

# DESTINATION MARKETING MERGES ONTO THE DIGITAL HIGHWAY

TECHNOLOGY HAS ACCELERATED DESTINATION  
AND TOURISM MARKETING – BUT THE RULES  
OF THE ROAD ARE THE SAME

wilson  
repositioning mature brands

## BRANDING OVERVIEW



### SEE ROCK CITY

For anyone driving throughout the southeastern United States in the middle of the last century

the message, "See Rock City," was nearly as common as "hi, y'all." One of the world's most successful destination and travel branding and marketing campaigns turned

barn roofs into billboards and a high rocky outcropping into a must-see destination for anyone traveling through Tennessee and Northern Georgia.





### BRANDS SHOULD ADDRESS & RE-EVALUATE THE FOLLOWING REGULARLY:

- determine your position
- define your offer
- identify your audience
- refine your message
- and ensure consistent delivery

Successful destinations work to establish this solid foundation, then incorporate new technology to connect with visitors and customers in ways that surprise and delight them.



### FORGET ABOUT CRUISE CONTROL

People plan for and travel differently now. They go faster and there is more competition for their time. Fortunately for marketers, a variety of tools, technology and platforms have evolved

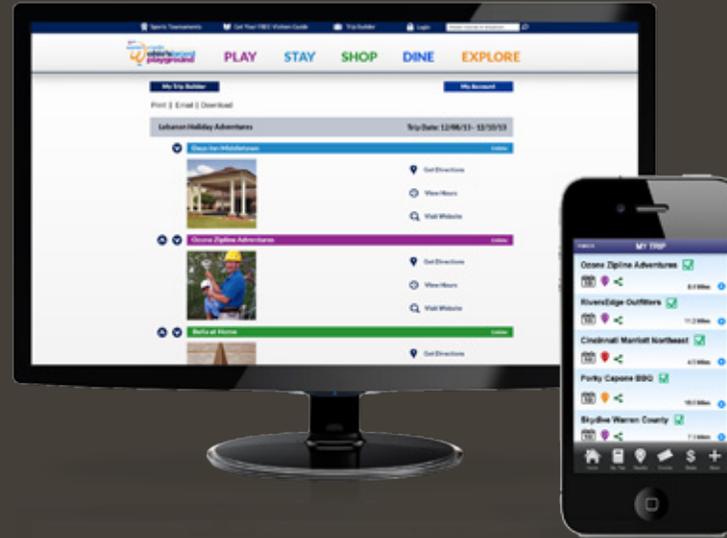
that enable them to keep pace by being much more targeted with their efforts. That's great news. While there's no speed limit on the digital highway, there is a passing lane: it's marked by complacency. These advances do not change the five gates of branding that made Rock City successful and are required for any brand to move forward.

## BRANDING EXAMPLES



### A BUILT-IN TRIP BUILDER

A built-in “trip builder” on the Ohio’s Largest Playground website enables visitors to plan their trip during their search. Easy for the customer, great for the businesses, and valuable data for the organization—it’s a win, win, win.



“Specificity is the key to a successful position”

### YOUR POSITION IS MORE THAN A PHYSICAL LOCATION

Understanding what makes your destination unique is the first step—and nearly everywhere has some claim to fame that differentiates them. It could be historical, cultural, a group of loosely related businesses, an event, or some creative combination of each or all of those that defines the area. But whatever it is, specificity is the key to a successful position that resonates in the market. For example, the ability to “See 7 States” differentiates Rock City from other high vantage points.

The famous Las Vegas theme, “What Happens Here, Stays Here,” recognized that while visitors had very different experiences through all of the locations varied attractions, they had one thing in common: a desire for freedom. Visitors to Las Vegas felt the freedom to dress, act and do things they didn’t feel in their daily lives or other destinations. The office, Broadway and Disney World all have well-defined expectations for behavior. The Las Vegas positioning gave the audience craving freedom permission to fill in the blanks with their own personal ideas—and nobody else has to know.



“Success can be attributed to sophisticated integrated marketing”



## RING THE BELL FOR RECESS

Similarly, Warren County in Southeastern Ohio might appear like any number of midwestern locations that are home to a major amusement park. But when you group all of the attractions and activities available for families to do together, it is much, much more than you can do or see in a single day. In fact it's a veritable playground loaded with options that other destinations couldn't claim and that families were looking for.

From that grew the position: **Ohio's Largest Playground**. The idea addresses the multiple agendas and interests that impact family decisions on where to spend their time

and risk leaving someone out. Not in Warren County—there's something for everyone! The result has been more than \$1 billion in tourism revenue since the introduction of the position.

While the phrase has been painted on a water tower (it's the Midwest, any highpoint from barn roof to bridge to water tower is fair game) the success can be attributed to sophisticated integrated marketing communications that work in concert to reach audiences most likely stay overnight and encourage their stay. In this case, families and especially those involved with youth travel sports teams. An informative website with an integrated booking and reservation system enables them to draw in and track new revenue.

## BRANDING EXAMPLES



## WORK THE CALENDAR

Your audience might vary by season, which will affect where and how you communicate. For example, at Ohio's Largest Playground, families flock to amusement parks in the summer when school is out. During the fall and before the holiday season, festivals and shopping are the main draws. It's seasonal and predictable, but requires very different messages throughout the year.

## WHAT DO YOU HAVE?

Knowing your audience and best customers is critical to determining who will be most interested in your offering and where and how to communicate with them.

To begin with you might have to start with some assumptions and observations:

- Who is already here?
- What are they looking for?
- What decisions and motivations led them here?

With this information start building your personas for

each group of decision-makers and influencers you identify. It might be a single persona, such as a mother planning a weekend vacation. Or the whole family might need to be convinced that your destination is the right choice.



## MATCH FACES TO PLACES

Adjust your personas as you actually observe behavior, continuously looking for commonalities across the different audiences. Using the Las Vegas example, some enjoy gambling, others shows, still others late-night revelry. On the surface, they might not seem connected, but underneath they are all motivated by the freedom to do something outside of their daily lives.

Continuously evaluating and taking stock of where you are and your audience is headed will enable you to move in sync with them. Note how your audience might be aging and changing. For example, while generations like Baby Boomers and Gen Xers might be drawn

to attractions that play on their nostalgia and sense of belonging. Millennials might prefer something that challenges them individually.

## STEPPING ON THE GAS

Fortunately, once you have this foundation of information, technology makes it much easier to find those groups. Search strategically for similar groups outside your current known markets to grow your audience.

Companies such as Esri combine demographic information with data maps enabling you to visualize your expansion. Organizations such as the **Pew Research Center** and the **United States Census Bureau** provide a wealth of data and insights.



“Continuously evaluating and taking stock of where you are and your audience is headed will enable you to move in synch with them ”



“Tailor experiences, creating loyal fans & increasing revenue”

### YES THEY DID AND TECHNOLOGY PROVES IT

As your messaging begins to take hold, ensure that you have the tools in place to track their actual experience before, during, and after their visit. Thanks to technology like predictive analytics and others, we can know with a degree of certainty

when members of our audience are planning a trip, what their interests are and when they will arrive. “Listen to what they say, but watch what they do” isn’t just an adage now. In many instances we can watch and tell precisely what they did while they were here through their digital footprint. That knowledge enables us to tailor experiences now and in the future, ultimately creating loyal fans and increasing revenue.



nSight For Travel “combines the world’s largest view of consumer shopping data with predictive marketing and revenue management solutions to deliver more guests to hotels.” In essence, they can know when potential visitors switch from thinking about their choices to actually taking action and booking their trip.

### RIGHT MESSAGE AT THE RIGHT TIME

Because you’ve established channels to communicate with your audience on a regular basis, you can see who is looking and interested in your destination. Social platforms are generally pretty clear and offer some built in collection and analysis. But for all of your properties, including web, you’ll want to add additional technology.

**Google Analytics** is a free and powerful tool. This will reveal rough numbers and locations that are great for high-level

reporting and synopsis. But to be truly effective you’ll want to invest in some type of marketing or email automation that can identify individual contacts.

Programs like **Mailchimp**, **Hubspot**, **Marketo** and open source **Mautic** provide increased levels of sophistication and detail. These programs enable you to clearly identify potential visitors’ interests and communicate in a more personal and conversational

way, delivering the right message at the right time. You’ll also see triggers that indicate that a particular audience member is ready to take the next step. This could be requesting a planning guide, visiting a certain number of pages, or returning to the site for third time. Of course, big data is taking hold here as well. We know that every digital touch creates a data point (or several) about that person and their activity. Whether we can see it, and better still, take action on it, are another story. But we’re getting better and better every day.

## DESTINATION MARKETING TECHNOLOGY

Technology like [AirSage](#) can employ mobile data to reveal how active an area is, how those visitors arrived there, when they arrived and even their movements within 100 yards. Other services can monitor and track what influenced their behavior.

[Arrivalist](#) can measure the way network-enabled devices change locations after being exposed to your communications. This provides direct insight into how your message has impacted their actions far beyond last click.



## WITH THEIR UNDIVIDED ATTENTION

Information is key to know how your communications are working or not. That's what really matters and what leaders want to see: did we get a return and how much?

Who actually shows up? What do they do and how long do they stay? Meeting actually face to face with visitors and those on your front line can't be replaced. It used to be the only way. Arming your associates with quick simple questions can

provide invaluable information. That information in aggregate can help you make more informed decisions. Anecdotal comments overheard or posted on social media can also provide valuable feedback. But even in the best circumstances, these can allow for huge gaps in misunderstood communications or vast swaths of incomplete information.

Once again, technology can pull back the curtain and show us what visitors really do after they arrive, not just what they say they do. While not everyone has total control over their environment and \$1 billion laying around like [Disney](#) to spend on magic RFID bracelets to track visitors, there are many technology options.





“ While getting visitors to your destination is the goal, once they’ve left your job isn’t over ”

### BACK TO REALITY

Communicating with the visitor after the visit when they are back in their routine is critical to understanding how they perceive their experience. What did they love and what can be improved to help replicate and enhance future experiences? It also sends the message that they were appreciated.

Follow up surveys are practically expected. There are countless online services that offer the technological capability, with [Survey Monkey](#), [Typeform](#), and [Google Forms](#) to name just a few. Because surveys are so common, it's important to ensure that yours stands out in a good way and collects the information you need.

Be respectful of their time and ensure that the interface works easily on a variety of platforms. An offer of some kind for their time will not only be appreciated, it will likely dramatically improve your response rate. The more inputs the better, plus it could add perspectives beyond the very disgruntled that are most likely to use the platform to vent their frustration.

Again, technology can dramatically expedite the process, transferring your offer directly to the recipient. If you offer a variety of choices it can be an opportunity to learn even more about your audience by their selection.

## DESTINATION MARKETING TECHNOLOGY



### NEVER FORGET: ALL ROADS LEAD TO YOU

While the marketing and communication process today might not be as simple as a message on a barn roof, it is much, much, more accurately targeted. Both require a lot of work, but technology

enables us to minimize our wasted efforts and accelerate what works to build a stronger relationship with our audience, increase loyalty, and attract more visitors to our destination.



### BRANDING

**See Rock City** <http://www.seerockcity.com/about/barn-history/>

**What Happens Here** <http://theweek.com/articles/459434/brief-history-what-happens-vegas-stays-vegas>

**Wilson Five Gates of Branding** [http://www.wilsonrebranding.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Wilson\\_Five\\_Gates.pdf](http://www.wilsonrebranding.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Wilson_Five_Gates.pdf)

**Ohio's Largest Playground** <http://ohioslargestplayground.com>

**Disney** <https://www.wired.com/2015/03/disney-magicband/>

### DESTINATION MARKETING TECHNOLOGY

**Esri** <http://www.esri.com/industries/>

**Pew Research Center** <http://www.pewresearch.org/>

**United States Census Bureau** <https://www.census.gov/>

**Google Analytics** <https://www.google.com/analytics/>

**Mailchimp** <http://www.mailchimp.com>

**Hubspot** <http://hubspot.com>

**Marketo** <http://marketo.com>

**Mautic** <http://mautic.org>

**nSight for Travel** <http://www.nightfortravel.com/>

**AirSage** <http://www.airsage.com/Industries/Tourism/>

**Arrivalist** <https://www.arrivalist.com/>

**Survey Monkey** <https://www.surveymonkey.com/>

**Typeform** <https://www.typeform.com/>

**Google Forms** <https://www.google.com/forms/about/>



## WILSON REBRANDING

We are an inventive agency with full-service skill sets and experience to match. We're passionate about helping mature brands rediscover their voice and audiences in the most effective ways possible. Why mature brands? Because we believe they have character and great stories to tell.

And we know that character combined with a great story is an unbeatable combination to create and hold attention. It's not easy, but it's always interesting.

Because we are rebelliously independent, we answer only to our own drive to produce great work and our clients' needs to see great results with exceptional personal service.



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We make old brands young again.

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