

Ad campaign helps fill N. Lake Tahoe hotels

By Renée Frojo, San Francisco Business Times

“Your life called. It wants its balance back.”

That’s one of the lines from North Lake Tahoe’s newest advertising campaign that’s trying to take some of the credit for the destination’s surprising boost in hotel bookings.

Despite the severe lack of snow, hotel bookings in Tahoe are reportedly up by more than 30 percent weekly over the first three months of 2012. While that also could be attributed to an improvement in the economy, other than anecdotal evidence, heads in beds is one of the few things advertisers can use to measure success of a campaign.



This is one of the ads created for North Lake Tahoe by School of Thought.

To give them credit, it has been eye-catching.

If you haven’t noticed the billboards or stencil street power washings which is running in San Francisco and Los Angeles, the focus is on living your life to the fullest and pitching a winter escape to North Lake Tahoe as inner restoration.

Unlike previous campaigns, they're not telling you what to do, exactly, just giving a glimpse of what you're missing – reminders about the joys of life away from a desk or computer. Of a dozen different headlines, only one is specifically ski related.

“Every year the ads for Tahoe tend to portray some sort of badass skiers, and North Tahoe in particular is distinctive, so we felt campaign needed to reflect that,” said Joe Newfeld, co-founder and creative director of San Francisco-based advertising agency School of Thought, which is spearheading the campaign for the North Lake Tahoe Marketing Cooperative.

Some of the campaign's headlines include, “When your kid asks about the stars, do better than an app,” and “Somewhere not far away, people are sipping hot chocolate and making snow angels.” Or one of my favorites, “A sick day is a terrible thing to waste.”

The \$330,000 campaign also did some creative marketing by slashing broadcast radio from its budget to add more Internet radio, TV, blogger outreach and even street stencils – all with a 15 percent cheaper budget than the year before.

“We don't take credit for all of it, but the numbers are up and that's good for the clients and the economy up there,” said Newfeld.

Hopefully the continued lack of snow won't put a damper on things.