, providing another measure of “leakage” from the Santa Barbara market area.

PREPARED BY: Business Development/Marketing