

Making North Carolina's Image

by Robie Patterson

"Quite often, the 'image' of a community...is even more important than the factual analysis." Special Business Department Report, Dun's Review.

"To visitors from all over the globe, North Carolina has become a special gathering place for the pursuit of pleasure, relaxation, good food and drink, and a taste of America that is uniquely down home and high style all at once." Brochure from N.C. Travel and Tourism Division, first place award in worldwide competition of Travel/Holiday and The Travel Advisor.

"Texas leads as the 'most likely choice' for the next plant location, followed by California, North Carolina, and Georgia." Facility Location Decisions, Fortune.

North Carolina has no "Department of Image," but putting the state's best foot forward is a full-time job for some 100 state employees working with a budget of \$4 million. The state Department of Commerce spends almost \$2 million a year advertising North Carolina as a good place to vacation and to do business. Moreover, corporate recruiters, ad agencies, chambers of commerce, university officials, and performing artists all find themselves selling the state in the normal course of day-to-day activities.

Domestic travel poster and economic development ad used in Japan.

なぜ 293 もの外国系企業がノース・カロライナで
ゆったりとくつろいでいるのでしょうか。

ノース・カロライナには何よりも多くの外国系企業
があります。
これらの外国系企業は、他の州と同じ理
由でやはりここにいる。
なぜならばノース・カロライナは、企業
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仕事で中断する心配をほとんど
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3-7193にお電話を
& IND RAL にて
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また各州の商務部 North Carolina
Department of Commerce, Division, Suite No 2601,
430 North Salisbury Street, Raleigh, North Carolina, 27611, U.S.A.
あてにご照会ください。
ノース・カロライナのファミリーも家庭に近いということがお
わかりになるでしょう。

North Carolina

ノース・カロライナ USA

Promoting the state has become an implicit part of doing business, from Gov. Hunt's meeting in Chicago with the head of Sears, Roebuck and Co. to the North Carolina Symphony's performance at Carnegie Hall. And glossy ads in 95 newspapers and magazines across the country are selling "North Carolina."

"To many people who have never been to North Carolina, and who don't even know anyone who has, North Carolina is the governor," says Hunt. When he meets corporate executives in Chicago or West Germany or Japan, Hunt usually opens his remarks by saying, "I bring you greetings from North Carolina, the eleventh most populous state and one of the fastest growing states in the nation."

A former speechwriter for Hunt explains the importance of that opening. "When the governor says that we might very well be the tenth largest state in the next census, people are shocked. They have no idea North Carolina is that big. Corporate officials are thinking market. When you crack the top ten, they know you have a market."

Attracting industry and commerce, though, represents only a part of the state's promotional effort. Brochures and ads sell the state to vacationers with spectacular panoramas of the hazy Smokies and aerial shots of the ribbon-like Outer Banks. Every year 300,000 people write the Division of Travel and Tourism for free pamphlets and maps. "We have five pieces of literature that won first place in international competition this year," says Travel and Tourism Director Daniel Roth. "Switzerland came in second."

Selling North Carolina as a distinctive tourist attraction has become a science. More than 80 percent (\$1.5 million) of the state's economic development advertising budget goes towards promoting tourist industries. McKinney Silver and Rockett, the largest ad agency in the state, has the job of determining the best way to promote North Carolina.

"If you think about North Carolina, who the hell will think this funny piece of geography is a great place to vacation?" says Michael Silver, executive vice president of the agency. "We're not an entertainment mecca. We have nothing to compete with Disney World. You've got to love nature. You've got to want a certain kind of family vacation."

As well as creating travel ads, the agency designs the state's industrial development advertisements, aimed at selling the state both to business persons and to their families. Ads in domestic and international trade publications promote the state as a place "where living is a pleasure." "More PhD's per capita" live in the Triangle area than anywhere else in the country, says

Selling Beaches and Mountains

McKinney Silver and Rockett handles \$28 million in accounts a year. Clients include Piedmont Airlines, North Carolina National Bank, Pine State Creamery Co., Goodmark Foods Division of General Mills, Carolina Power and Light Co., and, since July of 1976, the North Carolina Department of Commerce. Accustomed to designing ad campaigns for major business clients, the firm approaches the state's account with equal sophistication and experience.

"Each year we develop a marketing plan," says Michael J. Silver, executive vice president of the agency. "We do a hell of a lot of digging. We don't just throw darts."

For the travel package, Silver and his staff first determine exactly what kind of people travel. What are their ages, educational levels, incomes, and family composition? When do they travel and where do they go? What do they do when they arrive? And how much money do they spend? Only after compiling these statistics is the firm ready to design the ad campaign.

"Not everyone travels," Silver says. "Those who do have very specific characteristics. We find out where our most promising prospects are. We want to waste the fewest dollars on those who don't fit the profile."

The ads are designed to appeal to people who want a unique North Carolina-style vacation. First, they must persuade people that North Carolina has what they want in a vacation. But Silver has found that these ads must also convince families to spend their "extra" money on traveling instead of on something else. "Our competition is not Virginia or South Carolina or Georgia," says Silver, "but wall-to-wall carpeting, furniture, and paneling." To attract people who might spend vacation money on their homes instead, the agency places ads in home improvement and decorating magazines. "We're fighting

them on their own turf," Silver says.

While the firm must choose the right type of publications, it must also time the messages carefully. "We tend to cluster the ads, particularly in the gloomy, cold-weather states, during the first quarter of the calendar year," Silver says. "How gloomy, how slushy, how freezing, how stir-crazy people are—that affects the response rate."

Timing is important for another reason: North Carolina needs more tourists, not during the traditional summer vacation months, but during the spring and fall "shoulder seasons." "Now there's a problem," Silver says. "We can't selectively promote. We can't say, 'we want you to write for information, we want you to come to North Carolina, but for God's sake promise us that you'll come October through May.'" So the agency tries to appeal to the families most likely to take off-season vacations and to time the ads to coincide with when those families plan their vacations.

Besides researching family vacation habits and studying market trends, Michael Silver has to be aware of less tangible data. Like the private sector, the state has a side to its "business" that an ad agency can't control. "Current events and news coverage are a powerful influence," Silver told the N.C. Governor's Conference on Tourism in a speech last May. "Remember the Joan Little case? There's no way of estimating what effects, if any, it had on visitors or potential visitors from out of state," Silver said. "It sure didn't enhance our state's image, though."

Ad campaigns, like news coverage, build an image. To put the state's best foot forward, ads focus on North Carolina's most benign and most cherished common denominator—its natural resources. "There's something different around every corner," one ad reads, "from the wide beaches to the mile-high mountains." □

one ad. "North Carolina has a labor force that's pro-work and a government that's pro-business," says another.

Promoting North Carolina is not left to chance. Hunt recently appointed an official Advisory Committee on Travel and Tourism. A private trade association, the Travel Council of North Carolina, Inc., coordinates promotion and lobbying for the tourist industries. Through the North Carolina

Robie Patterson, a graduate student at the University of North Carolina School of Journalism, was a Center Fellow during the summer.

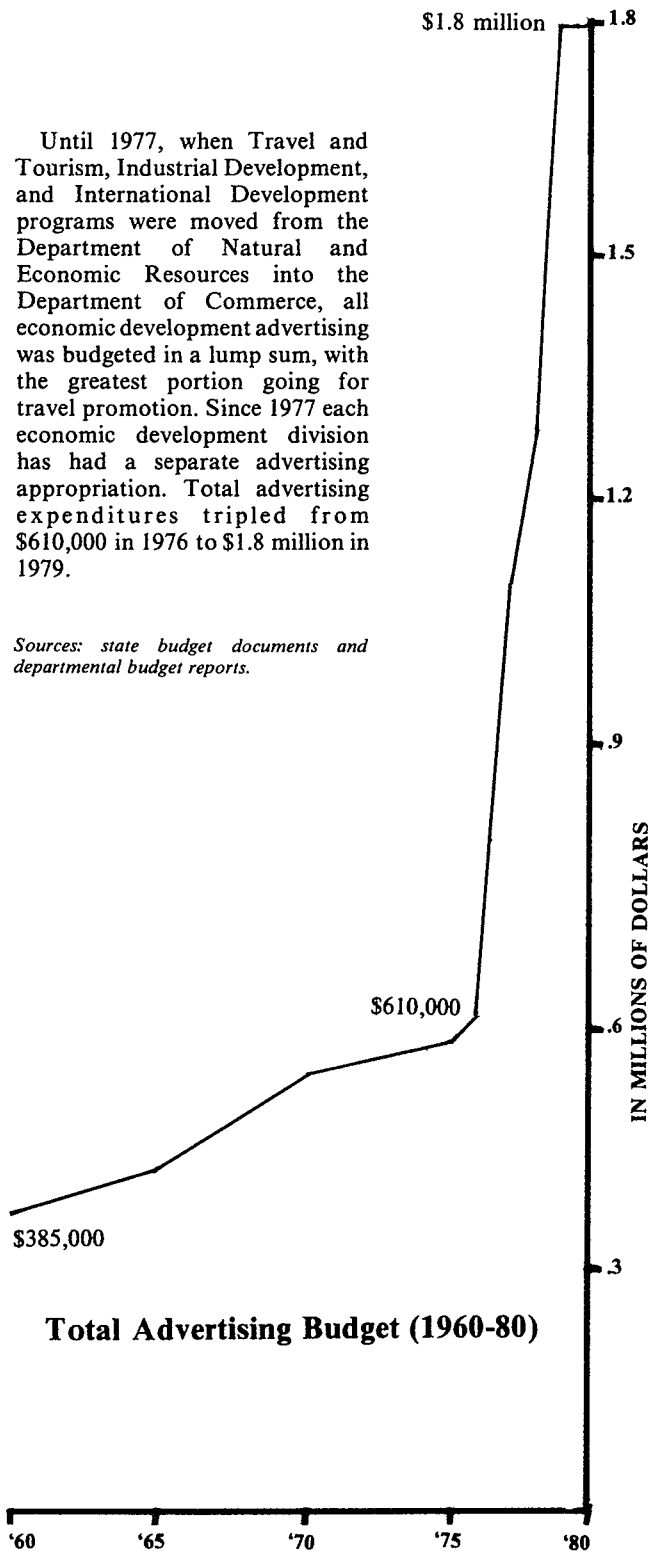
Industrial Developers Association, representatives of private businesses and local governments work to attract industry to the state. And city and county chambers of commerce, as well as individual industries such as banks and utilities, know the importance of promoting their areas as something special and unique.

"Over half of the new plant locations reported for the past five years were in the South," says a 1977 *Fortune* magazine survey. Promoting image is not a new activity for the state, but in an era of Sunbelt growth, it has grown into a sophisticated business. □

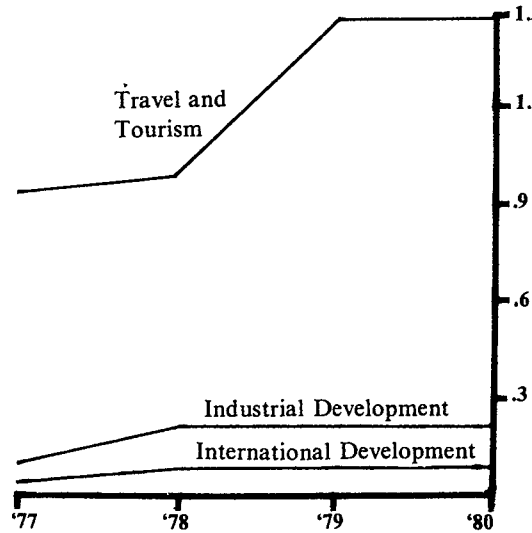
North Carolina's Ad Budget Soars

Until 1977, when Travel and Tourism, Industrial Development, and International Development programs were moved from the Department of Natural and Economic Resources into the Department of Commerce, all economic development advertising was budgeted in a lump sum, with the greatest portion going for travel promotion. Since 1977 each economic development division has had a separate advertising appropriation. Total advertising expenditures tripled from \$610,000 in 1976 to \$1.8 million in 1979.

Sources: state budget documents and departmental budget reports.



Advertising Budgets by Sector (1977-80)



Comparison With Other States

In 1979 the National Association of State Development Agencies (NASDA) surveyed its members (development departments in 36 states and the Virgin Islands) on expenditures for industrial development and tourist promotion during the 1978-79 fiscal year. The results of the survey, shown in the chart below, indicate that North Carolina was among the top state spenders for these purposes. All expenditures may not be precisely comparable between states because not all states reported expenditures in each category and because state development programs are sometimes organized differently. For example, for some states the international development budget may be included in the industrial development budget, rather than being listed as a separate expenditure. Also, no consideration is attempted for the size of the budget population.

	North Carolina expenditure	NC rank in expenditure (out of 37)	State with highest expenditure	State with lowest expenditure
Industrial development (excluding advertising)	\$1.1 million	5	Pennsylvania (\$11.9 million)	Wyoming (\$45,000)
Industrial development advertising	\$255,000	11	Florida (\$677,000)	Wyoming (\$3,000)
Tourist promotion (excluding advertising)	\$983,000	10	Michigan (\$3.6 million)	Louisiana (\$57,000)
Tourist promotion advertising	\$984,000	4	Virgin Islands (\$2.8 million)	Iowa (\$4,000)
International trade promotion	\$620,486	3	Illinois (\$1.2 million)	Wyoming (\$3,000)

Corporate Recruiting

Four years ago Data General Corporation, a Massachusetts-based computer firm, advertised in national computer-industry publications that it might locate in North Carolina. A "tremendous response" from highly educated, technically trained people across the country helped Data General decide to invest \$2 million in a facility in the Research Triangle Park, according to Jan Jensen, personnel manager for the new facility.

Corporate decisions to locate in North Carolina depend not only on economic factors like tax rates and real estate prices, but also on intangibles that attract the personnel a company needs. The state's image to potential employees from other parts of the country, as well as to executives who would be transferred to the new location, ranks near the top in considerations for companies like Data General.

"We don't sell North Carolina up front," says Jensen, a 12-year veteran of personnel work who recruits engineers and computer scientists from a scarce national supply. "But if we get the individual convinced from the technical point of view (to work for the company), that's when the area becomes important."

A native of New England, Jensen represents a breed of corporate official who finds himself, even as a newcomer, with a vested interest in the state's image. He sounds like a North Carolina native when he expresses concern over "the-kind of national coverage that we get because of the Communist Workers Party and the Ku Klux Klan."

"People will not pocket Greensboro as an isolated incident, nor should they," he says, explaining how an event like the November, 1979, shootings can influence a potential employee's decision to move to the state. "For all they know, that's just down the street from us. They don't want their children or themselves exposed to that kind of potential problem."

The impact of such an incident may be strongest on the small number of blacks trained in engineering and computer science, who, according to Jensen, are difficult to recruit from outside the South. "The perception of coming to North Carolina as a black professional from the Northeast or the Midwest is not very positive," Jensen says. "There's a hesitance to move into the South." For a company concerned about complying with federal equal employment opportunity regulations, such "hesitance" is important.

Jensen's concern with the state's image extends beyond publicity about racial controversies. "We don't need the kind of image that we get because Volkswagen has a nice little ad about 'this here part of North Carolina' that makes us all sound like rednecks," he says. "20/20 had a segment on Johnston County and all the indigent labor there. That's the kind of program that technical people tend to watch, and they're very socially oriented, very sensitive to these issues. We don't need that kind of coverage."

But Jensen remembers that before he moved South, his impressions were "pretty typical" for a New Englander. "For years I knew North Carolina was where most of my cigarettes came from. Other than that, I hadn't thought a lot about it. When I came here to visit, I had a hell of a time locating the place on my mental map."

People from other regions lump North Carolina with the rest of the South, Jensen says, and their impressions are not positive. "Backwardness, terrible school systems, racial problems—that's the poor southern image. It's amazing how much time I spend defending North Carolina against some of these perceptions."

Who could be better equipped to deal with those perceptions than someone who has experienced them himself? It would not be surprising to find that transplants like Jensen are, in fact, some of North Carolina's most effective salesmen. □

Data General's Computer Room



Photo Courtesy of Raleigh News and Observer