

Are Printed Brochures and Guides Obsolete?



Every time I walk into a hotel or visitor information center and pass a brochure rack, I always look to see if something grabs my attention. Now why would I do this when all that information is available on the web?

For several reasons:

1. The information is all right there in one spot, and it's a cinch to glance over them all. Try to do that online!
2. I'm now AT the destination, and there might be something that grabs my attention as an additional activity besides the reason I'm there.
3. I don't have to filter through a thousand

links, pages, and lists – I can instantly look at the top 3 inches of 150 brochures, scanning over them in perhaps two minutes instead of hours.

As much as we're tied to our tablets, smartphones, apps and computers, there's still no substitute for holding something tangible in your hands. In 2012 the Center for Marketing Technology at Bentley, University in Waltham, Massachusetts conducted a research study to answer the question about the need for printed materials. What they found was very interesting and can guide your decision-making when it comes to printing and distribution. Here's what they found:

The primary sources that impacted final decisions during the planning of a trip were based on:

- 57% - The Internet
- 48% - Word of mouth – recommendations from friends & relatives
- 32% - Printed brochures
- 25% - Maps or guides
- 15% - Mobile apps
- 8% - Billboards, signage & advertising

Printed brochures, maps and guides impacted the final decision a third of the time – behind the Internet and word of mouth.

But during the trip additional decisions were made as follows:

- 81% from locally distributed brochures
- 70% - Internet
- 66% - Friends, relatives
- 63% - Maps or guides
- 34% - Mobile apps
- 31% - Billboards, signage and advertising

Seven out of ten visitors pick up at least one brochure while on a trip. Of those, nearly half (42%) plan on purchasing goods or services as a result of picking up their brochure.

WHAT TO DO

Visitor information centers are sending out fewer and fewer guides and brochures as the same information is included online. So here's what you need to do:

1. Make sure your Visitor Guides and other printed materials are available on your website for both viewing AND download. ALWAYS!
2. Make sure they are optimized to work on smartphones and tablets, not just computers. Tablets and smart phone sales are far outpacing the sale of computers, and when traveling, most visitors have their tablets and smart phones with them.
3. You should be printing about 60% fewer guides than you did just five years ago. If you printed 70,000 a year, you should now be printing closer to 30,000 a year. Yes, you'll have advertisers tell you "but I'm paying to be in 70,000 guides!" Just tell them they are now in 100,000 guides and keep track of how many "unique visitors" the guide is getting online and how many copies are being downloaded. That's part of your distribution.

When it comes to distribution, here's what you need to do:

1. Based on the research, only one-third of your brochure distribution should be in the markets you're hoping to attract, and along freeway or highway visitor information centers.
2. The other two-thirds should be distributed locally and HEAVILY:
 - At retail shops
 - All lodging establishments
 - Visitor information centers
 - Service stations and convenience stores
 - At every attraction
 - At public restrooms

Once people arrive you want brochures available in super-convenient locations. People are more likely to review a printed brochure or guide in the car, restaurant, or hotel room than they will on their mobile devices.

In one of my earlier emails I noted how you should spend your marketing dollars:

- 45% on digital marketing
- 20% on public relations
- 20% on advertising focused on driving people to your website
- 10% on printed marketing materials
- 5% on billboards, trade shows and other marketing avenues

I also noted in that article that 88% of destination marketing organizations spend more on printed materials than on digital marketing. So, as you reduce your spending on printed costs, reinvest those dollars in your online and mobile device marketing.

I'm sure some of you will tell me that you are printing out MORE guides and brochures than you did five years ago and that you always run out. If that's the case, then ask yourself a few hard questions:

- Are visitors finding your website, and if so, are they finding your visitor guide online?
- Are your marketing materials optimized for mobile devices? If not, print fewer and invest that money in a mobile app or optimize the content for mobile devices.
- Is your tourism growing at such a rate that it justifies printing out and distributing more printed materials? If so, congratulations!

THE BOTTOM LINE

Printed guides and brochures are NOT passé and are still an integral part of your marketing efforts.