

Special Event

Entry: Visit South Walton 900 Shops Chicago Takeover

TARGET AUDIENCE

The 900 Shops Chicago Takeover targeted adults, ages 35-64 with a household income of \$175K+ living in Chicago. This affluent audience is likely to travel and spend more money on travel; travel via plane; and travel internationally more than the average American. Visit South Walton (VSW) targeted the affluent shoppers of the 900 Shops on Chicago's Michigan Avenue over the tax-free, President's Day weekend. The foot traffic of the annual tax-free weekend is an estimated 30,000/day.

OBJECTIVE

Chicago, Ill. has consistently shown to be a market with little to no awareness of South Walton. With the recent introduction of Southwest Airlines direct flight from Chicago Midway (MDW) to Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP), South Walton has become an easy getaway for the Chicago traveler. To increase brand awareness within the Chicago market, VSW sought an alliance to engage with potential consumers who met the affluent criteria of the target audience. Consumers of the 900 Shops largely align with the VSW consumer base, thus making the shopping center a perfect partner. VSW designed proposed an engagement strategy to impress upon affluent consumers that the destination is exceptional and compel them to learn more.

- Increase the amount of website engagement from Chicago by 20 percent.
- Showcase the South Walton culture and lifestyle in Chicago's 900 Shops.
- Face to face engagement with the potential visitor to further convert new visitation to the South Walton lifestyle.
- Measured impressions of at least 2.5 million through digital, paid and organic social, signage and collateral.

IMPLEMENTATION

VSW sought an alliance to engage with potential consumers in the 900 Shops on Chicago's Miracle Mile on Michigan Avenue. A mutual agreement was entered for South Walton to be an exclusive partner during the annual tax-free weekend in the 900 Shops. The partnership showcased the South Walton culture and lifestyle through a unique and stunning experience booth installation, fashion, culinary and music.

A VSW Visitor Tracking Study confirmed that when choosing a vacation destination, current visitors prefer a place to relax; feel comfortable; carry on traditions with familiar people and places; enjoy cultural events; festivals; and a variety of neighborhoods. This revealed that evoking these feelings and messages through a VIP event would be an important appeal to our audience.

The majority of the planning took place in the weeks leading up to the weekend, as VSW Staff and the advertising agency worked with the 900 Shops and a variety of Brand Ambassadors. Chef Jim Richard of

Stinky's Fish Camp was invited to participate and prepare culinary morsels of dark and white chocolate toffee, for the attendees to sample. Local fashion designers, Stephanie Carter of Southern Fashion House and Nicole Paloma of Nicole Paloma Designs participated with a Fashion Show of their new Spring 2014 line with four models rotating out the designs a few steps from major national brands in upscale retailers like Bloomingdales and J. Crew while live music was performed by the award winning Forrest Williams Band. Lastly, potential visitors were invited to step inside a 12 x 12 booth and "experience" the South Walton beaches on all four sides, complete with the sound of rolling waves and the smell of the Gulf of Mexico.

RESULTS

All measurable objectives were achieved and greatly exceeded.

- Chicago was the #3 city for visitsouthwalton.com visitation during the month of February 2014 marking the first time that Chicago has ranked in the top 3 cities.
 - February 14-18 (Friday through Tuesday of President's Day weekend) garnered 520 visitors from Chicago to the VSW website (38.4% of the total for the month). This was a 62% increase over the same period in 2013, which had only 199 visitors.
- During the brand activation (February 15-16), the website had 211 additional visitors, which was a 55% increase over the first weekend of February.
- 75 percent of the VSW app downloads in February occurred during the brand activation.
- Total media impressions: 5,341,448
- Total social impressions: 610,065
- Total partnership impressions: 1,318,475
- Total Impressions: 7,269,988

BUDGET/COSTS

The total budget for this event was \$XXX. VSW spent a total of \$XXX – coming in two percent under budget for the project.