

Why 97% of Your Advertising is Ineffective

Ninety-seven percent of destination marketing is ineffective, and it isn't because of the medium you're using! The reason isn't because of National Geographic Traveler, Leisure +Travel, or Southern Living Magazine. It's NOT a reflection on your digital advertising, television, radio or billboards. The reason is the content you're giving them! Over the next several weeks I'll show you how to make your advertising effective 100% of the time.

Here are the first two of the five reasons why you're wasting 97% of your advertising budget and what to do about it.

Reason #1: Trying to be all things to all people

I'm going to keep harping on this subject until you change your ways! Look at your ads. If your headline and the photography (or art) you use could fit just about anyone in your market, toss it and start over. Readers, viewers or listeners will give you four seconds to pull them in. If your message is generic, you will lose them instantly. If your ad starts with "One of the top 5 mountain biking destinations in the world," and that quote is attributed to Biking Magazine, it may not draw me in if I'm not a mountain biking enthusiast, but if I am, you just got my attention, big time. **NARROW YOUR FOCUS!**

What to do: If you haven't already, [download my "Words & Phrases to Avoid"](#) poster and give copies to your marketing agency, graphic design agency and anyone charged with marketing your hotel, B&B, community, museum or attraction.

If your marketing focus can fit anyone else in your market area, toss it and start over.

Reason #2: Marketing place before experience

We have the world at our fingertips – every community, lodging facility, and business – in a fraction of a second via the web. But we don't search for places first, we search for experiences first and THEN the area or city. We search for "Best Italian restaurant, central Pennsylvania," or "mountain biking trails, Southern Utah." In your advertising and on printed materials always **SELL** the experience first, the location second.

What to do: The name of your community (don't market counties!), your hotel, your guide service – your business – should be at the **BOTTOM** of your ad, not at the top. Next week I will show you some physical examples of place marketing done right. Utah Tourism does a great job with its headlines promoting the Mighty Five (five national parks all located in Southern Utah) with photographic experiences that can't be found anywhere else. Then at the bottom of the ads you're informed of what and where the parks are.

Reason #3: Using mundane text and photography

There's nothing more boring than elevator music (video or radio ads), or photos of scenic vistas without a soul in sight. To win you **MUST evoke emotion**. If your headline is boring or generic we won't remember it. We are drowning in advertising overload so your ads **MUST** be memorable. Once again, I'll show you some examples next week.

What to do: Make sure you have photos of people enjoying your activities – whether in a spa, or careening down a mountainside on a bike, or reading a book in front of a cozy fire with snow falling

outside. Your art should get the reader to instantly think “I want to do that!” And make sure it fits ONLY you in your marketplace.

Reason #4: Not telling me WHY I should visit or buy from you

Don’t tell me what you have, where you’re located, or who you are until you’ve told me WHY I should visit you. McDonald’s famous (and effective) campaign, “You deserve a break today” wasn’t about food. It was aimed at moms – they deserve a break today, so get up and get away – to McDonald’s. The most successful tourism campaign, perhaps in North American history, is Las Vegas’ “What happens here, stays here.” It’s not about what they have (entertainment, gambling) but WHY you would go there over other places.

What to do: I’ll cover this more in coming weeks, and this one requires digging deep. Alpena, Michigan is hitting a home run with its “Sanctuary” brand based on the National Marine Sanctuary of Thunder Bay and the 54% of Americans who are dealing with stress in their lives. I’ll showcase their ads in upcoming weeks. A water park that asks us “How loud can you scream?” will be more successful than the water park that tells us “The largest water park in Central Ohio.”