

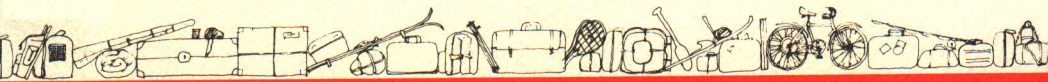
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Selecting Promotional Media – Tourism Information Series No. 10
Michigan State University Extension Service
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Selecting Promotional Media





SELECTING PROMOTIONAL MEDIA

By Maureen H. McDonough and Gary A. Ackert



Selecting the right media is a key to developing your promotional strategy (see Extension bulletin E-1939 for more information). There are three things that play major roles in deciding on what media to use:

- 1) When and where your target market (see Extension bulletin E-1939) gets its information
- 2) Your message
- 3) Your budget constraints

When choosing the promotional media that match target market needs, message, and budget, you need to know what media are available, their advantages and disadvantages, and how to use them. This bulletin helps you make the right choice.

One in Purpose, Different in Approach

The best reason to use promotional media is to transfer a message from a source to one or more markets. Some media reach certain markets better than others, and different markets use different media to get their information. They also use these media at different times. Thus, no one medium can reach everyone at the same time.

For example, newspapers, television, and radio all reach large, diversified markets, while newsletters, magazines, and brochures are limited to those who buy or pick them up. Television and radio are also used to reach specific markets. The key is to know the audience that is attracted to certain types of programming. For instance, more men watch nationally televised sporting events than women. Women who do not work outside the home watch more early afternoon television than do men. Young adults and adolescents are more influenced by radio than television.



Some messages are better suited for some media than others. Newspapers are better for long, detailed messages. Television and radio are best for public service announcements. Radio and television also provide “live” coverage for events.

To choose the medium that will best reach your market and accomplish your objectives, you must know potential media as well as you can, including good and bad points, and who they can and cannot reach.

The Difference is in the Presentation

Promotional media can be divided into five categories, based on the way the message is presented: print, broadcast, interpersonal or informal, signing, and visual images.

A person must see and read print media. Messages of these media vary in length and are read by people at their convenience. Examples include newspapers, newsletters, catalogs, and brochures.

Broadcast media (television and radio) are generally heard or seen when they are broadcast, although they can be recorded. Messages are short, and if not heard or seen the first time, they are easily missed.

Interpersonal and/or informal media rely on person-to-person contact and/or communication. Examples include word of mouth, hospitality information given by lodging employees, friends, traveling companions, and repeat visitors.

Signing and visual images make up the final two types of media. Signing is useful for directing tourists to local or area attractions, services, and facilities. Examples are billboards, entrance signs, directional signs, and road signs.

The visual image of a community or business is based on how the community or business is perceived by travelers. It is influenced by building design, signing in and around the community or business, hospitality, and the community's or business' overall appearance (see Extension bulletin E-1938 for more examples).



What's available for me to use?

It is important to know the types of media that are most often used in promotion, their good and bad points, and how to use them.

Brochures—

Strengths:

- They are a very mobile form of promotion because people take them home and give them to friends and family.
- They have souvenir value and can be referred to later.
- They can be developed to reach one market or as a series to reach a variety of markets.

Weaknesses:

- They are a passive and impersonal form of promotion.
- People must make an effort to get them and then read them.
- Brochures tend to reach small audiences and must be targeted at specific markets to be effective.
- Because brochures are overused, people tend to overlook them.

To develop an effective brochure, you must identify your audience and develop a theme for the brochure. The brochure must attract attention, be brief, simple, and readable (for more information on how to develop a brochure, see Extension bulletin E-1931).

Newsletters—

Newsletters are exactly that—"news" letters. They are used to keep people up-to-date about what is going on in an organization.

Strengths:

- They can be written informally.
- They are good for reaching special markets.
- They can be inexpensive to produce.



Weaknesses:

- They are not effective at reaching new audiences.
- The cost of producing them for large markets may become expensive and/or prohibitive.
- The use of high quality production materials, such as high quality paper and multi-color reproduction, can make the cost of producing a newsletter prohibitive.

Magazines—

Strengths:

- They are very good for reaching selected markets.
- Magazines provide quality advertising.
- They are passed around to others more than newspapers.
- Magazines have a sense of “permanence.” Once people acquire them, they tend to keep them for a while. This allows them to be re-read at a later date.

Weaknesses:

- Most require that photographs and stories be turned in far in advance of publication.
- It is difficult to make changes between the time a story is accepted and published.
- Most magazines, except for weekly magazines, lack a sense of immediacy.
- Readers only read what interests them and may not read the whole magazine.

It is important to remember a few things when deciding to use magazines for promotion. First, local magazines are more likely to run a story about a local event than will regional or national magazines. Second, check to see if the magazine has any format requirements for submitting stories including specific line spacing and number of lines per story. Third, find out about deadlines so that you can submit your story on time.



Some magazines may require a story to be submitted up to six months in advance of actual publication. Fourth, make sure that the story you submit is well written and neat in appearance. Many times the appearance of your story is just as important as the content. Finally, although it can be expensive, it may be easier to advertise in a magazine than to get a story published.

Newspapers—

Strengths:

- People tend to see the events in newspapers as happening “now” and being relevant to today; giving newspapers a sense of “immediacy.”
- Newspapers handle long, detailed messages.
- They reach markets at national, regional, and local levels.
- Newspapers reach both select and diverse markets.
- They are an excellent medium to use to promote local events or activities.
- Once people acquire newspapers they can either keep the entire paper or clip out the information that is important to them.

Weaknesses:

- Readers are selective. They read only what they are interested in.
- Advertising in national newspapers is expensive and can be prohibitive for non-profit organizations or small businesses.
- Color reproduction varies in quality from paper to paper.

Newspapers are used in two ways. One way is through advertising. Most promotion at the regional and national levels is done through advertising. Promotional ads are placed by contacting a newspaper’s advertising department.



The other way is through publicity. Generally, publicity is used most effectively at the local level. Most newspapers publicize local and some regional events or activities that are of interest to their readers through community calendars, human interest stories, feature articles and magazines, newspaper inserts, and photographs.

Editorials are also used to get publicity by expressing the opinion of your organization on current public issues being debated in your community. In addition, some papers allow organizations to have one of their members write a column that provides “helpful tips” or other information on public needs or other topics of interest to the entire community.

News coverage of an event or activity is another avenue for publicity. If an event is going to have an impact on most of a newspaper’s readers, or if it is significant for some other reason, a local or regional newspaper may cover it.

To cover an event or program, a newspaper must know about it. To inform them, send out a well written press release that briefly states the who, what, where, when, why, and how of the event or program at least one week in advance. Personally contacting the appropriate people at the newspaper before the day of the event or program and inviting them to attend may also help.

Television—

Strengths:

- It uses both sight and sound for a dynamic form of promotion.
- It is a versatile medium.
- It can be used nationally, regionally, or locally.
- It reaches specific or diverse markets.
- It can be used to cover an event or activity “live.”



Weaknesses:

- It is expensive to use.
- Commercials and other promotional messages are short and easy to miss or ignore.
- The number of desirable time slots for commercials and other promotional messages in prime day or night programs is limited and often too expensive for small businesses to use.

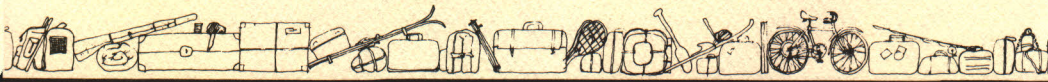
Television is used in two ways. The first way is through advertising. This is done by contacting the advertising department of a television station and buying commercial time.

The second way is through publicity. Even though they are no longer required to do so, many commercial television stations still run public affairs programming, such as public service announcements (PSA's), community calendars, weekly specialty shows that deal with topics of interest to their viewers, talk shows, and call-in programs. Check with your local or area stations to see which ones they offer.

Television news programs are also an avenue for publicity. Many stations provide news coverage if the event or activity is important to their viewers. Commercial television stations also run non-news stories during their newscasts, such as human interest stories, feature stories, special documentaries that deal with services or activities that are available in the area, or upcoming events that are of interest to most of their viewers.

Cable Television—

Cable television is commonly referred to as “pay TV.” Users pay a monthly subscription price for regular cable programming. They can also pay extra for “premium channels” such as HBO, Showtime, or the Disney Channel.



Strengths:

- It reaches very specific markets.
- It is required to carry a free public access channel for those who want to make their own commercials or programs.
- Advertising spots can be different than those for commercial television. They can be shorter or longer, for example.

Weaknesses:

- The main disadvantage of cable television is that not everyone has it.
- Just because it is aired on a channel doesn't mean it will be watched. For information on how to use cable television, contact your local cable television company.

Radio—

Strengths:

- It is good for targeting specific markets.
- Radio can reach large, diverse markets.
- Radio can help increase the market coverage of other media, especially print media.
- It can be used to cover events or activities “live.”
- It can be used locally or regionally.
- People can listen to it while doing something else.
- It is an excellent medium for reaching people on the move.
- Advertisements and PSAs can be repeated frequently.

Weaknesses:

- The length of most advertisements and PSAs is usually short and easy to miss or ignore.
- Radio cannot be used to demonstrate a process.
- Often there are many stations in an area which makes the audience for each station small.



Radio can be used two ways. One way is through commercial advertising. To advertise, call the advertising department of your local or regional radio station.

The second way to reach markets with radio is through publicity. Even though they are no longer required to do so, many radio stations still carry public affairs programming, such as PSA's, community calendars, talk shows, call-in shows, and short messages. Check with your local or area radio stations to see what they offer.

Radio stations will also give news coverage to events or activities if they are significant, have an impact on, or are of interest to most of their listeners.

Which one Should I Use?

Knowing what types of media are available, the pros and cons of each, and how to access them is important when deciding which ones to use. Deciding what is best for your market will depend on:

- 1) Your target market and where they get information
- 2) The method that best fits your message
- 3) Your timeline for promotion

For example, if you target young adults for your message, you will want to use a rock and roll radio station to reach them, rather than an easy listening station. If you want to inform people of an event, a community calendar might be more effective than an editorial message in a newspaper. Some media, like newspapers and magazines, have rigid deadlines which may limit their usefulness to you.



Tips on Accessing Media

There are many things that are critical in gaining access to any promotional media:

1) They need NEWS!—

The news media (newspapers, television, and radio) are always looking for stories to cover. Something is considered news if it has a sense of significance and is of interest to people. Your message may be news if it has one or more of the following characteristics:

- *Timeliness*—does it relate to current community issues or fit in with current community events or activities?
- *Proximity*—does your event or activity take place within the community or nearby?
- *Prominence*—is a prominent person going to be at your event or activity? Does it stand out from the rest of the events or activities taking place at the same time?
- *Unusual*—will your event or activity give people an opportunity to experience something unusual, or is the event or activity itself unusual?
- *Human Interest*—does your event or activity have something that is of interest to human nature?

2) Make sure your message clearly communicates Who?, What?, Where?, When?, Why?, and How?

3) Contact media people in your area and establish a good working relationship. This can be done if you:

- Call and introduce yourself before sending any information.
- Ask for their help in developing your message for their medium.
- Know of any special formats or requirements that your chosen medium has and follow them.
- Find out their deadlines for submitting information.
- Try not to contact them after “deadline time” arrives.
- Work with them at their convenience.



- Keep communication over the telephone as much as possible.
 - Provide any information that will let them know who you are and what you do or what services you provide.
 - Keep them up-to-date with your current and upcoming events.
 - Get them involved in your event(s) and activity(ies). Invite them to your business, give them a tour of your facilities, and show them samples of your products.
 - Call and thank them for using your message after they have done so.
- 4) Keep your wording, especially for television and radio, as simple, clear and conversational as possible.
 - 5) Keep your message short and concise, with your main point at the beginning of your message.
 - 6) Present your message in a logical manner and avoid technical jargon.

Conclusion

Selecting promotional media is important. To make a wise selection, you need to know what kinds of media are available, their advantages and disadvantages, and what it takes to gain access to them. Promotional media must be evaluated to see which ones are best to reach your target market and accomplish your objectives within your budget. The information provided in this bulletin will help you get off to a good start in choosing promotional media.

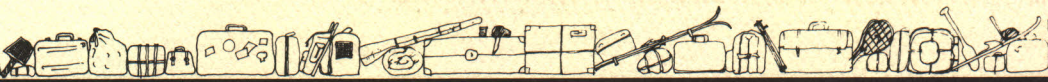


RESOURCES

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Tourism Information Series

The Tourism Information Series is for those interested in tourism development. To obtain the series, contact your county Cooperative Extension office. Look in the white pages under County Government.

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4. E-1959, Tourism Marketing
5. E-1992, Feasibility Analysis in Tourism
6. E-1939, Developing A Promotional Strategy
7. E-1957, Creating A Promotional Theme
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9. E-1938, Managing Tourism Information Systems
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11. E-1999, Pricing Tourism Products and Services
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