

Congratulations, No. 2

Myrtle Beach tops Vegas, New York and Chicago in Google searches

SEPTEMBER 19, 2011

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THE HORRY COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL

Myrtle Beach is apparently a sought-after destination.

According to results compiled by Google from June to August, Myrtle Beach ranked No. 2 in Google searches for vacation spots out of all searches in the United States.

Myrtle Beach topped Las Vegas, New York and Chicago this summer, coming in second to Orlando in terms of unique Google searches.

“[Marketing the area] is a cumulative effort with local partners and everything that is collectively done to promote our area to the world,” said Scott Schult, marketing director for the local Convention and Visitors Bureau. “We are very proud of the work that’s been done. Having a company like Google reinforce that effort in their rankings is but one positive example.”

Sarah Travis, a manager of online sales at Google, said Myrtle Beach hit the No. 2 spot last summer and held steady into this year. Travis also said cities that rank high on Google searches should expect to have more opportunities to influence consumers during that planning process.

“Cities that are the most searched-for summer destination spots should ensure that access to key information is readily available online, such as hotel or flight booking information,” Travis wrote in an email.

“They should also highlight summer specials or promotions to reach cost-conscious consumers who are looking for a deal.”

According to statistics released by the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), traffic to CVB website properties has increased nearly 129 percent since 2008.

That increase is due, chamber representatives said, to an emphasis in online distribution and driving people to the chamber’s main site, VisitMyrtleBeach.com.

Once there, potential and returning visitors can utilize videos, social media or use the mobile website, all efforts the chamber has made to enhance the area’s online visibility. The Google ranking is the icing on the cake.

“[The ranking] shows that we are gaining online market share against all U.S. destinations, not just those on the East Coast,” Schult said. “It speaks volumes to the advertising decisions we have made in exposing our brand to prospective guests and reaching potential first-time visitors.” Schult said one chamber site in particular has soared. VisitMyrtleBeach.com set traffic level records in June and July, surpassing one million unique visitors each month.

“It gives us great momentum to build going forward,” he said. Travis said on average a person will up to 20 travel sites during the trip planning process, and 78 percent of travel bookings involve research on a search engine. She said the chamber has been smart to utilize Google’s display network to target vacation planners.

“The Myrtle Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau has been very successful using online marketing to grow awareness and interest in Myrtle Beach as a summer destination spot — and clearly their efforts have paid off,” Travis said.