

Travel-Tourism

Background

The travel-tourism industry is a cornerstone of the U.S. economy. One out of 18 Americans in the civilian work force is employed due to travel spending. In most states, travel-tourism ranks first, second or third as the largest employer.

Among the diverse spectrum of businesses that use outdoor advertising, the hospitality sector buys the most. According to industry estimates, nearly one third of outdoor advertising revenue comes from restaurants, hotels and travel-related businesses.

Travel-tourism and outdoor advertising are partners. In a highly mobile society, outdoor advertising helps travelers reach their destinations.

Message Points

- Travel-related enterprises depend on directional advertising, complemented by on-premise signs and “logo” signs. If roadway businesses lose billboards, they immediately lose revenue.
- Travelers view billboards as providing useful information, according to independent public-opinion surveys.
- Governments use outdoor advertising to promote travel and recreation. Minnesota used digital billboards to count down the days until the opening day of fishing season. Maine, which has no billboards, used out-of-state outdoor advertising to draw visitors to Maine. West Virginia promoted its diverse tourism assets via a display in the Washington, DC, transit system.
- Billboard bans do not enhance tourism. Vermont and Maine banned billboards some three decades ago. Since then, the travel-tourism industry in Vermont and Maine has performed sub-par compared to the rest of the nation. Ironically, Vermont businesses buy billboard advertising across the state line.
 - **Vermont** promotes Vermont tourism via out of home advertising ([Click here for additional information](#)). *Vermont’s current ad campaign for tourism includes “a healthy amount of outdoor advertising,” says Steven Cook, deputy commissioner for the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing.*

- Most outdoor advertising messages promote local enterprises, and most of those are small businesses (with less than 50 employees). Many hospitality businesses – particularly those in remote locations – have no alternative affordable advertising.
- The outdoor advertising industry supports the hospitality industry by participating in public service campaigns to boost tourism.
- Top tourist destinations in America are sign-centric Times Square in New York City and the Las Vegas Strip, according to Forbes. The Times Square Alliance estimates an average of 2,000+ pedestrians travel a block of 7th Avenue during a 15-minute weekday period.

RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT THE INDUSTRY POSITION AND MESSAGE POINTS

I.) Taylor survey regarding revenue loss with no billboards (2000)

Research shows that most businesses using billboard advertising would lose sales without billboards.

- Nationally, 75% of businesses that use billboards predicted lost revenue without billboards, according to *The Survey of Businesses that use Billboards* conducted by Professor Ray Taylor of Villanova University. Of those who predicted losses without billboards, the average estimated revenue decline was 18%.

Survey results in Missouri and Texas tracked the national figures. In Missouri, 78% of those using billboards said they would lose sales if billboards were banned. The estimated average decrease was 18%.

The findings in Texas were even more dramatic. More than 81% of those using billboards in Texas said they would lose sales without billboards; the estimated average decrease exceeded 20%.

(To get more information on the Taylor studies in hard copy version, contact the OAAA office.)

II.) Testimonial of Bob Evans Farms (2002)

Bob Evans Farms owns and operates more than 500 full service family restaurants. This successful enterprise, based in Columbus, OH, offers the following testimonial regarding the effectiveness of billboard advertising:

- Nearly 80% of Bob Evans restaurants are located near interstates and major highways.

- The company has relied on billboard advertising for four decades.
- Billboards advertising Bob Evans restaurants are “tested” by the company, which periodically covers up its billboards to verify effectiveness. When billboards are covered up, stores suffer an *immediate* loss of at least 10% of revenues.

(A letter from the field marketing manager of Bob Evans Farms is included on the last page of this issue brief.)

III.) Mediocre “grades” for tourism in two states (Vermont and Maine) that banned billboard (2001)

Vermont and Maine provide revealing information about the business climate in the wake of statewide billboard bans. Vermont and Maine are two of the four states with no billboards; Alaska and Hawaii never had standardized billboards. In the early 1970s, billboards were removed in Vermont and Maine, with payment of just compensation for the assets. Using five major government indices from the early 1970s to 2000, the independent research firm iMapData “graded” the business climate in Vermont and Maine, focusing on the travel-tourism industry. Both states lag other states in tourism categories.

Ironically, the governments of Maine and Vermont have purchased billboards to promote tourism. Recent campaigns (shown below) have included VisitMaine.com and the Vermont Skiing industry.



Shown here is a transit shelter for VisitMaine.com appearing in the Washington, DC, subway system.



Shown here is a bulletin for Vermont Tourism that appeared in Bridgeport, CT.

IV.) The Associated Press, May 17, 2005

VT Puts Seat Belt Signs Up in NH, MA

CONCORD, NH (AP)—It's illegal to put up a billboard in Vermont. So the Governor's Highway Safety Program in that state took it's seat belt safety campaign to New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

A sign on Interstate 293 in central New Hampshire—at least 70 miles away from the Vermont state line—tells drivers, “Buckle-up in Vermont. It's the law.” It's part of the state's “Click it or Ticket” campaign.

“We bought billboards in New Hampshire and Massachusetts as close to the Vermont border as we can get,” said Charles Satterfield, public information officer for the Governor's Highway Safety Program in Vermont. “The reason we did it is because Vermont's lowest belt use is (along) the New Hampshire and Massachusetts borders. Those two states have among the lowest seat belt use rates in the country, and they affect the belt use rates in Vermont.”

Another reason: In New Hampshire, there's no seat belt law for adults.

V.) InContext/Lilley study showing that most messages promote local firms (1994)

Economic impact studies were conducted by InContext (Bill Lilley) in rural areas of Arkansas, Minnesota and West Virginia, showing that nine of 10 billboard advertisements were for local businesses; two out of three were related to travel and tourism.

(Contact the OAAA office for further information on InContext research.)

VI.) iMapData study regarding “jobs” impact (2001)

Economic analyses consistently show that most billboard advertisements are for local businesses, and that those businesses employ a significant percentage of the local

workforce. For example, more than 1,000 local businesses use billboards in San Antonio; those companies employ nearly 45,000 workers.

Studies conducted by iMapData Research, Inc., compiled these specific findings:

i.) Buffalo, NY

- 377 local businesses using billboard ads employ 16,080 workers in the Buffalo area (Erie and Niagara counties),

ii.) State of Delaware

- 595 local businesses using billboard ads employ 22,120 workers in Delaware.

iii.) San Antonio, TX

- 1,064 local businesses using billboard ads employ 44,956 workers in San Antonio.

iv.) San Francisco, CA

- 334 local businesses using billboard ads employ 16,926 workers in San Francisco.

v.) Tampa, FL

- 911 local businesses using billboard ads employ 39,092 workers in Tampa.



September 27, 2002

OAAA
Kenneth Klein
1850 M Street, N.W.
Suite 1040
Washington, D.C. 20036

RE: Billboards

Dear Mr. Klein:

Bob Evans Farms, Inc. owns and operates 500 full service family restaurants in 22 states. Nearly 80% of these restaurants are located on Interstate or major US Highways and consequently require outdoor directional advertising.

Our use of outdoor billboards for nearly 40 years has confirmed the importance and cost effectiveness of this advertising medium. Billboards drive sales and generate customer awareness. Specifically they identify each restaurant location to the traveling customer. We know they work because we put each billboard to a scrutinizing evaluation each year. In some cases we test the billboards effectiveness by temporarily covering the advertising copy. The result being an immediate loss of at least 10% in sales. In other cases we have lost billboards due to storms or highway construction and have suffered a loss in sales until a replacement board could be found.

Bob Evans Farms, Inc. has a workforce of more than 40,000 employees and continues to grow. We have for the past several years been adding 30 new restaurants per year. Over the 40+ years that we have been in business we have had to close a few restaurants due to performance. It has never been easy telling employees the bad news. In terms of sales, profit and the future growth of our company we need the effectiveness of outdoor billboards.

In conclusion, the most compelling truth about the need for billboards is to have our traveling customers call us and tell us we need them. Our response has been immediate and fortunate. do hope that billboards will continue to be viable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carl Crews".

Carl Crews
Field Marketing Manager
BOB EVANS FARMS, INC.

CC/SM