

Alaska Airlines

Problem

How does an airline raise awareness in a new market?

Solution

Use OOH formats to make a bold, impactful statement across multiple consumer touchpoints.

Background

Californians were found to have low awareness of the multiple destinations Alaska Airlines flies. Through analyzing sales and demographic data, the agency partner concluded that the state of California offered a great opportunity for increased share of voice. A secondary objective was to increase enrollment in Alaska Airlines' Mileage Plan.

With an entire state to cover, it was necessary to narrow down markets and geography to maximize exposure and stay within an overall media budget. Media needed to be relevant to the market and work in tandem with the online and radio messaging.

A multi-faceted media program was planned to educate consumers of the brand's breadth of routes and to encourage participation in the mileage program. OOH proved a strong format to illustrate the colorful imagery of this new effort and to penetrate in to very specific, targeted core geography. Gorgeous photo snippets of destinations Alaska Airlines flies were placed in a stamp-like design to showcase the multiple routes from the targeted cities of San Diego, San Francisco and San Jose. Consumers were tempted with the campaign tagline, "Explore More, Spend Less" (EMSL).

Objective

The primary objective was to communicate the numerous destinations Alaska Airlines flies from key cities in California. The secondary goal was to increase enrollment in their Mileage Plan.

The agency partner created an MRI profile to better define the target audience. The audience was defined as a group of value-conscious adventure seekers. Adventure translates not only to travel but to other activities too – food, entertainment, technology, etc. It's all about exploration. These people are thoughtful and intentional in their purchasing decisions.

Because this is an ultra-defined target, the media planning team needed to use an alternate demographic in order to measure metrics in the Telmar system. The team chose to use adults 25-54, Alaska Airlines' primary target audience, for all TAB OOH Ratings measurement.

The bold, colorful and detailed graphics were also a consideration when looking at locations. With multiple images to focus on, it was important to have units with more personal reads.



Strategy

Using data from Alaska Airlines, the agency partner selected San Diego and San Francisco for Phase 1. The planning team then used the MRI coding to request quintile maps from the vendor. Once this data was received, the team calibrated it to reflect a 70% comp/coverage value that reflected a more accurate picture of how Alaska Airlines' core audience was seen in the markets. The team had the vendors re-map the new data and present new quintile/zip code rankings. These maps were critical to how media was purchased for this program. The team looked at inventory in the top three quintiles with a stronger emphasis in quintiles 1 and 2.

Phase 1

In San Francisco, the best way to reach the core audience was through messaging in and on commuter touchpoints. Transit two-sheets and branded trains were used to reach commuters in the quintile 1 and 2 hot spots. High impact bulletins located on major expressways connected to the car commuter, with additional bulletins placed along the commuter routes of the suburban neighborhoods.

For San Diego, it was important to establish a strong presence for Alaska Airlines' first foray into the market. Bulletins were selected for their locations within quintiles 1 and 2, in addition to high impressions and clean reads. Transit shelters and mall kiosks were chosen to provide added reach and capitalize on dwell time. Messaging on these formats included a \$50 off offer when consumers signed up for the Mileage Plan. Finally, the team secured a hand-painted mural located in the heart of the city on Market Street. This unit became the iconic image of the entire campaign. Its vibrant colors and detailed painting offered residents and visitors of this neighborhood a large scale piece of art. Locals sat across the street and watched daily as it was painted. Feedback on this execution was overwhelmingly positive.

Alaska Airlines also had an annual contract for two digital bulletins, one in San Francisco and one in San Jose. These were integrated into the EMSL campaign and rotated several messages featuring multiple destinations.

Phase 2

With numbers in from Phase 1 and new routes being launched, San Diego and San Jose were selected for Phase 2. Initial planning was done using quintile maps for both markets. Once geography of the core target was established, market rides were planned. To initiate a ride list, the planning team did an RFP of inventory in the top three quintiles with the lens of units that skewed high weekly impressions.

TAB OOH Ratings created a base level idea of how many units would be needed to adequately cover the market. From there, the team determined appropriate weight levels and a budget was created. The San Jose ride resulted in the selection of a bulletin-only program. The key geography showed that site selection on key freeways and interstates would reach the target audience. Ratings data supported this against not only adults 18+ but also the core target of adults 25-54.

In San Diego, the primary format in the market was bulletins. However, during the market ride, it became evident that posters dominated in the core geography. The team added a poster blitz program to allow for maximum penetration in the targeted geozones. Each month, bulletins and posters rotated locations to ensure maximum coverage. Some months used line-of-sight units



to provide a visual to drivers of the multiple destinations served by the airline.

Once the program budget and tactics were set, the campaign start was set for April 1 for both markets. After six weeks, the plan was evaluated using TAB OOH Ratings. By generating runs for each month, the team was able to optimize the buy in regards to site selection and weight levels. Alaska Airlines determined that the campaign now had a monthly TRP goal of 400. Using the system, the team calculated reach, frequency and TRP value and added and/or moved units to achieve this goal. These tools gave the campaign a strategic advantage of being nimble within the OOH space.

Plan Details

Phase 1

Markets: San Diego, San Francisco

Flight Dates: September 2012 for 4 – 8 weeks

OOH Formats Used: bulletins – static and digital, platform two-sheets, branded rail cars, painted wall, transit shelters, mall kiosks

Data Used: Quintile maps, weekly impressions

Phase 2

Markets: San Diego, San Jose

Flight Dates: April 1 – December 31, 2013 (bulletins end in September, posters continue through end of year)

OOH Formats Used: bulletins – static and digital, posters

Data Used: Quintile maps, TAB OOH Ratings (reach, frequency, plan TRP, weekly impressions) against target of adults 25-54 and adults 18+, CBSA rankings, market rides

Results

Both markets achieved great overall distribution and provided a strong presence of the brand. Client visits yielded positive feedback.

One market visit by the client resulted in a tweak of the creative (they wanted larger images and less of them) but yielded zero changes to the OOH plan. They were very happy with the program as it stood. The San Diego hand-painted wall was one of the client's favorite parts of the fall campaign.

The EMSL branding has extended to other OOH large format campaigns outside California (Boise, Portland, Dallas/Ft. Worth, Reno) and smaller, tactile efforts (coffee sleeves, opt-in posters, experiential events) in San Francisco's Castro district. The EMSL bulletin program paved the way for current branding efforts.

There also has been an increase in OOH budget for the launch of new routes in Alaska Airlines' smaller, secondary markets (i.e. Walla and Pasco). This is a testament to the effectiveness and strong branding done throughout the EMSL campaign. With the metrics in place to share, the client's trust in OOH for their brand continues to grow.

