



HEART OF THE ROGUE



**STRATEGIC MARKETING PLAN  
ADDENDUM | 2021-2022**

# STRATEGIC MARKETING PLAN

## ADDENDUM

### 2021-2022

#### SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The economic outlook going into the year 2020 was very positive and on track to have strong earnings and employment growth. Beginning in December 2019, reports had started trickling in about a virus that had developed in China. By January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Corona Virus, or COVID-19, a global public health emergency.

In one short week, the first known American had died of the virus in California on February 6, 2020. On March 11, the WHO declared the outbreak a pandemic and President Donald Trump affirmed it as a United States national emergency on March 13. New York City was confirmed as the U.S. epicenter of the pandemic on March 23 with more than 21,000 cases. In Oregon on March 23, Governor Kate Brown ordered business closures and sheltering into law with only essential businesses to remain open and healthcare services provided for emergent needs only. By April 7, nearly 95% of Americans were under lockdown with 42 states mandating stay-at-home orders.

On March 27, the federal government passed a \$2 trillion CARES Stimulus Act, then a second one on May 4. Billions of dollars were given as a Payroll Protection Program to help small businesses stay afloat, as well as stipends and increased unemployment benefits for American citizens. By May 21, the number of global COVID-19 cases surpassed 5 million and 38 million Americans have filed for unemployment with the national unemployment rate at 14.7%

Needless-to-say, the tourism industry's rosy 2020 predictions of record earnings quickly turned to a forecast of 60% losses.

#### ADAPTING FOR COVID

Though the primary initiatives of the Travel Medford strategic plan didn't change, the organization had to make significant adjustments to the budget and staffing, as well as make swift decisions on priorities. Two full-time staff members were laid off from Travel Medford and the budget was reduced by nearly 40%.

In August, the remaining Travel Medford team met with the Tourism Council to identify the state of affairs and how marketing efforts needed to shift. With the support of national and regional research, group assessed how the pandemic had impacted tourism in the Rogue Valley market, as well as executed a SWOT analysis.

#### 2018-2022 STRATEGIC GOALS

- I. Expand Community Education
- II. Venue Development
- III. Reinvent Visitor Services
- IV. Further Funding Outside TLT
- V. Expand Sports Tourism
- VI. Strengthen Downtown Collaboration
- VII. Regional Collaboration
- VIII. Foster Community Vision

#### HOW THE PANDEMIC IMPACTED TOURISM

- Businesses shuttered for two months except essential
- Businesses shifting how they deliver services
- Airline travel decline
- Business over Zoom
- Traveler fear of urban areas
- Traveler sentiment has changed to road trips and nearby travel (2-3 hours)
- Travelers want to see safe travel options
- Travelers seeking rural and outdoors
- No more large gatherings (in-person events)
- Very little one-on-one visitor engagement
- Focus from gatherings/events to outdoor space/adventure
- Business Travel will take a while to recover - corporate travel minimized significantly. Group, trade and conferences same.
- Hotels have services and cleaning practices beyond what AIRBNB can provide.

## SWOT ANALYSIS AMID COVID

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural</li> <li>• Wide open spaces</li> <li>• Safe</li> <li>• Crater Lake</li> <li>• Centric drive location and easy to access from (I5) &amp; Regional Airport</li> <li>• COVID-19 not too prevalent in our County</li> <li>• New and perfectly located visitor center at the airport-with screens we can utilize</li> <li>• Medford is on track to being the sports hub of the Pacific Northwest</li> <li>• Inventory</li> <li>• Affordable</li> <li>• Outdoor spaces, outdoor entertainment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of travel</li> <li>• Marketing research changes rapidly</li> <li>• Unknown future</li> <li>• TLT actual income payment from lodging partners low and inconsistent</li> <li>• Not receiving any Government financial help or benefits</li> <li>• Lots of our volunteers are older and unable to serve many shifts/evening shifts</li> <li>• Limited staff (loss 40%) time/output</li> <li>• Message dichotomy of stewardship of local lands and community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market to millennials</li> <li>• Position RV as open, safe to travel</li> <li>• Reposition marketing strategy to more local</li> <li>• Start to generate revenue income outside just the TLT</li> <li>• Maximize promotion of Medford Events and Sports Complex</li> <li>• reimagine and integrate how and where we do visitor services</li> <li>• Amending staff duties and responsibilities</li> <li>• Solidify to stakeholders the value and need of travel and tourism to Medford and the Rogue Valley- this will prove the importance of it in terms of overall economic impact and quality of life</li> <li>• Continue to lobby and ask for help in new HEALS act for 501 c 6 to get PPP</li> <li>• Re-focus on obtaining some new high energy volunteers</li> <li>• Shift back to older travelers last two weeks - Fall demo</li> <li>• The other two major tourism destination in Oregon are saying don't come here. (Bend &amp; Portland) Research Bend travelers for trends in 2019/2020</li> <li>• Staycations - Invest in Local</li> <li>• Wine in the Fall - Boomer</li> <li>• Weekday travel opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing pandemic</li> <li>• The unknown</li> <li>• Overall economic recession- less money for visitors to spend- people restricting their expenditures</li> <li>• Ongoing wildfire issue</li> <li>• The unknown for opening back up the downtown office and the VIC</li> <li>• State and federal policy limiting travel/ spending</li> <li>• Visitors are not being stewards of our natural assets – Crater Lake</li> <li>• Business closures in downtown corridor and mall</li> <li>• Cancellation of school sports and sporting events will impact TLT</li> <li>• Oregon Shakespeare Festival cancelled</li> <li>• Britt Festival cancelled</li> <li>• Staffing issues</li> <li>• Cancellations of events and festivals</li> <li>• Season shifts to winter with no indoor capabilities</li> </ul>

## RESEARCH + DATA TRENDS DURING THE PANDEMIC

- **Most travelers are within drive market** – 3-5 hours (SeeSource)
- **Average age of traveler is 30-50** (millennials and Gen-X; boomers not traveling to our area; SeeSource)
- **Most travelers coming from** (SeeSource):
  - Eugene area
  - Redding area
  - Coast (Brookings, Crescent City)
- **Safest perceived travel activities** – in order of perceived safety (Destination Analyst):
  - Road trip
  - Outdoor activities
  - Visiting friends and relatives
  - Shopping
  - Staying at a hotel
  - Eating at a restaurant
- **Top Travel Medford website searches:**
  - Things to do
  - Regional attractions
  - Crater Lake
  - Request Travel Planner
  - Places to stay
  - Bucket list
  - Wine trails
- **Other things to note:**
  - Website analytics continued to be strong through pandemic, which suggested pent-up travel demand and, of course, increased internet usage.

## WEBSITE ANALYTICS, QUARTER 4 2020

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>Y-O-Y % CHANGE</b>
Users	32,703	23,455	<b>39%</b>
Sessions	35,345	29,519	<b>20%</b>
Page Views	97,213	87,316	<b>11%</b>
Download Visitor Guide	1,173	343	<b>242%</b>

## **MOST RECENT TOURISM TRENDS AND FORECAST, AS OF 4/2021**

- With new coronavirus cases rising again in the U.S., Americans' concerns about contracting COVID-19 have also increased over the last 3 weeks, after hitting record lows at the beginning of the month. However, this anxiety has heightened in Millennial and Gen X-age travelers and lessened among the Baby Boomers.
- As has been demonstrated by their sentiments throughout the pandemic, vaccination has the greatest impact on American travelers' anticipated behaviors. Fully 82.0% say the idea of traveling is made more comfortable by receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. Two-thirds of American travelers have or will take a COVID-19 vaccine, and the majority continue to believe they will be inoculated by summer. Half of parents with school-age children plan to vaccinate their children when able, as well.
- In looking at feelings about pandemic-safety in the post-vaccine world, American travelers still appear to believe in vigilance to prevent spread. Right now, 73.5% believe you still need to wear a mask after you are vaccinated. In addition, over three-quarters (76.0%) believe that proof of vaccination should be required for international travel.
- Despite rising fear about contracting the virus, American travelers appear relatively optimistic about their financial future and thus their ability to spend on travel. Fully 3-in-10 American travelers say they are financially better off now compared to a year ago; 29.8% say they expect their income to rise in the next 6 months. In terms of devoting their income to travel, 38.9% say that right now is a good time for them to spend money on their leisure travel and 41.7% expect to spend more on leisure travel in the next 12 months compared to the previous year.
- American optimism is even more prevalent in their travel outlook. A record 66.6% report being in a ready-to-travel mindset, nearly two-thirds report being highly open to travel inspiration and 61.4% exhibit strong excitement at the prospect of traveling now.
- This increasingly positive sentiment towards travel can be seen in Americans' current trip plans. Over 71% did some travel dreaming or planning in the last week alone, including a 2021-record 16.2% who booked or made reservations. Two-thirds of American travelers say they have trip plans in the next 3 months—yet another pandemic record.
- Urban destinations also continue to show recovery, with a pandemic-record 41.3% of those traveling in the next 3 months saying they will visit cities.
- Many American travelers are saying yes to summer vacation. This week, 62.5% report they are traveling for leisure this summer; this is up 26 percentage points from 2020. Summer travelers currently have 2.2 trips planned for the season on average, with July the peak month.
- The desire to stay close-to-home appears to have retreated, as 70.4% of summer travelers say they will be traveling out-of-state and 8.1% say they plan to go abroad this summer. California and Florida dominate the states Americans say they are heading to this summer.

With new coronavirus cases rising again in the U.S., Americans' concerns about contracting COVID-19 have also increased over the last 3 weeks, after hitting record lows at the beginning of the month. With older Americans prioritized for vaccination and a far greater proportion of them fully vaccinated, this anxiety has heightened in Millennial and Gen X-age travelers and lessened among the Baby Boomers.

## **COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES FOR TRAVEL MEDFORD + ROGUE VALLEY DURING PANDEMIC**

- The location is highly desirable because of its rural, open and outdoor nature

- COVID is relatively in control in the Rogue Valley
- Residents and visitors are fairly compliant with safety regulations
- Hotels are taking advantage of ORLA certification as COVID compliant
- Drive market
- Easily accessible by car and air – I5, RV Airport

## **MARKETING ADJUSTMENTS + PRIORITIES DUE TO THE PANDEMIC**

- Shift majority of advertising budget to digital – internet usage is through the roof during COVID
- Budget allocated to travel writers since strong return has been realized with investment
- Increase Certified visitor collateral distribution when possible
- Permanently close Visitor Information Center in spring 2021

## **STRATEGIC INITIATIVE ACTION ITEMS, 2020 - 2022**

### **1. Reinvent Visitor Services**

- a. Explore the option of mobile visitor center
- b. Enhance downtown visitor location

### **2. Strengthen Downtown Collaboration**

- a. Utilize Community Partnership Fund to boost DMA events

### **3. Further Funding Outside TLT**

- a. Evaluate options for additional revenue
- b. Advertising to tourism partners to website, eNewsletter, social media, etc.
- c. Create, promote and generate revenue from lifestyle brand

### **4. Expand Sports Tourism**

- a. Develop national brand: Recreation/Sports Hub of the West
- b. Actively support venue development

### **5. Foster Community Vision**

- a. Sit at the table for the City visioning process and implementation

## STAYING THE COURSE WITH FLUIDITY

Moving into 2021, Travel Medford's TLT revenue has been performing well above projections and past years creating a surplus in budget. The Travel Medford team worked with the Tourism Council to allocate excess funds to meet marketing objectives and strategic initiatives as follows:

Downtown Medford Association	\$11,000
HOTR Festival	\$25,000
Money Market	\$25,000
Close VIC	\$3,000
Downtown Banners	\$3,000
Downtown Visitor Center Refresh	30,000
Creative Assets + Advertising/Promotions	\$44,000
Merchandise/Swag	\$30,000

Travel Medford will continue to stay the course of its strategic plan and initiatives while continually evaluating and responding to market shifts. It remains steadfast in its principles of following the marketing data while keeping abreast of forecasting trends and making adjustments to the tactics as needed.

