

SLO Marketing Activities Report

Key Performance Highlights

July 2025




At-a-Glance Highlights

- **Total Website Sessions:** 54,605 (**-22% YoY**)
- **Top Traffic Source:** Organic Search
- **Total Lodging Referrals:** 3,792 (**-27% YoY**)
- **Top Performing Ads:** YoY, SLO Life Coach Ads on paid social saw:
 - **+13%** engagement rate
 - **+62%** average session duration
 - **+80%** increase in website sessions
 - **+90%** increase in CTR
- **PR Media Mentions:** Travel + Leisure: [This Is California's Most Underrated Road Trip—and It Travels the State's Oldest Highway](#) (Cu Fleshman)
 - **Total estimated reach of 44,497,393** as the article was syndicated across AOL as well

Overall Performance

In July 2025, Visit San Luis Obispo saw strong engagement from the new SLO Life Coach campaign but overall declines in key traffic and lodging referral metrics compared to July 2024. Website sessions fell 22% YoY to 54,605, and lodging referrals dropped 27% to 3,792. These declines were influenced not only by broader industry headwinds in Organic Search—driven by the growing prevalence of AI-generated search results - but also by the absence of last year's Summer MidWeekend promotional campaign, which had delivered a meaningful lift to midweek bookings (partner referrals) and traffic in 2024.

Despite the declines, Organic Search remained the top traffic source. Paid social ads for SLO Life Coach delivered standout results, including a 71% higher engagement rate and 32% higher CTR



YoY. Email marketing also performed strongly, with newsletters achieving a 50% open rate—well above industry benchmarks—and generating a 17% YoY increase in sessions.

The move from short-term incentive promotions to an evergreen midweek strategy supports our long-term goals but removed the short-term traffic lift seen last summer.

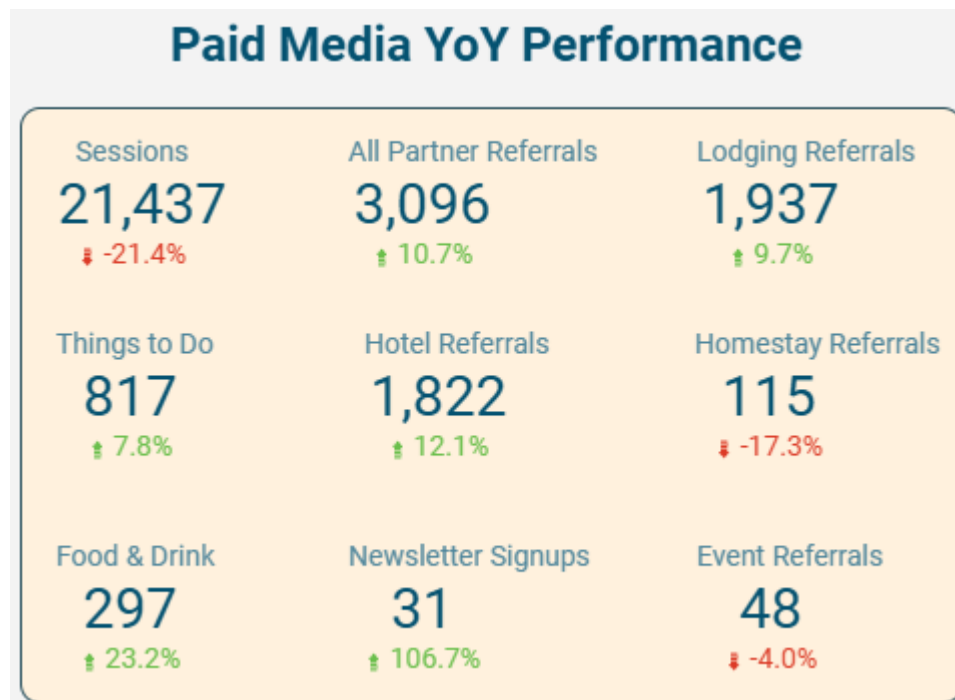
Next Steps: We are auditing and improving schema on VisitSLO.com to provide clearer context cues to search engine crawlers and enhance page visibility. We are also developing new SLO Life Coach itinerary-style content designed to perform well in AI-generated responses and rich SERP features. We will continue monitoring the rapidly evolving search landscape and adapt strategies to reach potential travelers in the right channels at the right time. In addition, we plan to review July 2025 TOT performance to gain deeper insight into visitation trends—particularly in light of the absence of the Summer MidWeekend promotion—to better inform future campaign strategies.

Paid Media Snapshot

- **Paid Search**
 - Impressions: 32,323 (–15% YoY)
 - Clicks: 3,094 (–3% YoY)
 - CTR: 9.5% (+13% YoY)
 - Sessions: 3,194 (–1% YoY)
 - Lodging Referrals: 1,755 (+21% YoY)
 - Cost: \$9,099 (–8% YoY)
- **Paid Social (Evergreen)**
 - Impressions: 379,220 (–1% YoY)
 - Clicks: 17,000 (+88% YoY)
 - CTR: 4.48% (+90% YoY)
 - Sessions: 8,303 (+80% YoY)
 - Lodging Referrals: 49 (–26% YoY)
 - Cost: \$4,492 (+13% YoY)
- **Display, Demand Gen, & PMAx**
 - Impressions: 793,006 (–2% YoY)
 - CTR: 0.86% (+17% YoY)
 - Clicks: 6,809 (+14% YoY)
 - Sessions: 4,746 (+47% YoY)

- Lodging Referrals: 120 (+33% YoY)
- Cost: \$3,409 (+16% YoY)

Key Insight: The new SLO Life Coach campaign has been showing significant performance improvements across display, demand gen, PMAX, and paid social channels when compared to the previous campaign that we ran last year, resulting in higher click through rates, higher engagement rates, longer time on site, and more pages per session.



*The chart above shows comparisons to last year's evergreen campaigns in addition to the 2024 Summer MidWeekend Campaign. Despite not running the Summer MidWeekend, we still saw increases in total partner referrals and lodging referrals despite a 42% decrease in paid media spend YoY.

Owned Media Snapshot

Website

- **Total Sessions:** 54,605 (-22% YoY)
- **Lodging Partner Referrals:** 3,792 (-27% YoY)
- **Avg. Pages/Session:** 2.1 (-4% YoY)

- **Average Session Duration:** 2m 37s (+8% YoY)
- **Top Lodging Referral Channels:** Paid Search (46%), Organic Search (27%), Referral (15%)

SEO + Content

- Organic Sessions: 21,008 (-30% YoY)
- Organic Partner Referrals: 4,123 (-41% YoY)
- Organic Impressions: 2.17 Mil (+22% YoY)
- Organic Clicks: 15.1K (-37% YoY)
- Organic CTR: 0.7% (-46% YoY)
- Page 1 Keywords: 4.6K (-7%)
- Top Losses: things to do in san luis obispo, San Luis Obispo, Sunset Drive-In
- **Actions Taken/Next Steps:** SLO Drive-In/Movie Theaters page optimized in May. We're working on auditing/optimizing schema across many of our key pages, as this additional data will become more important as we move further into the AI era of search.

Key Insight: YoY drops in Organic traffic are tied to a 46% decrease in organic CTRs related to a rapidly evolving search engine results page, which now features AI responses and significantly more SERP features, allowing searchers to get more information without the need to click through to a website. We're seeing organic traffic declines across the Travel & Tourism industry and are continuing to explore ways to increase our visibility on the SERP.

Creative & Web Maintenance

Website Maintenance & MRO

- July MRO Efforts:
 - Plugins and Updates
 - ACF Pro
 - Gravity Forms
 - Permalink Manager Pro
 - Safe SVG

- Events Calendar
 - Community Events
 - Events Calendar Pro
 - Tiny PNG
 - Yoast
- July Web Services Efforts:
 - 4.25h out of 120 hours were utilized for July 2025 (Remaining hours: 115.75)
 - Work Accomplished:
 - Stakeholder page updates: Zoo, SLO Ranch, and Media page

Creative Services

- July Creative Services Efforts:
 - 5.25h out of 150 hours were utilized for July 2025 (Remaining hours: 144.75)
 - Work Accomplished:
 - Spanish Brochure updates

Earned Media Activity

Earned Media Highlights

Total Impressions/Circulation: 96,317,666

Placements: 5

Press Coverage

- 7/12/25: **Travel + Leisure:** [This Is California's Most Underrated Road Trip—and It Travels the State's Oldest Highway](#) (Cu Fleshman – Individual FAM) (Reach: 10,233,649)
 - 7/12/25: **AOL:** [This Is California's Most Underrated Road Trip—and It Travels the State's Oldest Highway](#) (Reach: 34,263,744)
- 7/20/25: **Islands:** [These Are The Most Breathtaking Road Trips Along The West Coast, According To Travelers](#) (Fiona Chandra – SLOIFF FAM attendee) (Reach: 7,322,880)
- 7/26/25: **Travel + Leisure:** [I Live in California and This Is the Most Underrated Part of the State—With a Stunning Stretch of Highway](#) (Cu Fleshman – Individual FAM) (Reach: 10,233,649)

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- 7/26/25: **AOL:** [I Live in California and This Is the Most Underrated Part of the State—With a Stunning Stretch of Highway](#) (Reach: 34,263,744)

Upcoming Individual Press Trips:

- N/A