

1.1. Establish icons of “spectacular unspoiled nature” throughout Montana

This Strategic Action strengthens Montana’s marketing efforts.

Recommended Tactics

TAC, MTOT, Regions, CVBs

- » Jointly identify specific locations throughout the state that epitomize the diverse array of “spectacular unspoiled nature” found in Montana. Icons can be selected not only for each tourism region, but also for specific niche markets.

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

Produce or select images of each icon for use in promotional campaigns and collateral and other promotion efforts.

- » “Iconify” these selected locations – using their images in tourism marketing materials consistently and in a manner that evokes an emotional response, so that they become recognizable by non-resident markets and come to represent the spectacular unspoiled nature of the region in the mind of non-resident visitors.
- » Work with public land management agencies to enlist their support in establishing the iconic nature of locations under their management.

Indicators of Success

- » Each tourism region has identified a location(s) that epitomizes the “spectacular unspoiled nature” that the region has to offer. Locations that are iconic for specific activities have been identified.
- » Images of these locations are used across marketing materials, such that they have become representative of their regions and have become recognizable to targeted non-resident markets.
- » These locations become “tourism icons” for their regions – recognizable and associated with Montana by potential visitors.

Background & Rationale

“Tourism icons” are landmarks that are instantly recognizable and represent to visitors important tourist attractions or experiences. Such icons can be crucial in the marketing of destinations. An iconic image can exert a very strong marketing influence, offering an experience that *pulls* the traveler to visit the destination, and is particularly useful when the destination is relatively unknown in the marketplace. New icons can be created through a process of (1) identification, (2) marketing emphasis, and (3) interpretation to evoke certain emotions.

Yellowstone National Park and Glacier National Park are Montana’s most recognizable icons. Montana’s branding research concluded that the state has a number of specific locations or natural features that *could be* iconic of its spectacular unspoiled nature, but these locations are not well known outside the state or are not associated with Montana in the minds of non-residents. The branding consultant recommended development of 8-10 such icons. ITRR’s Nickerson and Moisey similarly recommended the use of natural features and niche market features as icons (e.g., Virginia City and Nevada City to target visitors primarily drawn by history).

Identifying several iconic locations drawn from all six tourism regions that capture Montana's "spectacular unspoiled nature" will help the regions to market with brand consistency. Greater brand consistency strengthens the marketing power of the brand, which should improve the conversion rates of marketing efforts and bring more travelers to Montana.

Diversifying the iconic images *within* the Montana Brand will facilitate promotion of the less-visited regions, helping to balance distribution of tourism throughout the state. Through targeted marketing, these locations can become iconic for specific market segments and may help tap segments that have to date been underdeveloped. As a result, tourism could be increased in less-visited areas and seasons.

Resources

Nickerson & Moisey, 1999, *Branding a state from features to positioning: Making it simple?*, at <http://www.itrr.umt.edu/articles.htm>