

Category: Regional Strategy - Recognizes thinking that influenced a marketing initiative at the local or regional level, either in the United States or in the country for which they were designed

Submissions must include:

The Written Case Study

Your case study is expected to include:

Title:

Motel 6 'Ski For All'

Part 1: A 200-word introduction that specifically explains how the strategic insight you uncovered went beyond the obvious and drove to a meaningful marketing opportunity and/or created an advantage for the brand. Papers that do not include this will be disqualified.

Motel 6 guests, who we call Economy Movers, are the diverse, hardworking folks who keep the economy going every day, and constantly seek affordable travel that fits their budget. In fact, 55% identify as having an income less than \$50K, a unique characteristic of Motel 6 guests vs. the category.

When exploring their winter travel habits, we uncovered a surprising data point about our guests: **these budget travelers are 5x more likely than the general population to be interested in skiing—a “luxury” sport infamous for its high cost of entry. Indeed, despite their interest in the sport they were far less likely to take ski trips.**

**This led to our insight: Economy Movers crave the mountains, but have been priced off the slopes.** The travel, equipment, and lift tickets have always been expensive, but more than ever large ski conglomerates are hiking up prices and lodging costs are skyrocketing.

This inspired our strategy to position Motel 6, a brand that's been making travel more affordable for 60 years, as the lodging brand that's helping take back the slopes from the elite few and making them more accessible for everyone.

Part 2: A narrative with a maximum of 1,500 words (this word count does not include the 200-word summary), which includes the following:

- A clear understanding of the background and business challenge.
- A great story of the “aha”: What was the human truth you identified? How did that lead to a clearly defined problem and a leverageable strategic insight? How did it incite or provoke thinking that led to the creative execution?
- Demonstration of the effectiveness and impact of the ideas resulting from this strategy

Brands in the economy lodging category generally lack differentiation, leaving travelers to pick where they stay based purely on location, price, and amenities. But even with the highest brand awareness in the category, Motel 6 was not converting as many guests as they could due to low preference numbers compared to competitors. This challenge became even greater as the winter months approached, since the season traditionally sees slower visitation across the category.

This led to our primary objective: **to increase Motel 6 revenue and direct bookings during the winter season.**

To inspire more post-holiday travel and convince our audience to choose Motel 6 for their stay, we needed to shift perception of the Motel 6 brand among guests to build a deeper, emotional connection. This established our secondary objective: **to increase perception and positive sentiment of the Motel 6 brand.**

The strategy sparked from a surprising data point about Motel 6’s budget-conscious guests: **they’re 5x more likely than the general population to be interested in skiing - an infamously expensive sport.**

While our Economy Movers crave the mountains during the winter months, costly lift tickets, skyrocketing lodging costs, and additional gear has priced them off the slopes. **This inspired our idea to position Motel 6 as the brand that champions ‘Ski for All,’ making the mountains more accessible for everyone to enjoy.**

**To bring our ‘Ski for All’ story to life, we partnered with longtime Motel 6 guest and legendary ski bum, Joe Miron.** Joe’s been skiing on a budget for 50+ years, averaging no less than 35+ resorts each season. As a military vet who enjoys his simple life in the mountains with his dog Kelo, Joe wasn’t easy to find... But Kelo was. Indeed, Joe’s story was first scooped by a GPS dog collar-tracking company that saw Kelo’s collar move from ski town to ski town. Since adopting Kelo off the street, the duo have been inseparable and always travel together. **In the company’s article, Joe mentions Motel 6 as his go-to ski lodge for the past 50 years because Pets Always Stay Free, the rooms are always clean and comfy, and the rates are always low.** As living proof that Motel 6 makes ski trips more affordable, we reached out (to Joe’s old flip phone), and the rest is history.

With Joe as the star, the ‘Ski for All’ campaign flexed across paid, owned and earned with the following tactics:

- **Video:** We captured Joe’s story in a longform docu-style video with :30, :15 and :06-second cutdowns, turning Tom Bodett, our iconic spokesman, into a true storyteller.

- **Radio:** Our radio spot, also featuring Tom Bodett, further inspired 'ski bums' everywhere to take the trip this winter.
- **Partnerships:** Motel 6 leveraged two partnerships to make affordable skiing even more possible for guests, gaining national earned media attention:
  - IndyPass: A collection of independent resorts that believe the larger mountains have made skiing unaffordable. The partnership offered My6 members 10% off season passes, and existing IndyPass holders 10% off their Motel 6 stay.
  - Share Winter Foundation: An organization that aims to empower a diverse community of youth through the joy of skiing. Motel 6 sponsored a winter full of ski trips for kids who otherwise wouldn't have had the opportunity.
- **Social & Blog:** We published Joe's affordable winter travel and ski tips so others could learn from his 50+ years of experience.
- **Additional Tactics:** In addition, PR, display, Motel6.com, and CRM emails were also leveraged, further amplifying Motel 6's mission to make skiing more accessible.

The campaign strategy was to increase revenue by making Motel 6 the go-to ski lodge for Economy Movers. And it did just that:

- **+20% in overall revenue** (462 bps above chain) for ski-resort adjacent properties, contributing to a **+15% in overall business revenue** YoY.
- **+52% in the all-important direct website bookings** (2000 bps above chain) for ski resort-adjacent properties, contributing to a **+36% in direct bookings** YoY for the business overall.

And turns out, making the slopes more accessible doesn't just resonate with our guests, but our culture at large. During the 2022 Winter Olympics, 'Ski for All' found itself on the national stage:

- **174MM earned impressions across 2,600+ placements** with a **100% positive sentiment**, including standout coverage in an NBC broadcast Olympic Zone segment during the 2022 Winter Games.

All proving that when you shine a light on the 'ski bums' who rarely get celebrated, they not only feel seen. They feel welcome.