

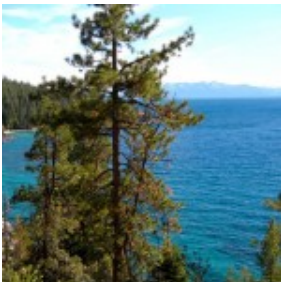
Tourism focus groups know little about Nevada

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

State tourism leaders trying to figure out the best way to brand Nevada to attract visitors may have a bigger challenge on their hands than they thought.

In six focus groups in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Salt Lake City, participants demonstrated little knowledge of the Silver State and its tourism attractions.

David Bratton, founder of San Francisco-based Destination Analysts Inc., which conducted the focus groups, updated the Nevada Tourism Commission on the results Wednesday. Destination Analysts is gathering research for Seattle-based GreenRubino, which has been contracted to develop a brand identity for the state.



Tahoe is one area of Nevada people know about.

Photo/LTN file

Bratton told commissioners members of the focus groups listed “explore Nevada parks,” “have an adventure” and “sense of exploration” as the top three experiences travelers could have in Nevada.

They also listed “gambling,” “enjoy nightlife” and “visit Reno as well as other state attractions” as the bottom three experiences.

In a map exercise in which group members were asked to give their impressions of the state by drawing on an outline of a map, one respondent drew “Vegas” in the middle of the state and labeled the rest of it as “empty desert.” Another placed Las Vegas in the southern end of the state and Lake Tahoe, surrounded by images of mountains and then a circle around the rest of the state labeled “not a whole lot.”

Another map-maker located “Vegas,” “Beautiful Tahoe,” Winnemucca, Wendover and Area 51 in approximately the right locations, labeling the rest of the state as “nothing.”

Yet another may have a future as a meteorologist, labeling eastern Nevada as “windy and hot,” the center of the state as “hot and dry” and Southern Nevada as “hell-like,” with the area around Las Vegas as “more hell-like.”

An attractions analysis indicated Great Basin National Park, Lehman Caves, Lake Tahoe, ghost towns around the state, Las Vegas and the Ruby Mountains near Elko as the state’s most interesting attractions.

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