Sex sells: Las Vegas stops fighting its image

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The animated silhouettes of two buxom women cavort around a desert truck stop and then hitch a ride on a four-wheeler's mud flaps. "Las Vegas. What you want. When you want," concludes the new

TV spot.

Las Vegas casinos spent the 1990s trying to sell consumers on how wholesome they were. A campaign in 1999 featured pop-restaurateur Wolfgang Puck serving up lobster, David Cassidy in dancing shoes, and recurrent shots of golf courses, swimming pools and the massive theme-park hotels that line the Las Vegas Strip. "We were afraid" to promote sex and gambling," said Bill Horn-buckle, president of MGM

Mirage's MGM Grand casino hotel. "We all kind of danced around it, talking about our four stars and our five stars."

But these days, plenty of cities offer haute cuisine, theme parks and even casinos. So starting this week, Las Vegas is hoping to stand out with a titillating new image that's more like its old one — naughty, mysterious and very adult. "We're bringing back the sex appeal of Las Vegas. That's part of the sizzle and the sell," Hornbuckle said.

Reno advertising executive Phil Rose doubted the change in marketing strategy for Las Vegas would

affect Reno.

"I doubt this will have any impact on Reno," Rose said.

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