

Quarterly Report

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2024





MARKETING

“The Santa Barbara Effect” Campaign

Throughout the fall, Visit Santa Barbara (VSB) executed a dynamic media plan featuring seasonally tailored digital, social, video and print advertisements, highlighting the abundant travel experiences unique to the Santa Barbara South Coast. The “Santa Barbara Effect” brand campaign seamlessly inspired travelers to relax and rejuvenate by showcasing signature experiences — outdoor recreation, culinary delights, wine culture, arts, wellness and the region’s signature lifestyle. Special emphasis was placed on spotlighting seasonal events, including the Harbor & Seafood Festival, Santa Barbara Vintners Festival and the numerous holiday events and festive offerings available for travelers.

To effectively drive fall visitation, VSB strategically targeted potential travelers in ZIP codes known for generating visitation to the area’s lodging properties. Advertisements were optimized to reach high-performing California audiences and expanded to attract qualified travelers from Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New York, Texas, Utah, Oregon, Washington and Washington D.C. Nationwide targeting also included major metro airports and competitive luxury lodging ZIP codes to capture active travelers and individuals within higher-income brackets.

The ability to navigate the competitive landscape of travel marketing posed a unique challenge during the fall season. The presidential election, holiday promotions and the urgency to capture travelers’ capricious attention spans, led to a saturated media landscape with increased advertising costs across most media partners. Despite these challenges, VSB effectively managed its paid advertising budget, totaling \$701,490, successfully boosting destination awareness and trip planning interest in Santa Barbara:

- The cost per 1,000 ads delivered was \$2.97, generating 101 million impressions
- The cost per 1,000 completed video views was \$19, generating 7.7 million completed video views
- The cost per website referral was \$0.53, generating 848,000 website referrals

Weddings

To place a spotlight on the region’s unparalleled beauty and romantic allure, VSB launched a paid media and content marketing campaign to position the Santa Barbara South Coast as the premier destination for weddings. Stunning visual assets and inspiring, yet informative content were activated to showcase the diverse venues, exceptional service and unique experiences available to couples planning their special day.

The campaign, strategically timed to reach couples during “engagement season,” catered to two primary audience segments: couples local to California seeking a memorable ceremony and out-of-state visitors looking for the perfect destination wedding. With a budget of \$58,000, media partners Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, TikTok and Google served a series of digital, video and search ads to targeted audiences, delivering 10.4 million impressions and 60,000 clicks.

Website

VSB’s official destination website, SantaBarbaraCA.com, saw significant growth metrics across key performance indicators, including 14% increase in users, 38% increase in sessions, 18% increase in page views and just a slight 8% decrease in overall referrals to business, in large part due to seasonality and increased advertising competition.

SantaBarbaraCA.com recorded a total of 1.5 million sessions and welcomed 1 million unique users to the website. These users collectively viewed 1.9 million pages, reflecting a high level of interest in the content. On average, visitors spent 2 minutes per session and the engagement rate for users was 45%.

With continued efforts to publish and refresh inspiring, timely and thoughtful itineraries centered around travel to the Santa Barbara South Coast, VSB maintains its position as a top source for online destination-related content by remaining up-to-date on trending themes and keeping content relevant with key search words. The editorial team focused on content themes that promote holiday content and trending travel themes, with an emphasis in highlighting the fall season as one of the most intriguing times to visit.

The combined endeavors yielded an impressive outcome of 26 new articles and 43 optimized pages. Top-performing, newly published articles on the website, based on page views, included:

- Holiday Events in Santa Barbara
- New Year’s Eve in Santa Barbara
- December in Santa Barbara
- Thanksgiving in Santa Barbara

In partnership with the Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce, specific efforts to highlight Goleta through GoGoleta.com garnered 4,000 users and 8,800 page views.



Social Media

VSB's social media reach was strategically deployed across eight popular platforms, amassing nearly 500,000 active followers and driving 1.5 million organic impressions. VSB capitalized on high-performing posts related to seasonal offerings and holiday themes. While all platforms inspired travelers with a daily dose of Santa Barbara, Instagram led the pack with 1.2 million impressions. Short-form video content kept audiences wanderlusting for The American Riviera®, garnering over 1.1 million organic video views highlighting accommodations, outdoor recreation, dining and seasonal attractions. Prioritizing timely, shareable content with stunning visuals and informative copy led to keeping VSB's followers inspired and engaged with Santa Barbara content, totaling 853,000 engagements and 49,000 website referrals.

In collaboration with the Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce, Goleta was highlighted through the Go Goleta social media channels garnering 47,000 impressions through 13,000 active followers on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

Third Night Free Promotion

The Third Night Free Lodging promotion continued to support non-commissioned, direct bookings and encouraged longer stays in the Santa Barbara South Coast. Nearly 25 diverse properties, from luxury to mid-tier and budget accommodations offered an extra night free with a three-night booking, complemented by additional lodging discounts and exclusive offers.

For campaign visibility, a comprehensive advertising approach was deployed, including targeted consumer emails through TravelZoo, Dunhill Deals and Luxury Link, as well as paid social media outreach and promotional placement

on VSB's website and social channels. Seasonality and increased media competition caused the fall quarter to experience elevated media costs across all partners. Despite these challenges, VSB's \$307,000 multi-channel media investment strategy resulted in 43,000 referrals to participating properties.

Locals Lodging Promotion

VSB resumed its seasonal lodging promotion, encouraging locals and their visiting friends and family to stay in eighteen area accommodations with a 30% discount on staycations from November 2024 through February 2025. Designed to fill vacant rooms during the shoulder season, VSB positioned this campaign as a unique opportunity for the community to celebrate their hometown and experience the activities and amenities vacationers from around the globe travel to Santa Barbara for. To help spread the word, VSB invested \$27,000 in paid media, which generated 6,000 referrals to participating hotels.

Airline Partnership

To inspire travelers to choose Santa Barbara Airport, VSB partnered with Southwest and Delta Air Lines to promote convenient nonstop flights from Sacramento, Oakland, Las Vegas, Atlanta and Salt Lake City. The paid social media campaign, designed to showcase both the ease of travel and the captivating experiences awaiting visitors on the Santa Barbara South Coast, delivered outstanding results. Through a series of engaging ads, the campaign resulted in 26 million impressions and generated 108,000 link clicks to airline booking sites — all achieved with a \$62,000 paid media investment.

Partner Advertising Program

VSB delivered substantial value to industry partners by extending marketing dollars and high-value opportunities for South Coast Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) lodging properties and VSB members to expand their reach among potential travelers to the Santa Barbara South Coast. VSB delivered 1.5 million impressions and 36,000 referrals for 13 partners through tactical digital marketing programs including digital, native, social and newsletter ads. Revenue for the fall quarter totaled \$14,200.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

What The Media Are Saying

“With its views of the Pacific and Santa Ynez mountains, balmy weather, bursting floral gardens, and Spanish-style architecture, there’s a reason that Santa Barbara and Montecito is nicknamed ‘The American Riviera’ — it is perhaps the most idyllic, topographically diverse coastline in the country.”

Vogue Online, December 2024

“[Santa Barbara is] a town so sun-kissed and sublime, you start to wonder if it’s even real.”

Forbes, October 2024

“The laid-back-luxe locale is tucked between the Pacific Ocean and the Santa Ynez Mountains and is a treasured escape for travelers who want to spend the day on the beach or sipping pinot noir in a vineyard — or both.”

Philadelphia Magazine, October 2024

“Whether it was shopping in Summerland, wine tasting, or simply relaxing on the beach, the Santa Barbara area offered the perfect weekend getaway.”

Matador Network, November 2024

Top Media Coverage Highlights

- Summerland was the focus of an extensive multimedia travel feature in [Los Angeles Times Online](#) (20,041,531 Unique Visitors per Month), which described 22 different area businesses and outdoor recreation areas, as well as a digital “girl’s weekend” story in [Matador Network](#) (548,941 UVM).
- The Bay Area’s [Mercury News Online](#) (4.2 million UVM) took a look at the wonders of winter travel to the South Coast, from the Santa Barbara Harbor & Seafood Festival to whale watching. The story also ran in [The East Bay Times](#) (55,787 print circulation, 906,957 UVM), [Alameda Journal](#) (16,805 circ.), [Walnut Creek Journal](#) (17,651 circ.) and [The Montclarion](#) (25,025 circ.).
- [Seattle Magazine](#) (52,188 circ., 61,009 UVM) [spotlighted Santa Barbara as a winter escape for Seattle residents](#), homing in on the restaurants, boutiques and attractions of the ARTS District.
- In a multi-page story resulting from a partnership with the Santa Barbara Vintners, [Philadelphia Magazine](#) (103,418 circ., 820,389 UVM) [explored how to spend a weekend in Santa Barbara County](#), with South Coast highlights ranging from food and wine to local landmarks.
- [Forbes Online](#) (54.1 million UVM) published [“The Ultimate Santa Barbara Fall Guide,”](#) with an eye on new attractions, winemaker dinners and even royal sightings.
- [Modern Luxury’s Angeleno Online](#) (31,519 UVM) took a closer look at “Montecito Magic,” [exploring new and notable attractions for visitors in the “chic seaside enclave.”](#)



Top Media Coverage Highlights Continued

- Visit Santa Barbara plugged its **locals lodging promotion** aimed at local residents in a [staycation feature](#) in the Santa Barbara Independent, as well as separate mentions in [Siteline](#), [Noozhawk](#), [the Santa Barbara Independent](#) and [Pacific Coast Business Times](#).
- **Travel + Leisure en Español Online** (38,408 UVM) showcased Santa Barbara in a series of stories, calling it “a paradise on the West Coast of the United States,” including a [general travel feature](#) and pieces on [El Encanto](#) and [Ganna Walska Lotusland](#).
- **Le Figaro Online** (101.7 million UVM), one of France’s top newspapers, published two travel stories focused on the South Coast, including a [general piece on beaches, gastronomy and activities](#), and a [separate feature on hotels](#).
- A travel feature in **Atlanta Homes & Lifestyles** (31,853 circ., 7,563 UVM) [showcasing the South Coast](#) was aimed at high-income households in the Atlanta direct flight market.

Quick Hits

- **Brit + Co.** (859,374 UVM): [“The 50 Best Travel Destinations To Visit In 2025”](#)
- **Vogue Online** (10.5 million UVM): [“Romantic Getaways in the USA That Are Perfect for Any Couple’s Trip”](#)
- **U.S. News & World Report Online** (34 million UVM): [“22 Most Romantic Getaways in California,”](#) plus [“The 25 Best Girls Trip Ideas for 2025”](#) and [“263 Best Black Friday Travel Deals of 2024”](#)
- **Thrillist** (2 million UVM): [“The Most Stunning California Road Trips to Take This Fall”](#)
- **AFAR Online** (1.4 million UVM): [“12 Beautiful Places to Spend Your Winter”](#) and [“4 All-American Family Road Trips—and Tips for Surviving”](#)
- **Observer Online** (821,534 UVM): [“The Best Santa Barbara Restaurant and Bar Openings 2024,”](#) plus [“The Best Culinary Destinations in California”](#)
- **The Sun Online (U.K.)** (7 million UVM): [“Relax Like Royals”](#)

International group press trips hosted in conjunction with Visit California in 2024 resulted in the South Coast's inclusion in several stories including:

- Top French regional newspaper **Ouest France** (629,629 circ., 52.1 million UVM): [“A relaxing getaway under Southern California’s pink sun”](#)
- French women’s magazine **Avantages** (271,820 circ.): dedicated Santa Barbara story in the “California dreams series”
- The in-flight magazine for Mexican air carrier **Volaris** (504,000 circ., 22,118 UVM): [“Permission to land: The glamour of Hollywood”](#) with a section on Santa Barbara
- **Outlook India** (13.4 million UVM): [“5 Reasons To Visit Santa Barbara In California This January”](#)
- Italian luxury website **Posh** (65,000 UVM): [“California Calling”](#)
- **Forbes Middle East** (20,000 circ. English and Arabic versions, 193,637 UVM English version): [“California Dreaming”](#)



Media Relations and Familiarization (FAM) Trips

In the second quarter, VSB contributed 124 media placements through targeted pitching, media hosting and collaborative partnerships. Stories ranged from dedicated destination features in drive and flight market magazines and newspapers to major international publications and niche luxury outlets. The potential audience reach was more than 2.4 billion unique visitors per month online, as well as more than 2 million print readers and TV viewers.

VSB hosted press trips for 28 journalists from near and far, including a luxury media group FAM with 11 global freelancers in partnership with Visit California, local feature editors who were invited to cover VSB's local lodging promotion and more.





GROUP & TRAVEL TRADE SALES

Group

Group sales secured \$2.2 million in new contracts this quarter, compared to \$2.3 million in definitives and assists during the same period in 2023. This year's contracts saw a notable 5.4% year-over-year ADR growth. Additionally, the average group size in Q1 of 2024 was 173 room nights, marking a 51% increase from the 114 room nights in Q1 of 2023.

This quarter, VSB hosted three site inspections and one FAM trip, welcoming a total of nine customers. The FAM included walking and e-bike tours of Santa Barbara, a private dinner at The Lark and a range of experiences at local hotels.

Outside of Santa Barbara, the VSB team attended NorthStar's Small and Boutique Meetings in Lake Tahoe, Smart Meetings Northeast in Newport, R.I., CALSAE's Seasonal Spectacular in Sacramento and IMEX America in Las Vegas. IMEX is the biggest annual meeting planning show the team attends, and this year in addition to a triple booth with 146 appointments and five exhibitor partners, VSB also hosted a client dinner at a trendy Las Vegas restaurant and paired wines from the Santa Barbara County Vintners Association. IMEX events also included SITE night at TopGolf Las Vegas, a LV Golden Knights hockey client event, receptions with HPN and Visit California and the MPI Rendezvous.

The sales team also hosted three co-op events with hotel partners including a pickleball event in Los Angeles with six clients, a charter boat cruise on the Sacramento River with 17 clients and a table at SITE SoCal's holiday event. VSB joined Visit California for a road show to Minneapolis and Chicago with 43 and 47 clients, respectively. Additional proactive sales events took place with SITE Chicago, NorCal and Minneapolis, Prestige Chicago and San Jose and MPI Sacramento Sierra.

Locally, the sales team networked at Belmont's Holiday Market, Art and Soul, the Dos Pueblos Institute, UCSB Athletics, a number of local hotels and wineries and hosted a hotel sales meeting attended by 23 sales professionals — featuring the Santa Barbara Inn and Menchaca Chocolates.

Travel Trade

It was a busy quarter for leisure sales trade shows. The team first traveled to London for Brand USA's Travel Week, where they held 39 appointments and engaged with 300 attendees. VSB then participated in the AAA Travel Conference in Oceanside, welcoming 200 travel advisors and agency owners. Next, the team attended the Connections Luxury Summit in West Hollywood, conducting 19 appointments and connecting with 200 attendees. Finally, the team traveled to France for ILTM Cannes, which attracted over 2,500 international buyers.

In partnership with Black Diamond, VSB's UK representative agency, 60 UK-based agents were trained on selling Santa Barbara. VSB also collaborated with Visit Newport Beach and Visit Greater Palm Springs to create FAM and FIT itineraries for multi-city California visits. While the team was sad to see Leisure Sales Manager Maren Beneke depart in December, VSB was fortunate to quickly promote Community Partnerships Manager Catherine Lopez into the position. She began her new role on Jan. 1. ❖



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Community Partnerships department offered an engaging lineup of events, training programs and networking opportunities designed to deepen member connections and foster community involvement. These initiatives encouraged collaboration across the local hospitality sector, strengthened community ties and supported professional growth while cultivating meaningful partnerships.

Membership Update

New members this quarter included Our Society's Events, specializing in bespoke event planning; State Street Ballet, a renowned local performing arts organization; High Seas Mead, offering handcrafted mead and cider beverages; SwingPath Golf Club, focused on premier golf experiences; and Candle Bar 111, a creative space for custom candle-making workshops.

Events and Trainings

In October, the Community Partnerships team hosted two impactful Lunch & Learn sessions. The first, held at the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum, featured Holly Lohuis of the Santa Barbara Whale Heritage Area and Becca Tucker from the Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies program, who shared valuable insights into sustainability initiatives and the Santa Barbara Channel's marine environment, complemented by a tour of the "Whales are Superheroes" exhibit. The second session focused on wildfire preparedness, with Melissa Wilder from the Santa Barbara County Fire Safe Council providing practical tools for protecting businesses, planning evacuations and enhancing communication during wildfires, concluding with an interactive Q&A addressing attendee concerns.

An exclusive event for TBID lodging properties was hosted in partnership with the California Hotel & Lodging Association (CHLA) at the Kimpton Canary Hotel. Lynn Mohrfeld, CHLA President & CEO, provided updates on statewide legislation, compliance and key industry issues, while Todd Seiders of Petra Risk Solutions delivered actionable strategies on hotel safety and homelessness. The event concluded with a networking reception on the hotel's rooftop.

In November, VSB hosted the second annual Holiday Showcase at 28 Vic, a new event space in downtown Santa Barbara. Exhibitors included MOXI, Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation, Music of the Spheres, Tamsen Gallery, Celebration Cruises, Santa Barbara Gift Baskets, Santa Barbara Adventure Company, WorkZones, Margerum, Moby Dick & Oyster Bar, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Global Gardens and High Seas. Attendees explored holiday offerings, networked and found inspiration for the season in the venue's versatile setting.

The monthly I Am Santa Barbara training program continued, certifying 17 members as Santa Barbara Ambassadors. This 60-minute session offered historical insights, a comprehensive overview of destination offerings and practical strategies for addressing guest inquiries. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with participants highlighting the engaging presentation and useful materials. All survey respondents indicated they would recommend the training and found it highly valuable to their roles.

This quarter, member events and training sessions engaged over 200 participants, offering opportunities for professional growth, collaboration and knowledge sharing. Covering diverse topics, these sessions equipped members with valuable industry insights and practical tools, fostering individual expertise and strengthening community connections.



TRAVEL TRENDS OCTOBER - DECEMBER

Accommodations Employment	Fall (Q2) 2023 vs. 2024		
	Fall 2023	Fall 2024	% Change
Santa Barbara County	5,000	5,133	3%

Santa Barbara South Coast TBID Hotel Performance	Fall (Q2) 2023 vs. 2024		
	Fall 2023	Fall 2024	% Change
Occupancy	64%	67%	5%
Average Daily Rate (ADR)	\$310.40	\$320.08	3%
Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR)	\$199.10	\$214.51	8%
Demand (Room Nights)	305,085	321,838	6%
Supply (Room Nights)	475,640	480,240	1%
Gross Revenue	\$94,697,836	\$103,014,795	9%

Airline Passenger Volume	Fall (Q2) 2023 vs. 2024		
	Fall 2023	Fall 2024	% Change
Santa Barbara Municipal Airport	338,653	389,162	15%

Weather at Santa Barbara Municipal Airport	Fall (Q2) 2023 vs. 2024		
	Fall 2023	Fall 2024	% Change
Average High Temperature (°F)	73.2	68.5	-6%
Total Precipitation (Inches)	5.31	0.64	-88%
Days of Precipitation	11	6	-45%



About Visit Santa Barbara

Visit Santa Barbara (VSB) is a nonprofit 501(c)(6) organization jointly funded by the City of Santa Barbara, the County of Santa Barbara, the South Coast Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) and by a membership of hospitality-related businesses. As the official destination marketing organization for the Santa Barbara South Coast, VSB is contracted by the City of Santa Barbara to market the area nationally and internationally as a premier destination for leisure and business travel.

VSB’s Board of Directors is composed of business owners and professionals who have the experience and willingness to serve the community beyond the scope of their demanding work schedules. Their volunteer responsibilities include steering company policy, building relationships with local government, interpreting the needs and interests of the community, shaping how VSB delivers upon its mission and influencing the organization’s future evolution.

Our Mission

We inspire overnight travel to the Santa Barbara South Coast in order to enhance the community’s economy and quality of life.



2024-2025 Board of Directors

- Rebecca Anderson**, Lotusland
- Jens Baake**, Acme Hospitality Group
- Warner Anderson**, WA Event Management
- Leslie Brickell**, Residence Inn by Marriott Santa Barbara Goleta
- Greg Broussard**, Santa Barbara Hotel Collection
- Bradley Cance**, The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara
- Michael Cohen**, Santa Barbara Adventure Company
- Chris Cline**, Hotel Santa Barbara
- Amanda Cruz**, Santa Barbara Museum of Art
- Rick Fidel**, Rosewood Miramar Beach
- Treg Finney**, Mar Monte Hotel
- Andrew Firestone**, StonePark Capital
- Ed Galsterer**, Santa Barbara Inn
- Dan Glaeser**, Montecito Bank & Trust
- Christopher Hastert**, Santa Barbara Airport
- Babett Hirzel**, Hilton Santa Barbara Beachfront
- Councilmember Mike Jordan**, City of Santa Barbara
- Trevor Large**, Fauver, Large, Archbald & Spray LLC
- Kristen Miller**, Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce
- Warren Nocon**, Hotel Californian
- Samantha Onnen**, Santa Barbara Airbus
- Tom Patton**, Ramada by Wyndham Santa Barbara
- Councilmember Luz Reyes-Martín**, City of Goleta
- David Sigman**, Santa Barbara Polo & Racquet Club
- Tim Snider**, Fess Parker Winery & Vineyard
- Ben Sprague**, Earl Warren Showgrounds



Visit Santa Barbara Staff

ADMINISTRATION

Kathy Janega-Dykes, President/CEO

James Minton, CDME, Vice President of Strategic Planning

Jennifer Reyes, Executive Assistant

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Noelle Buben, Director of Community Partnerships & Events

MARKETING

JessyLynn Perkins, Director of Marketing

Carly Hopkins, Creative Manager

Shantel Adams, Web Marketing Manager

Taylor Faltas, Content Manager

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Karna Hughes, Director of Public Relations

Anna (Jacobson) Naughton, Public Relations Manager

Brooke Holland, Public Relations Manager

Whitney Wiser, Public Relations Associate

Dani DeVries, Public Relations Manager

MEETINGS AND TRAVEL TRADE

Beth Olson, CDME, Director of Sales

Catherine “Cat” Puccino, Director of National Accounts

Amy Esnault, Group Business Development Manager

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