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Andrew Cripps
Rowan University

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Seashore Tourism Brochures and Advertising:
Characteristics of Effectiveness

by
Andrew Cripps

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division
of Rowan University, Glassboro, N.J.
1997

Approved by _____ Professor

Date Approved 6-27-97

ABSTRACT

Andrew Cripps
Seashore Tourism Brochures and Advertising:
Characteristics of Effectiveness
1997

Advisor: Dr. Donald Bagin
Graduate Program in Public Relations,
Rowan University, Glassboro, N.J.

The purpose of this study was to identify the visual design elements that contribute to the effectiveness of seashore tourism brochures and print advertising.

For the first part of the study, the researcher interviewed seven tourism communications professionals for resorts from Cape Cod, Mass., to Virginia Beach, Va. The researcher asked them to indicate the most effective elements in the following categories: brochure format, color tones, overall tone, use of text, style of text, use of photos and the elements within those photographs.

The researcher also conducted a survey of a non-random sample of 31 potential seashore resort visitors. The participants were provided examples of design elements and were asked to select those which made them feel more favorable about visiting a seashore resort.

The research showed the most effective brochure format to be the magazine. Vacationers preferred extensive text while tourism professionals chose minimal text. A dominant

photographic image was seen as more effective than multiple, equally weighted images. Vacationers strongly preferred photographs of scenery over images of people. Vacationers and professionals favored cool color tones, particularly blues and greens, and preferred a formal overall tone. Both groups also preferred conventional typefaces, such as Times Roman and Helvetica.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Andrew Cripps
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This study attempted to identify design elements that contribute to the effectiveness of seashore tourism brochures and print advertising. The research showed the magazine format, extensive text, a dominant photographic image, photographs of scenery, cool colors, a formal overall tone and conventional typefaces were seen as most effective.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Former President Ronald Reagan said, "Tourism is an extremely important industry to the United States, contributing to our employment, economic prosperity, and international trade and understanding. It substantially enhances our personal growth and education."¹

In 1995, the Travel Industry Association of America reported the value of the United States travel industry at \$417 billion. Tourism is also the nation's second largest employer, with 6.3 million employees.² In New Jersey alone, where it is the second largest industry and the fastest growing, tourism is responsible for more than 24 billion dollars in commerce annually and more than 584 thousand

¹Robert Scott Milne, Opportunities in Travel Careers, (Lincolnwood, Ill.: VGM Career Horizons, 1996), p. xiv.

²Ibid, p. 8.

jobs.³ Seashore tourism is a vital segment of the New Jersey tourism market. On any sunny summer day, more than a million people visit the state's beaches.⁴

Brochures and print advertising are vital tools for public relations, advertising and marketing professionals seeking to attract visitors to tourism resorts. In fact, the printing and distribution costs of brochures comprise the largest part of most marketing budgets within the tourism industry.⁵

However, the industry lacks organized research to determine if there are visual design elements common to brochures or print advertisements that have proven their effectiveness in attracting tourists. Aside from experience, hearsay and intuition, there is little to guide the communications professional in designing promotional literature for resorts. As a consequence, some of these professionals may waste money by printing and distributing ineffective brochures and placing ineffective print advertising.

³Longwoods International, "New Jersey 1996 Travel Year," report presented at the New Jersey Governor's Conference on Tourism, Atlantic City, March 18, 1997.

⁴Milne, p. 8.

⁵Chris Cooper, John Fletcher, David Gilbert and Stephen Wanhill, Tourism Principles and Practices (London: Pitman Publishing, 1993), p. 260.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the visual design elements that contribute to the effectiveness of seashore tourism brochures and print advertising. It attempted to provide information about the ideal use and subjects for photographs, the most desirable color schemes, the best use of text and typefaces, and the most effective formats among those in widespread use.

Importance of the Study

This study provides communications professionals working for seashore resorts with guidelines for creating effective promotional brochures and print advertisements. It will help them make decisions about which types of photos to include, which typefaces to employ, which colors to use, how much body text to include, etc. With this information, seashore resort communications professionals will be better able to serve their clients.

Definition of Terms

The theoretical definitions below come from the American Heritage Dictionary, Third Edition.

- Tourism is defined as tourist travel and accommodation.
- A tourist is one who travels for pleasure.
- A brochure is an unbound printed work, often

containing promotional material.

■ Seashore resorts are cities or public accommodations next to oceans or seas which are frequented by people for relaxation or recreation.

■ Effective is defined as having an intended or expected effect.

■ For the purposes of this study, effectiveness of tourism brochures and print advertising is defined as the ability to stimulate interest among prospective tourists in visiting the promoted tourism resort. That interest is measured by the prospective tourist's expression of a favorable attitude toward visiting the resort.

■ A survey is defined as a sample of public opinion to acquire information.

Assumptions and Limitations

This study assumes the honesty of tourism professionals in responding to questions about their experiences with effective and ineffective tourism brochures and print advertisements. It assumes that geographic differences among the seashore resorts studied did not affect the ability of the researcher to draw conclusions about the characteristics of effective tourism brochures and print advertisements for Eastern Seaboard seashore resorts. It also assumes that prospective tourists were honest in

expressing their opinions regarding which elements in brochures stimulate their interest in visiting the resorts promoted. It assumes that survey participants were representative of the larger population of prospective tourists, and that temporary conditions, such as negative news coverage of a particular resort, did not affect the accuracy of the study. Finally, it assumes that sources of data about existing research, and the research itself, are accurate.

This study is limited to brochures and print advertising for Eastern Seaboard seashore resorts, particularly beach resort towns from Cape Cod, Mass., to Virginia Beach, Va. The findings address solely this type of resort, but may be applicable to other tourism attractions and resorts. The study is limited to the period of time from January through May of 1997.

Plan of Study

For this thesis the researcher undertook a comprehensive search of area college, county and municipal library databases for existing data about tourism brochure design and the design elements that make the brochures more effective. The search included general studies about publications design to discover the general principles behind brochure and advertising effectiveness and to compare them to the thesis findings.

The researcher interviewed tourism communications professionals whose responsibilities include overseeing the design of brochures and advertisements for Eastern Seaboard seashore resorts. The researcher asked these tourism professionals about current or past tourism brochures or ad campaigns that demonstrated effectiveness. The researcher asked which design elements they believe helped make their brochures or advertisements more effective, and why they feel these elements were effective. The researcher also asked what results they derived from the brochures or advertisements, and asked for copies of the brochures and advertisements.

After compiling the data from these interviews, the researcher conducted a survey of persons identified as interested potential seashore resort visitors. Participants were asked to review brochures and advertisements that illustrate many of the design elements used in seashore resort brochures and advertising. They were asked to describe their feelings about the design elements that caused them to be favorably or unfavorably inclined to the resort.

Upon compiling the survey results, the researcher compared the findings with the assessments of the tourism communications professionals, and the general principles of publications design, to determine if there are design elements which enhance the effectiveness of tourism

brochures and advertisements.

Chapter 2

Related Literature

Relevant literature on seashore tourism brochures and advertising was sought through various sources.

A search of the Atlantic County Library Catalog, Atlantic County Library, Mays Landing, N.J., using the keyword(s) "tourist trade," found 15 books related to the topic. Three of those books pertained in some way to the study.

Atlantic County Library's InfoTrac EF Magazine Index, cataloging periodicals published between January 1993 and December 1996, listed 36 articles under the heading "tourism advertising." None was pertinent to the study. Under the heading "tourism industry," 510 articles were listed. None pertained to the thesis topic. The heading "tourism marketing" consisted of 28 articles, of which none was pertinent.

A search of Atlantic County Library's Magazine Index Plus Backfile, listing magazine articles from 1980 to 1992, found 32 articles under the heading "tourism advertising."

None pertained to the thesis topic.

Cape May County Library System's Online Catalog, accessed at the library's main branch, Cape May Court House, N.J., listed three books under the heading of "tourism." One contained information relevant to the study. The heading "marketing" listed 128 books, none of which was relevant to the study.

A search of Rowan University's Online Catalog, accessed via the Internet, found no books using the keywords "tourism marketing" and "tourism advertising." It showed 35 books under "tourist trade," four of which contained information pertinent to the study.

Rowan University Library's periodicals database listed 21 magazine articles under the heading "tourism industry - advertising." None was relevant. The library's newspaper database found no articles under "tourism," one article, which was not relevant, under "tourist trade," and five listings, none relevant, under "travel."

A search of Rowan College Library's Dissertation Abstracts database found no relevant listings. However, Dr. Donald Bagin provided a copy of "Research Findings and Proven Techniques for Producing Effective Promotional Literature," a thesis written by Brian C. McCallum in 1995. This thesis provided a wealth of relevant information.

A search of the World Wide Web using the search engine Yahoo yielded 564 matches for "'seashore resort' 'brochure

design," none of which was specifically relevant to the study.

None of the relevant literature found specifically addresses the topic of design elements and their contribution to the effectiveness of seashore tourism brochures and advertising. However, some materials address more general topics that may include the study topic. Those materials are summarized below.

Size and Format

The book "Desktop Publishing Study Guide," by Dan Lattimore and Art Terry discusses the various sizes and formats of printed promotional materials. Among them are:

- Fliers and circulars, which are usually single pages used to announce an event or some similar idea. Their purpose is to gain the audience's attention.
- Brochures, which Lattimore and Terry define as six pages or more, published one time and distributed to special publics.
- Booklets, which usually consist of 24 or more pages, and tend to have more structure, photographs and illustrations than brochures.
- Pamphlets and folders, which are smaller than a brochure and have fewer photographs, illustrations and colors. Their usual format is an 8½" by 11" sheet folded twice. Lattimore and Terry point out that this format is often referred to as a brochure, but is

technically a pamphlet.⁶

Elements of Design

In the book "Travel and Tourism Marketing Techniques"⁷ Robert Reilly, a professor of journalism at the University of Nebraska and an advertising/public relations professional for 30 years, describes basic elements of advertising design. He equates design with a careful hostess arranging her table in a pleasing pattern, or arranging pictures on a wall in a pleasing pattern. For advertising design to work, all elements -- headline, illustration, body copy -- must work together.

Reilly writes that line is the basic tool of design. Different types of lines denote different feelings. "Horizontal lines are generally restful; vertical line aspiring," he writes. "Wavy lines indicate growth or beauty; diagonals show stress or tension. A stack of lines of the same dimension is boring; a stack of different length lines is more interesting."

Three basic shapes are used in all design: the rectangle, circle and triangle. Layout artists often experiment with these shapes, placing them in various relationships, when beginning to design an ad.

⁶Dan Lattimore and Art Terry, Desktop Publishing Study Guide (Englewood, Colo.: Morton Publishing Company, 1990), p. 73.

⁷Robert T. Reilly, Travel and Tourism Marketing Techniques (Wheaton, Ill.: Merton House Travel and Tourism Publishers, Inc., 1980), pp. 84-115.

Lines and shapes must be arranged in a way that attracts and delights the reader. This where the artistic principles of harmony, sequence and balance come in. Harmony means a pleasing relationship among all the elements; the colors blend, typefaces work together, etc. Sequence refers to the way our eye travels through the space of the ad. Reilly writes, generally, our eye first lights on an area about a third of the way down from the top of the ad. From there, the eye moves to a dominant element, perhaps a logo or coupon.

Balance can be symmetrical or asymmetrical. Symmetrical balance means that all elements on one side of a layout nearly mirror those on the other. Asymmetrical balance occurs when a heavier object on one side is balanced by an interesting item, or an element of vivid color, on the other.

Reilly gives seven principles of good layout.

1. Don't forget that copy is part of the layout.

Squint at the copy block so it looks solid, and see if it fits into the ad in terms of harmony, sequence and balance.

2. Something must dominate the ad. If every element in the ad is given equal emphasis, nothing stands out and the overall ad is monotonous.

3. Good composition comes with practice and with the study of the work of others.

4. The rules of proportion apply to layout. The ratio of three to five is considered the most attractive relationship.

5. Remember that people read from left to right. Also, people's faces in ads should be directed into the copy and not away from it.

6. Don't be afraid to leave a little white space. It helps to set off the other elements.

7. Avoid visual cliches, headlines that run vertically or diagonally, and cluttering the ad with too many items in too small a space.

Reilly describes nine basic ad formats:

1. *Picture Window*: This format consists of a large photo onto which copy or headlines or logos are superimposed. It is the most common layout for national advertisers.

2. *Mondrian*: This format uses various sizes of rectangles. This design is more common in magazines than in newspapers.

3. *Frame*: This is a common format, consisting of the usual elements surrounded by a border.

4. *Typeface*: Large headline type takes center stage. This design leaves little room for detailed information.

5. *Multi-panel*: Unlike the *Mondrian* format, the panels in this ad are all the same size. Usually running left

to right, the panels can be used to tell a story, like a comic strip.

6. *Copy Heavy*: This is used when the advertiser has a lot to say, or when the message is complicated. To be successful, this layout must showcase an interesting subject and have well-written copy.

7. *Silhouette*: All the elements of the ad form a shape. For example, text on one side may line up against the side of the border, while the other may form an irregular pattern designed to suggest a shape.

8. *Circus*: Grocery store circulars are a prime example. This loud, brash layout often contains blocks of reverse type, starbursts and other features. There must still be some rationale to the design and something must dominate.

9. *Rebus*: Text is wrapped around illustrations, which may be of varying sizes. It is named for old puzzles in which pictures are substituted for words within the text.

Several articles from *communication briefings* newsletter offer findings concerning publication design. The newsletter's recommendations included alternating dark pages, containing lots of type and photos, with light ones. This technique establishes a lively rhythm that holds a

reader's attention.⁸ *communication briefings* also suggests using the cover to tell at a glance what the brochure offers inside, using visuals to get a message across, and giving readers frequent exit ramps, in the form of easy-to-read chunks of text with space to rest between each.⁹

Concerning the use of white space, Lattimore and Terry suggest pushing it to the outside of the layout, rather than trapping it internally. It should also be thought of as positive space to be used, rather than something that is left over when all the elements have been placed.¹⁰

Color

To attract potential vacationers, vivid color is desirable.¹¹ Color enhances the marketing of travel. Readers associate color with both beauty and excitement. Color also gives a little glamour, Reilly wrote, to a headline or logo. The color choice should fit the mood and subject, and colors should be compatible with each other.

A study reported in *Advertising Theory and Practice* showed that a mail order catalog printed in color sold

⁸"Improve Layout by Using Rhythm," *communication briefings* (May 1993).

⁹"Designing a Sales Brochure," *communication briefings* (January 1992).

¹⁰Lattimore and Terry, p. 36.

¹¹A.J. Burkart and S. Medlik, *Tourism: Past, Present and Future*, 2nd Edition (London, William Heineman, Ltd., 1974), p. 208.

fifteen times more merchandise than a black and white version.¹²

Studies by Faber Birren, author of several books on color, found that red is preferred by active people, orange by friendly, yellow by the high-minded and blue-green by the fastidious. Most subjects named blue as their favorite color, followed by red. Teens and adults prefer pastel shades to bright colors.¹³

The Johnson Wagner Institute for Color Research reported:

- Blue has a calming effect.
- Red gets adrenalin flowing and creates excitement. However, the eye takes longer to process red than any other color.
- Yellow draws attention.
- Green makes people feel comfortable and is appropriate to introduce new products or services.
- Gray gives an "exclusive" label to products and services.
- White signals sophistication.¹⁴

In "Publication Design for Editors," Robert Bohle

¹²C.H. Sandage and Vernon Fryberger, Advertising Theory and Practice (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1971).

¹³Robert Bohle and Mario Garcia, "Reader Response to Color Halftones and Spot Color in Newspaper Design," Journalism Quarterly (Winter 1987): pp. 731-739.

¹⁴"How Color Affects People," communication briefings (October 1989).

writes that colors denote specific psychological associations:

- Red (passionate, exciting, rage, fierceness, intensity)
- Orange (jovial, energetic, hilarity, exuberance)
- Yellow (cheerful, inspiring, high spirit, health)
- Green (peaceful, refreshing, quieting, guilt, terror)
- Blue (subduing, melancholy, sober, furtiveness, fearfulness)
- Purple (mournful, dignified, loneliness, desperation)
- White (pure, clean, frank, youthful, normality)
- Black (depression, funeral, negative spirit, death)

Bohle also finds that color may influence which information gets read, and in which order. Items printed in color are usually read first, so color should be used to highlight the most important messages.¹⁵

Baird, McDonald, Pittman and Turnbull agreed that color should be applied to the design elements of the greatest significance. They warn, however, that it be used sparingly. Otherwise, the color can dominate the page.¹⁶

Additional studies show that colors carry specific mood associations. Orange inspires the most excitement, followed

¹⁵Robert Bohle, Publication Design for Editors (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1990).

¹⁶Russell Baird, Duncan McDonald, Ronald Pittman and Arthur Turnbull, The Graphics of Communication (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, Inc., 1993), p. 79.

by scarlet and yellow-orange, then green. The most calming color seemed to be violet.¹⁷

Research also shows that colors can be used for specific purposes. Use red if you want the reader to recall something. Blue helps to minimize the recall of information by reducing the reader's attention. Use yellow to attract attention, because yellow objects are usually perceived first.¹⁸

If you want people to retain your message longer and consider it in depth, use black and white. Color provides short-term appeal.¹⁹

Typography

In the book "Typography: How to Make It Most Legible," Rolf F. Rehe refers to a study by M.A. Tinker and D.F. Paterson. The study shows that black on yellow provides the best legibility and that contrast is the main factor in determining the maximum legibility of color/paper combinations.²⁰

Val Adkins, in the book "Creating Brochures and

¹⁷Faber Birren, Color Psychology and Color Therapy (New York: University Books, Inc., 1961).

¹⁸"A Quiz on How to Use Color," communication briefings (October 1990).

¹⁹"Color Research Conclusions," communication briefings (May 1988).

²⁰Rolf Rehe, Typography: How to Make It Most Legible" (Carmel, Iowa: Design Research International, 1984), p. 45.

Booklets," writes concerning legibility, "We recognize words by their shapes, and setting your text in all caps creates a page of rectangles. This is not easy to read. If you're WARNING people, or if you're trying to get their ATTENTION, you can make your point with uppercase type. Just don't go overboard with it."²¹

Rehe compiled more than 180 studies, articles and journals on typography. He concluded that:

- For body text, a type size of 9, 10, 11 or 12 points should be used. For typefaces with small x-heights (x-height is the size of a letter, excluding ascenders and descenders), 11 or 12 point type should be used, while for typefaces with large x-heights, a 9 or 10 point size may be more appropriate.²²
- For text of 9, 10, 11 or 12 points, a line width of 18 to 24 picas, consisting of 10 to 12 words per line, should be selected.²³
- For text, a typeface of medium weight should be selected. For emphasis, boldface instead of italics should be used.
- A number of studies showed there seems to be no significant differences in legibility between justified

²¹Val Adkins, Creating Brochures and Booklets (Cincinnati, Ohio: North Light Books, 1994), p.8.

²²Rehe, p. 27.

²³Rehe, p. 29.

or unjustified typography.²⁴

■ A 1970 study found that printing styles did not affect good readers, but poor readers read justified text with considerably more difficulty.²⁵

■ Type in reverse (white on black) should be avoided for small type sizes, and used sparingly for larger ones.

Sandra Ernst Moriarty, in a *Journalism Quarterly* article, found that longer lines, from 69 to 79 characters were consistently read faster. Shorter lines, from 29 to 39 characters, had a slightly lower score than medium lines, from 49 to 59 characters.²⁶

Daniel Will-Harris suggests that designers find out what typefaces their audiences respond to by looking at publications aimed at similar audiences and see what typefaces they use and don't use. He says that studies show black text on a white background is up to 40 percent easier to read than the reverse.²⁷

In "The Graphics of Communication," Russell Baird, Duncan McDonald, Ronald Pittman and Arthur Turnbull support

²⁴Rehe, p. 33.

²⁵Rehe, p. 34.

²⁶Sandra Ernst Moriarty, "A Search for the Optimum Line Length," *Journalism Quarterly* (Summer 1986): pp. 337-340.

²⁷Daniel Will-Harris, *Typestyle: How to Choose and Use Type on a Personal Computer* (Berkeley, California: Peachpit Press, 1990).

a number of common beliefs concerning typography. They reported that most contemporary research favors the use of serif fonts in body text. Some studies of newspaper readers show that they read and comprehend Roman typefaces faster than sans serif in most cases. They say that as the length of the line increases, so does the need to increase leading.²⁸

The editors of *communication briefings* point to several important factors when selecting the weight of a typeface for a brochure. They recommend medium-weight typefaces for maximum legibility, but suggest using lighter typefaces if a page is heavy with photographs and illustrations.²⁹

Photography

Tourism advertising seeks to raise awareness of and propensity to visit prospective destinations. To help achieve these goals, advertisements, including brochures, often contain an attractive photograph to get the reader's attention and create in his or her mind a positive perception of the resort.

Reilly suggests that any photography used in a brochure should be the best you can get. In general, photographs with high contrast are desired for the best reproduction.

²⁸Baird, McDonald, Pittman and Turnbull, p. 9.

²⁹"Picking a Typeface Weight," *communication briefings*, September 1987.

Whenever possible, he writes, use people in the photographs. The advertising agency Ogilvy and Mather recommends, "Photograph the natives, not the tourists."³⁰ There are exceptions, however, Reilly writes. If you want to show the variety of activities a tourist can participate in, you would photograph tourists doing those activities. Research by H.F. Brandt shows that people prefer photographs with action over static images.³¹

Photographs should be placed above text to increase readership. Advertising agency founder David Ogilvy found that when a photograph is placed below the text in advertising, readership of the text drops ten percent. Brandt, too, concluded that more attention is given to copy when the illustration is placed above the copy instead of below.³²

Baird, McDonald, Pittman and Turnbull suggest three basic criteria for choosing photographs:

1. Relevance (Does it add something to the message?)
2. Simplicity (Does the photo have one easily understood, dominant theme, and not a lot of extra details?)

³⁰Reilly, p. 111.

³¹H.F. Brandt, The Psychology of Seeing (New York: Philosophical Library, 1945).

³²H.F. Brandt, "An Evaluation of the Attensity of Isolation by Means of Ocular Photography," American Journal of Psychology 55 (1942): pp. 230-239.

3. Impact (Does the photo stir a desired emotion?)

Very often for seashore resorts, photographs include attractive women in bathing suits, often in suggestive poses. In 1988, Charles Heatwole interviewed about 200 people and recorded their reactions to a variety of travel ads featuring women in bathing suits. His research resulted in five hypotheses about why these photographs, which Heatwole called "body shots" are used so often in travel advertising.

1. *The Climactic Hypothesis:* Body shots are intended to create a perception of a warm place.
2. *The Heterosexual Hypothesis:* Body shots are a blatant sexual appeal to men.
3. *The Female Fantasy Hypothesis:* Body shots appeal to women's desire to be good-looking and attractive to men; the message being, "You can look like this if you vacation here."
4. *The Unphotogenic Destination Hypothesis:* Body shots are more eye-catching than the places they advertise.
5. *The Hedonistic Hypothesis:* Body shots suggest a destination where the only demands placed on the tourist are to rest, relax and indulge oneself.³³

Heatwole finds problems with each of these theories, choosing *The Hedonistic Hypothesis* as the most probable. He

³³Charles A. Heatwole, "Body Shots: Women in Tourism-Related Advertisements," *Focus* (Winter 1989): pp. 7-11.

points out that the clothing worn by the models (bathing suits), the setting (beach, poolside) and the pose (lying, sitting, stretching or walking) all project leisure.

Finally, Heatwole concludes that body shots are successful in attracting a reader's attention, male or female. They are also, he writes, successful in creating a positive perception of the destination. Some people are offended by the body shots, but to most people interviewed a body shot suggests that a pleasant vacation awaits in a pleasant place.³⁴

Content

Adkins suggests that because space is limited in many brochure formats, designers should cover important information first and avoid using more words than are needed. He also recommends carefully allotting an appropriate amount of space for each topic and writing to fit that space.³⁵

The book "Tourism Principles and Practices,"³⁶ a textbook for aspiring travel agents, calls the brochure the most essential link in the tour sales process. It lists three elements that must be included in tour brochures:

1. Illustrations that provide a visual description of

³⁴Ibid., p. 11.

³⁵Adkins, p. 3.

³⁶Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert and Wanhill, pp. 195-196.

the destination.

2. Copy, which is a written description of the destination to help the customer match the type of destination to his or her lifestyle.

3. For specific vacation packages, price and departure information, which includes the specifications of the package for different times of the year, duration of stay and variety of departure points.

Research has shown that travellers' first decision when planning a vacation is choosing their destination. The brochure is designed to encourage customers to buy, and is often the only information they receive concerning the resort until they arrive. However, it cannot be a comprehensive travel guide. How much detail about the resort to include in the brochure must be consistent with the brand image the resort is trying to convey.

The information contained in a tourism brochure must accurately portray the quality of vacation experience the reader can expect. When resorts are misrepresented, the satisfaction derived by vacationers will be less than expected, resulting in resistance to repeat visits to those resorts.³⁷

Objectives

The decision of which tourism destination to visit is a

³⁷Gregory Ashworth and Brian Goodall, ed., Marketing Tourism Places (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1990), p. 190.

five-step process, according to researcher Thomas Davidson.

The steps are:

1. *Awareness*: The subject gains the knowledge that the resort exists.
2. *Association*: The subject develops a favorable attitude toward the resort.
3. *Conviction*: The subject develops a desire to visit the resort.
4. *Perceived Value*: The subject develops the belief that the benefits of visiting the resort outweigh the costs and inconveniences.
5. *Action*: The subject purchases a resort vacation.³⁸

Davidson spells out four objectives of tourism advertising:

1. To increase awareness of the destination as an option for the next vacation decision.
2. To increase the number in the target market who hold favorable attitudes toward the destination.
3. To broaden knowledge of the specifics of the destination and what it offers the vacationer.
4. To increase the number in the target market who say they will seriously consider the destination the next

³⁸Thomas Lea Davidson, "Assessing the Effectiveness of Persuasive Communications in Tourism," in Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality Research: A Handbook for Managers and Researchers, 2nd Edition, ed. J.R. Brent Ritchie and Charles R. Goeldener (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1994), p. 539.

time the vacation decision arises.³⁹

Summary

While none of the literature found in the library and Internet searches specifically pertained to the thesis topic -- a study of the design elements that contribute to the effectiveness of seashore resort brochures and advertising -- the books and magazine articles provided important, though general, information about brochure design, about the effects of various photographic and textual elements, and about the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of advertising in achieving its objectives.

³⁹Ibid, p. 540.

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

Before undertaking new research into the role of design elements in the effectiveness of seashore resort brochures and advertising, the researcher conducted a search for existing literature on the topic. The search included the Atlantic County Library Catalog, Atlantic County Library's InfoTrac EF Magazine Index and Magazine Index Plus Backfile, the Cape May County Library System's Online Catalog, Rowan University's Online Catalog and periodicals database and Dissertation Abstracts database, and the World Wide Web using the search engine Yahoo. In addition, Dr. Donald Bagin provided a copy of "Research Findings and Proven Techniques for Producing Effective Promotional Literature," a thesis written by Brian C. McCallum in 1995. This search discovered little existing literature about design elements and their role in the effectiveness of seashore resort brochures and advertising. It, however, provided a wealth of information about publications design in general. That information is outlined in Chapter 2.

Selection of the Sample

For the first part of this study, the researcher interviewed a sample of tourism communications professionals. The professionals are responsible for producing or overseeing tourism publications for their respective resorts. The tourism professionals interviewed were:

- Chris Cooney, President and C.E.O. of the Cape Cod (Mass.) Chamber of Commerce. He has worked in tourism for seven years. Mr. Cooney has a B.A. in Political Science and is pursuing graduate studies in business administration.
- Ann Fairley, Director of Tourism for the Long Island (N.Y.) Convention and Visitors Bureau. She has an associate's degree in tourism marketing and has worked in tourism for two and a half years.
- David Holtzman, Director of Publications for the Atlantic City (N.J.) Convention and Visitors Authority. He has an associate's degree in art and 20 years experience in tourism.
- Diane Weiland, Acting Director of the Cape May County (N.J.) Department of Tourism. She has an associate's degree and 22 years experience in seashore resort tourism.
- Barbara Murphy, Director of Communications for the Greater Wildwood (N.J.) Tourism Improvement and

Development Authority. Ms. Murphy has a B.A. in business administration, and has worked in tourism one and a half years.

■ Pete Leddy, Account Supervisor at Barker, Campbell and Farley, the advertising agency serving the Ocean City (Md.) Convention and Visitors Bureau.

■ and Evie Pedulla, Director of Tour and Travel Sales for the Virginia Beach (Va.) Department of Convention and Visitor Development. Ms. Pedulla possesses a B.A. in marketing and has 12 years experience in seashore resort tourism.

The researcher did not attempt to select the sample randomly, but selected tourism professionals who represent seashore resorts spread throughout the geographic region to which the researcher proposes to apply the study.

In the final part of the study, the researcher conducted a survey of a non-random sample of 50 interested potential seashore resort visitors. The sample was provided by the Atlantic City Convention and Visitors Bureau from among those persons who contacted the bureau for information about vacationing in the greater Atlantic City area. The survey was limited to persons who gave an address outside a 30-mile radius from an Eastern Seaboard seashore resort. The participants were provided with examples of seashore resort brochure and advertising design elements and were asked to select those which made them feel more favorable

toward visiting a seashore resort. To assure the desired response rate, a \$1 bill was included with each survey, along with a letter explaining the survey and its purpose. A stamped, pre-addressed envelope was also provided with each survey. Of the 50 people surveyed, 32 responded for a 64 percent response rate.

Measuring Instruments

The researcher asked selected tourism professionals about the design elements that they feel have demonstrated effectiveness in current or past tourism brochures or ad campaigns. The professionals were asked to indicate the most effective elements in the following categories: brochure format, color tones (warm versus cool), overall tone (formal versus informal), use of text (minimal versus extensive), style of text (plain, conventional typefaces versus specialty typefaces), use of photos (multiple, equally weighted photos versus one dominant image) and the elements within those photographs (people, active or passive, versus scenery). The responses were tabulated to show the consensus of the tourism professionals.

The researcher then recorded the responses of 32 persons identified as interested potential seashore resort visitors who participated in a mail survey. Participants chose from examples of design elements in the categories listed above, and provided brief explanations of the

reasoning behind their choices. The researcher reviewed the responses, tabulating the reactions of the respondents to show the consensus.

Procedures

In the first part of this study, the researcher traveled to the offices of selected tourism professionals, or conducted telephone interviews with those for whom in-person interviews were geographically impractical. The interviews were recorded on audio tape whenever possible. The researcher also attempted to record on paper any observations relevant to the study.

In the second part of the study, the researcher mailed surveys to a sample of 50 interested potential seashore resort vacationers. The members of the sample were asked to review examples of design elements from seashore resort brochures and advertisements and to select those that make them feel more favorably toward visiting a seashore resort. The participants were asked to indicate and briefly explain their choices on a survey answer sheet to be mailed back to the researcher in a stamped, pre-addressed envelope provided. A \$1 bill was stapled to a one-page letter explaining the survey and its purpose, and was included with the survey.

Analysis of Data

The researcher compared the findings of the survey of potential vacationers with the assessments of the tourism communications professionals, and the general principles of publications design, to determine if there are design elements which contribute to the effectiveness of tourism brochures and advertisements.

Chapter 4

Analysis and Conclusions

Results

The first part of the study, interviews with seashore resort tourism professionals, yielded the following group opinions concerning design elements and their roles in the effectiveness of seashore resort brochures and advertising:

1. Brochure Format: There seemed to be no consensus among the group concerning the most effective brochure format. Of the seven professionals, four chose an 8½" by 11" magazine format, while three chose a standard 4" by 9" tri-fold pamphlet format. None of the tourism professionals cited the booklet format (8½" high by 5½" wide). Those favoring the magazine format cited the higher impact of its larger size, its enhanced credibility due to its similarity to commercially published magazines, and the increased likelihood that it would be kept by potential tourists for future reference. Pete Laddy of the advertising agency serving the Ocean City Convention and Visitors Bureau

favored the magazine format, but printed in landscape format (8½" high by 11" wide), which he said provided even greater impact. Those favoring the tri-fold brochure said it is cost-effective, can be mailed with other materials in a standard #10 envelope, and fits into brochure racks.

2. Color: Four of the seven tourism professionals interviewed said cool color tones were more effective in attracting potential vacationers than warm colors. They said the cool tones denote the relaxation and relief desired by seashore vacationers. Two felt warm color tones were more effective, psychologically reminding readers of the heat of summer and stimulating a desire for relief in the form of a beach vacation. One interviewee said the choice of color tones should depend on the predominant color themes of the resort being promoted. However, all felt that to promote a beach resort, deep blues and green should be incorporated into the color scheme in some way to suggest the relaxation and beauty found at the seashore. Ann Fairley of the Long Island Convention and Visitors Bureau also referred to deep blues and greens as "understated and classic."

3. Overall Tone: The respondents were evenly split in their response to the question of the effectiveness of a formal tone versus an informal one. Formal tone is

characterized by symmetrical layout, rectangular photographs, perpendicular lines and conventional typefaces, such as Times Roman and Helvetica. Informal tone might include diagonal orientation of photographs or illustrations, curved or diagonal lines, or cartoon-like illustrations and typefaces. Chris Cooney of the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce and Diane Weiland of the Cape May County Department of Tourism felt a formal tone provides a professional image that lends credibility to the information presented. David Holtzman of the Atlantic City Convention and Visitors Authority said the formal layout prevents distractions from the message. However, Leddy said curves, if used sparingly, denote sensuality and relaxation. And Barbara Murphy of the Greater Wildwood Tourism Improvement and Development Authority said informal design appeals to families with children.

4. Photography. All but one of the tourism professionals interviewed felt that a single photographic image should dominate the brochure or ad, rather than a number of equally-weighted images. Holtzman referred to this as the "icon image" and called it the most important design element in the piece. The interviewees felt this image must attract attention and draw the reader to further examine the ad or brochure. Murphy, however, felt using many smaller

photos conveyed the variety of activities to be found at a seashore resort.

All the interviewees felt the photographs should include people rather than just scenery, and that those people should be seen as being actively engaged in some activity, even if it is simply sunbathing. However, Murphy and Weiland warned against showing a beach scene with too many people. They believe visitors are discouraged by the idea of crowded beaches.

5. Type. All but one of the tourism professionals felt that copy should be kept to a minimum in tourism brochures and advertising. The consensus was that there should only be enough text to entice the reader to request more information directly from the resort, offering the resort the opportunity for more persuasive person-to-person communication, and for gathering name, address and demographic information from the prospective vacationer. Weiland, however, felt that vacationers desire more information to help them make decisions about a destination. She cited the effectiveness of the magazine format, and the success of the tabloid format with males, as evidence.

The second part of the study, the survey of potential seashore vacationers, yielded the following group opinions concerning design elements and their roles in the effectiveness of seashore resort brochures and advertising:

1. Brochure Format: of the 32 respondents, 13 (40.6%) favored the magazine format (8½" wide by 11" high), most because of the implied abundance of information, and some because of its more impressive look. "Easier to read and keep," one respondent wrote. Twelve (37.5%) selected the booklet format (8½" high by 5½" wide) as the format that made them feel most favorable toward visiting a seashore resort. Respondents cited its wealth of information compared to the pamphlet and its ease of handling and storage compared to the magazine. Seven (21.9%) chose the pamphlet for its ease of reading and storage. "Can put it in glove compartment of car," a respondent wrote.

2. Color: Just as the tourism professionals, the potential vacationers surveyed favored cool tones over warm colors, but by a wider margin. Of 32 respondents, 19 (59.4%) favored cool colors, while 10 (31.3%) selected warm. Proponents of cool colors called them "inviting," and "more exciting," and that they "evoke images of soft summer breezes." "One respondent wrote that cool tones "look more like summer." Those who favored warm tones wrote that they "reflect summer sun," "give a warm, positive feeling," and "present a more relaxing atmosphere." Three respondents (9.4%) had no preference.

3. Overall Tone: Unlike the tourism professionals, who

were evenly split between formal and informal, survey respondents clearly favored a formal tone. Nineteen (59.4%) selected formal over informal, saying it "looks more professional," "more impressive," and "a little more classy." One respondent said it implied that the resort is a "more established vacation place." The eleven (34.4%) proponents of informal tone wrote that it implied a relaxed, family atmosphere and was "more inviting." One respondent wrote, "It denotes fun." One respondent (3.1%) had no preference.

4. Type: The survey respondents differed dramatically from the tourism professionals on the question of how much text should be included. Twenty-three out of 32 respondents, or 71.9 percent, said they want extensive text because they want more information. One wrote, "More use of text shows more diversity or attractions." Another wrote, "I prefer information over mood." One of the eight (25%) who favored minimal text wrote, "People don't want to read that much in a brochure." Another chose minimal text because it is "easier to read." One respondent (3.1%) had no preference.

5. Style of Text: Survey respondents favored conventional typefaces 29 to 1, or 90.1 percent to 3.1 percent with two respondents (6.3%) expressing no preference. Eight respondents wrote that conventional typefaces are "easier to read." Others wrote that

conventional typefaces are "more personally appealing," and "more professional." The lone proponent of specialty typefaces felt the example provided was "more appealing."

6. Use of Photographs: The survey respondents agreed with the tourism professionals that one image should dominate the design of the brochure or ad. However, they were more divided on the issue than the professionals, favoring the dominant image by a 17(53.1%) to 11(34.4%) margin, with four respondents (12.5%) expressing no preference. One who favored the dominant image said it "provide(s) a good first impression." Another wrote, "It gives me a 'mood' picture. I like that." Respondents who favored multiple images felt they "tell a broader story" and "show the variety of activities to participate in."

7. Photographic Elements: Scenery was barely the most popular photographic element, with 15(46.9%) expressing their preference. Fourteen respondents (43.8%) said they prefer photographs of active people, while one person (3.1%) said he/she preferred a photograph of people passively enjoying themselves. One proponent of scenery in photos wrote, "I visit an area to see the area, not the people or other tourists." Another wrote that a shot of scenery "shows more of the beauty of the area, which can relate to relaxation." a third wrote,

"People are not so different in different places within a country -- scenery is more distinctive." Those who favored active people cited the vicarious connection. "I can relate to it in spirit," one wrote. "Glad to see people enjoying what they are doing," wrote another. A third wrote, "It promotes a 'This could be you' approach." One respondent (3.1%) chose all three photo elements, writing, "All three have their places in brochures."

Conclusions

The research shows that tourism professionals in seashore resorts along the Eastern Seaboard are not necessarily in agreement with potential vacationers about the design elements that make brochures and advertisements effective. Nearly as many of the vacationers preferred the booklet format as preferred the magazine, but none of the professionals cited the booklet as effective. The booklet format has one of the advantages of the magazine -- the perception that it contains a wealth of information -- but at a lower cost. As with the pamphlet, vacationers perceive it as being a quick read, and easy to handle and store.

In addition, the professionals favored minimal text while vacationers overwhelmingly preferred extensive text. Clearly, potential vacationers, as an active audience, are seeking information about the features of the resorts they

are considering to help them in choosing their destination. Therefore, brochure and ad designers need to include the extensive information vacationers seek, but present it in an attractive layout.

The survey results concerning the use of text agree with Robert T. Reilly's point that a brochure is often the only information they receive concerning the resort until they arrive.⁴⁰ Too little text may leave important unresolved questions in the minds of the reader.

The professionals preferred the single dominant image over multiple, equally weighted images. Vacationers also preferred the dominant image, although by a smaller margin. These results agree with Reilly, who advised that something must dominate the layout.⁴¹

Vacationers placed far more importance on photographs of scenery over images of people than did the professionals. As with the desire for extensive text, vacationers want to see as much as they can of the resorts they are considering. While a dominant image can present the primary visual message the designer wants to convey, multiple photos can provide additional information many vacationers desire.

The vacationer responses concerning the use of people in photographs seem to contradict Charles Heatwole's findings. Heatwole asserted that "body shots," photographs

⁴⁰Reilly, p. 111.

⁴¹Reilly, pp. 84-115.

of women in bathing suits, are successful in creating a positive perception of a destination. The surveys showed that the respondents were more interested in the scenery of the resort area than in seeing people enjoying the resort, particularly if the people in the photos are passively enjoying the beach, pool, etc.⁴² The survey results also contradict Reilly's assertion that, whenever possible, people should be included in photographs.⁴³

Vacationers and professionals agreed concerning color tones, favoring cool tones, particularly blues and greens, by a considerable margin over warm colors. These findings are consistent with findings by the Johnson Wagner Institute for Color Research. They show that blue has a calming effect, which is desired by potential seashore vacationers. Also, the Johnson Wagner Institute found that green makes people feel comfortable and is appropriate to introduce new products or services. Comfort is also an especially desirable characteristic of a vacation destination.⁴⁴ The research findings also seem be consistent with Faber Birren's studies, in which most subjects named blue as their favorite color.⁴⁵

⁴²Heatwole, pp. 7-11.

⁴³Reilly, p. 111.

⁴⁴"How Color Affects People," communication briefings (October 1989).

⁴⁵Birren.

The professionals and vacationers agreed that a formal overall tone is desirable, though vacationers preferred it by a greater margin than the professionals. Conventional typefaces, too, were preferred by both groups, with vacationers choosing them almost unanimously. Formal design, both groups said, lent credibility and status to the resort. When vacationers preferred informality, the reason given was the appeal to families and young children. The preference for formal design agrees with Reilly's point that "Horizontal lines are generally restful; vertical line aspiring," while diagonal lines evoke stress or tension.⁴⁶

⁴⁶Reilly, pp. 84-115.

Chapter 5

Recommendations

Summary

The researcher sought to identify design elements that contribute to the effectiveness of seashore resort brochures and advertising. He interviewed seven tourism professionals responsible for brochure and advertising design in Eastern Seaboard resorts from Cape Cod, Mass., to Virginia Beach, Va. He asked them to identify the design elements that they believe have contributed to the effectiveness of brochures and advertising they or others have produced. The interviewer also conducted a mail survey of potential seashore vacationers to determine the design elements that make them feel more favorably toward visiting a seashore resort.

The research findings show that cool color tones, particularly blues and greens, are favored by the tourism professionals and vacationers alike. A formal overall tone, with straight lines, rectangular photographs, and conventional typefaces, is also preferred. A single,

dominant photograph was preferred over a number of equally weighted photos, but some vacationers said they liked the multiple photos because they wanted to see the variety of activities available at a resort. Tourism professionals preferred photographs of active people while vacationers strongly favored photographs of scenery. Vacationers also said they liked the wealth of information available in large format brochures (booklets or magazines) filled with extensive text about the resorts.

Recommendations

1. Brochure Format: The magazine format is seen by professionals and vacationers as the most effective in attracting customers. It also lends status to the resort by virtue of its perceived additional cost. Its cost is substantial, however, and may be too expensive for some seashore resorts. The booklet format may provide a more cost-effective alternative for resorts less concerned with status than cost. The booklet was perceived nearly as favorably as the magazine by vacationers, who said they valued its substantial information and its ease of handling. The pamphlet format lacks the perceived information value of the magazine or booklet, but is useful and cost-effective for increasing awareness of, if not attracting visitors to, a resort. It can be distributed to encourage potential visitors to request more information, thus allowing the

resort to print only the number of magazines or booklets it needs to serve truly interested vacationers. When using these formats in combination, designers should maintain a consistent style of appearance, with many of the same design elements, and some of the same photographs and descriptive information about the resort, appearing in each.

2. Color Tone: Cool colors were clearly preferred by tourism professionals and vacationers, and should be the dominant colors in a seashore resort brochure or advertisement. This is particularly true if the resort desires to present an image of a relaxing, comfortable vacation destination. If the resort wants to position itself as a destination for adventure or activity, it should consider using warm color tones. In addition, warm colors, such as red, could be used in a pamphlet format brochure in order to stand out on a crowded brochure rack, and to stimulate vacationers to take action by picking up the brochure and/or calling the resort.

3. Overall Tone: The researcher recommends that seashore resorts design their advertising and brochures with a formal overall tone. This is clearly preferred by vacationers, who said it presented information clearly and easily, and presented the resort as being "more established." An exception to this recommendation would be for brochures or advertisements designed to attract families of young children.

4. Type: Vacationers overwhelmingly preferred the inclusion

of extensive information in brochures and advertisements. The researcher recommends including as much useful information as can be presented in an attractive, uncluttered manner. The vacationer's desire for information should not eclipse the need to design a brochure or ad that is easy to read, includes appealing photographs and presents its message clearly. Rather than stuffing too much text into a format designed for minimal text, such as a pamphlet, resorts should consider stepping up to a booklet or magazine format. In addition, the copy-heavy brochure must always be well written, and tell an interesting story.

5. Style of Text: The researcher discourages the use of cartoonish specialty typefaces or script typefaces. These were overwhelmingly rejected by vacationers as hard to read. Brochures or advertisements aimed at families with young children may present an exception to this recommendation. Rather, more conventional typefaces, such as Times Roman and Helvetica, or variations thereof, should be used. Serif type between 9 and 12 points is recommended for body text because it is easier to read than Sans Serif.⁴⁷ Sans Serif type can be used when larger type is needed, such as for headlines. When using extensive text and multiple photographs in brochures and advertising, medium-to-light

⁴⁷Rehe, p. 27.

weight type is recommended.⁴⁸

6. Use of Photographs: The researcher recommends the use of a single, dominant photographic image, an "icon" that sets the tone of the brochure or ad. A single image can deliver a clear, focused message about the resort. It requires, however, that a photograph of outstanding quality, which successfully communicates the desired message, be obtained. This does not preclude the addition of other, smaller images that express the variety of activities and scenic attractions available at a resort. These should be used throughout the body of any of the brochure formats, and be used to balance the dominant image in a print advertisement. The use of these smaller images with the large, dominant image is consistent with the finding that vacationers want to see the variety of scenery in a resort.

7. Photographic Elements: The researcher recommends that brochure and advertising designers use photographs of scenery unique to the resort, incorporating people actively enjoying the resort into those photographs whenever possible. In fact, whenever possible, the large, dominant image should include people to enhance what one vacationer called a "this could be you" appeal. The designer should avoid photographs of crowds on beaches or at attractions. Vacationers indicated that these made them less inclined to

⁴⁸"Picking a Typeface Weight," communication briefings, September 1987.

visit a particular resort. Rather, the photos should include a couple or family of three or four. A mix of photographs with people and without is recommended to provide the scenery, as well as the vicarious appeal, desired.

8. Additional Research: The vacationers' expressed desire for extensive information points out the need for research into the most important information to include in a seashore resort brochure. Should designers include maps or directions, lodging and dining information, attractions information, package tour information, etc?

More specific research should be conducted concerning photographic elements and their role in the effectiveness of seashore resort advertising. What types of scenery appeal most to seashore vacationers? What types of people should be included in photos? What should they be seen doing?

Further study also should be conducted into whether these findings apply to other beach resorts, in the Southeastern U.S., the Pacific Southwest, Central and South America, or in Europe and Australia, for example.

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