






Sectors | Travel/Recreation

Virtual vacation spots

By [Lauren Bell](#) [E-Mail to a friend](#)  [Print this article](#)  [Reprints](#) 

November 9th, 2007

What do New Orleans, Las Vegas and Rockford, IL have in common? They, like many regions in the US that are competing for domestic tourism dollars, all needed to attract new vacationers, and they all turned to direct marketing strategies to do it.

When Hurricane Katrina hit, New Orleans' tourism market suffered. The New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau (NOMCVB) enlisted Trumpet, a New Orleans-based firm, to kick-start a new tourism campaign.

"We wanted to talk to people that had an affinity for New Orleans and showcase the spirit of the city," says Trumpet's Jenny Dalton.

An interactive Web site, 24NOLA, is the centerpiece of the "Forever New Orleans" campaign. Users can create and print their own 24-hour itineraries at the site, at www.24nola.com.

"With 24NOLA, we articulated our target as a 'seeker,' and that person is the traveler looking for a new, unique experience," Dalton explains.

A push e-mail describing the site was sent to potential travelers, directing them to the site. New Orleans posters were also made available and, when travelers began returning, Trumpet and NOMCVB made a series of testimonial videos about the tourism industry in New Orleans.

Business travel and conventions in New Orleans this year are at 70% of pre-Katrina levels. Travel agent bookings have increased by 30%. By the end of 2007, 6 million people are expected to have visited the city.

Like New Orleans, Las Vegas was seeking an experience-oriented client. The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority turned to Critical Mass, part of Omnicom Group, to help with its city-branding

efforts.

Critical Mass worked with R&R Partners, which produced the "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas" TV and print spots.

"Our primary goal was to bridge that gap from the emotional message [R&R] was putting out there to the more tangible, informational experience and backing up the promise of that message," says John McLaughlin, VP of Critical Mass.

An interactive microsite, Las Vegas Free Will, was launched in late September. The messaging capability of the site adds a viral component to the campaign and appeals to the younger people the city is trying to attract, McLaughlin says.

Rockford, an Illinois town located a moderate drive from Chicago, took a slightly more traditional DM approach to its tourism marketing, turning to mailing lists and postcards as a way of making first contact.

"In the small-to-midsize destinations, targeted direct marketing online is really more of an emerging trend, rather than the norm," says David Preece, president and CEO, Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The city of Rockford did, however, create its own Web site that includes a virtual tour, trip planner and e-newsletter sign-up. Seasonal promotions in the city have their own microsites.

Rockford built up its database with help from city partners such as hotels, museums and parks. The RACVB used Cohorts database analysis and segmentation to find its best prospects and to target its messages.

The RACVB's Web site, www.gorockford.com, has seen a 30% increase in traffic since this time last year.

Lauren Bell is a reporter covering media, circulation issues, CRM and database. Reach her at lauren.bell@dmnews.com.

[Previous Article in Travel/Recreation](#)

[Next Article in Travel/Recreation](#)

Trackbacks

Trackback URL: <http://www.dmnews.com/cms/trackback/42955-3>

[Travel/Recreation Sectors RSS Feed](#) 