

3.1. Present each town in the context of its surroundings

This Strategic Action strengthens Montana’s tourism product development and marketing efforts.

Recommended Tactics

MTOT, Regions –

- » Clearly show the geographic location of each town in visitor information to help orient the visitor.
- » Clearly show each town within a meaningful context of nearby towns, transportation, public lands, and icons of “spectacular, unspoiled nature” in visitor information to facilitate the planning of multi-destination trips.

CVBs, Communities, Tribes, Businesses & Organizations –

- » Ensure that local visitor information clearly identifies the location of the community in Montana to help orient the visitor.
- » Ensure that local visitor information clearly identifies the nearby towns to facilitate the planning of multi-destination trips that include more time in your area.
- » Ensure that local visitor information clearly identifies all nearby public lands and offers information (directly or through links) regarding access points and the attractions, assets, and activities available there. This facilitates planning of a full itinerary and promotes a longer stay.
- » Ensure that local frontline staff can offer information and knowledge regarding experiences available in the surrounding area. This promotes the use of your community as a gateway and encourages a longer stay.
- » In local visitor information, add local insights and recommendations to the public lands inventories: e.g., favorite hikes or places to float, picnic, or watch the sunset; where to see wildlife or wild flowers; or local news articles highlighting favorite places.

Indicators of Success

- » In all visitor information each town is easily placed on a map, and in the context of surrounding towns, icons, public land access points, transportation and other visitor points of interest.
- » Visitor information includes local insights regarding access and activities on nearby public lands.

Background & Rationale

Making the relative locations of towns, activities, and outdoor spaces easy to see is key to helping the visitor with *orientation* and with building an itinerary.

The Montana Brand promises relaxing hospitality to go along with the visitor’s exhilarating experiences. The visitor needs the relative location of towns, activities, and outdoor locations in order to plan an itinerary that combines both aspects of the promised experience.

This integration of comfort and experiences so that visitors can include both in their itinerary also provides reassurance that any necessary services or amenities are available and that the natural wonders are easily accessible. The overall effect is to reduce the perceived riskiness of Montana as a destination, encouraging selection of the state and facilitating trip planning.

Presenting the town within the context of its surroundings greatly enhances the visitor's perception of an integrated and balanced whole and helps the visitor to start visualizing their own trip.

By providing local insights and recommendations regarding access and activities on nearby public lands, the authenticity of the Brand is reinforced and the visitor begins to form a connection to the gateway town.

3.2. Present a balanced and cohesive visitor experience in all marketing and visitor information

This Strategic Action strengthens Montana’s tourism marketing efforts.

Recommended Tactics

MTOT

- » Ensure that marketing materials and visitor information present – in images and text – a visitor experience that consistently marries “breathtaking experiences” and “relaxing hospitality”.

Regions, CVBs, Communities, Tribes

- » Ensure that marketing materials and visitor information present – in images and text – a visitor experience that consistently marries “breathtaking experiences” and “relaxing hospitality”.
- » Focus first on presenting the best of what a destination offers and what makes the destination stand out from others. The most “breathtaking experiences” might be outdoor recreation or wildlife viewing, historical reenactments, cultural festivals, or live theatre. The hospitality that makes the destination stand out may be fine dining, a campfire cookout, or a warm pastry and a steaming cup of coffee in a cozy café.
- » Add depth by presenting a second tier of images that capture the diversity of experiences and hospitality available. If outdoor activities are the strong point, for example, present images to indicate that there are also heritage sites, cultural activities, or local arts festivals, as appropriate.

Businesses & Organizations

- » Provide customers with recommendations for local goods, services, or experiences that complement the goods or services you sell (e.g., places to dine after the guided fishing trip, where to take a horseback or bike ride to work up an appetite for the steak dinner, where to stop for coffee before hitting the ski slopes, arts and cultural offerings to balance great day hikes).
- » Work together to cross market goods, services, attractions, and businesses in your community or area.

Indicators of Success

- » Images and text present a balance of experiences and hospitality.
- » Images and text present the diversity of experiences (not just natural or outdoor experiences, but also experiences related to culture, heritage, and the arts) and hospitality (from fine dining to small town comfort).
- » Images and text for specific communities and regions focus on the experiences and hospitality that make that destination stand out from others – the best or most unique of what they offer.
- » Businesses and organizations recommend experiences and hospitality to complement their own product or service in visitor information and via knowledgeable frontline staff.

Background & Rationale

The synergy of Montana’s spectacular nature and relaxing hospitality is central to the visitor experience promised by the Montana Brand. By clearly projecting this balanced visitor experience, Montana’s visitor information can make the potential visitor aware of this special chemistry, increasing the appeal of Montana as a destination.

Montana’s brand research has shown that visitors are attracted by the adventurous aspects of travel in Montana, yet this can be outweighed by the perception of remoteness and the perceived lack of “comfort”, which can make Montana seem like a risky destination choice. By presenting a cohesive image of experiences and hospitality, visitors will be reassured that both are readily available to create a balanced visitor experience throughout Montana. Offering options for fine dining, fine arts, or cultural events highlight the element of refinement that can soften the perceived “rough edge” of the Montana experience.

3.3. Present a seamless and border-less visitor experience in all visitor information

This Strategic Action strengthens Montana's tourism product development and marketing efforts.

Recommended Tactics

TAC, MTOT

- » Examine the rules and regulations governing Regions and CVBs. Make modifications as necessary and appropriate to facilitate closer coordination.
- » Actively support cross-region cooperative efforts by the tourism community to facilitate itineraries along natural travel paths.

MTOT, Regions, CVBs, Communities, Tribes

- » Evaluate visitor information and trip planning tools for seamlessness from the visitor's perspective, particularly between adjoining Regions and along primary travel corridors.
- » Within visitor information, ensure that each town is placed in the context of nearby towns, attractions, activities, and transportation (see Strategic Action 3.1), including those across Regional boundaries.
- » Ensure that information for each town always incorporates holistically those assets and amenities that lie outside the city limits, for example dining, accommodations, activities, or services.

Indicators of Success

- » Visitor information is seamless and has user-friendly functionality across Regions for trip planning.
- » Regions and CVBs undertake effective cooperative efforts across Regional boundaries.
- » Visitor information for towns is inclusive of outlying tourism assets.

Background & Rationale

Providing visitor information in a seamless and cohesive way is particularly challenging because the visitor experience is a composite product that often crosses city, county, and regional boundaries. Meeting visitor information needs without creating artificial barriers in the mind of the visitor is essential for converting potential visitors and facilitating trip planning.

In addition, research has shown that tourism websites that are enjoyable predispose the visitor to a positive perception of the destination itself and build expectations of a positive travel experience, while websites that cause frustration predispose visitors to negative perceptions of the destination and the visitor experience. Visitor information sites, therefore, must not only make comprehensive information available, but must do so in a user friendly way.

The administrative boundaries of city limits or tourism Regions are irrelevant to the non-resident visitor. To the extent that the traveler cannot obtain visitor information or plan an itinerary across these boundaries, the attractiveness of Montana as a destination (and its competitiveness) will be reduced.

From the perspective of a Region, CVB, or Chamber of Commerce, however, the administrative boundaries create very real and tangible constraints through rules, regulations, and budgetary constraints. A strong commitment to reducing the negative effects of these boundaries for the visitor must be accompanied by (i) realistic expectations and (ii) a strong commitment to aligning administrative processes to support (or not impede) that goal.

3.4. Build excitement about Montana among niche market enthusiasts

This Strategic Action strengthens Montana's tourism product development and marketing efforts.

Recommended Tactics

MTOT, Regions, CVBs, Communities, Tribes

- » Craft visitor information that immediately sells the excitement of experiencing an activity or interest *in Montana*.
- » Ensure that locations within Montana for a particular activity/interest are easily located on a map, including their relative location to one another.
- » Ensure that for each location for a particular activity or interest the surrounding towns are easily identified. Present surrounding towns as gateways to that activity or interest, offering supplies and support needed for the activity or interest, and offering comfort and hospitality to complement the breathtaking experience.
- » Provide links to user generated content online (e.g., blogs, online communities, reviews) to capture the passion for pursuing the activity or interest in Montana.
- » When presenting niche information, also offer area activities and attractions that would appeal to a spouse, family members, or other travel partners that are not as passionate about the niche activity. For example, when promoting fly fishing or hunting, suggest activities that could entice the target niche visitor to bring along a spouse, family, or friends.

Businesses & Organizations

- » If customers often share a common trip motivation (e.g. fishing, snowmobiling) provide links to user generated content online (e.g., blogs, online communities, reviews) to capture the passion for pursuing the activity or interest in the area.
- » If your business or organization doesn't serve all the needs of the niche market, provide information about other local entities that can offer supplies, support for activities or interests and offer comfort and hospitality.
- » When presenting niche information, also suggest activities and attractions that would appeal to a spouse, family members, or other travel partners that are not as passionate about the niche activity. For example, when promoting fly fishing or hunting, suggest cultural, heritage, or recreational activities that could entice the target niche visitor to bring along a spouse.

Indicators of Success

- » For visitors interested in a particular activity or interest, visitor information offers easy access to multiple locations to partake in that activity or interest. These locations are easily located on the map, located in relation to one another, and located in relation to gateway towns.
- » Visitor information presents each activity or interest in a way that immediately sets a tone of excitement, focusing on the superb setting offered by Montana.

- » Links to independent online content helps to build excitement and lend credibility to the Brand promise.

Background & Rationale

Niche activities are strong motivators for their audiences and, while these audiences may be individually small, they can contribute significantly to overall tourism numbers. (For example, Wyoming’s Office of Tourism found that niche activities together *motivated* the choice of Wyoming for 47% of the state’s 2012 visitors, compared to 46% of visitors motivated by visiting a national park. See <http://www.wyomingofficeoftourism.gov/industry/pdf/homepage/2012VisitorProfileStudy.pdf>).

Because Montana’s strength as a destination depends upon the natural landscape and outdoor activities (adventurous or not), targeting the niche markets associated with these activities offers strong opportunities for Montana’s tourism sector.

Today’s traveler seeks experiences rather than “sights” and judges a destination on the “existential or authentic experience” – the deep and lasting impression that it makes upon them and their lives. Offering the enthusiast a superb experience involving the favored activity or interest will have a strong marketing pull.

Like scenic beauty, however, many other states have the same activities and interests available. Montana must position itself, therefore, by emphasizing *excitement* rather than just *availability*.

Mapping the various locations for an activity or interest in relation to one another and to gateway towns facilitates multi-destination trip planning and mitigates any concerns about the availability of necessary services and amenities. The visitor can envision and plan a balanced trip with breathtaking experiences and relaxing hospitality. It “expands opportunities for these visitors to stay longer and spend more” (Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, 2009).

Linking to user generated content online – blogs, online communities, reviews – strengthens the credibility of the breathtaking experiences that are offered, supports trip planning, and builds excitement. The excitement generated can be significant, as online community members often express great passion not only for the activity but also the Montana setting. For example, motorcyclists on AdvRider.com rave about riding in the Gravelly Range and the BigSkyFishing.com blog exudes excitement about favorite fishing spots all around Montana. These word-of-mouth praises are incredibly valuable and can be found for most activities marketed to the non-resident visitor.

3.5. Build and expand photo and video libraries

This Strategic Action strengthens Montana's tourism marketing efforts.

Recommended Tactics

MTOT, Regions, CVBs, Communities, Tribes, Businesses & Organizations

- » Build, expand, and update an inventory of photo images and videos for use in the promotional campaigns, collateral and other promotion efforts.
- » Ensure that images and video materials project and reinforce the Montana Brand.
- » Ensure that images and video materials feature iconic locations, as appropriate.
- » Ensure that images and video materials include all seasons that the stakeholder wishes to promote.
- » Ensure that images and video materials are largely experiential.

Indicators of Success

- » Each region, CVB, Community, tribe, business and organization has a library of images that represents their tourism area in a way that is brand consistent.
- » Images and video materials are kept current.
- » Images and video materials include relevant icons and seasons, and show visitor experiences.

Background & Rationale

Appealing, experiential, and brand consistent images for use in marketing and promotion are key to inspiring potential visitors. Given the diversity of Montana's tourism offerings, it is important that each stakeholder build and maintain a library of images and videos that features its area.