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Mall Of America

By Cheryl Madeley

When out shopping with my sisters, we decided to visit the famous Mall of America. My eldest sister announced that she was keen to look for a store specializing in children's clothing. I decided with my younger sister to do some shopping for clothes for ourselves, and she also wanted to buy something for her husband's 40th birthday. Upon arrival, we picked up a comprehensive directory that listed clothing stores for loads of different items of clothing.

We started off by visiting a store for kid's clothes for my older sister. She found some great items for her kids, at really low prices. We then opted for a coffee break at a little place just by the store, which also sold delicious cakes and pastries, in which we took great delight! Next stop was a high-fashion clothes store I was excited to visit. According to the map in the directory, it was on the second floor, and not too far from where we were, so I just couldn't resist. After admiring the entire stock, I came across this gorgeous silk shirt – purple and green, ideal for the summer. I went to the cash desk to buy it and was amazed at how low the price was! For such an original, stylish garment, I really couldn't believe it. We were all very happy with the range of shops, the prices, and how easy it was to find your way around. Next, we headed towards a golf shop for Thomas's birthday – fitting, given our husbands were playing golf together as we shopped! We spotted a great golf shirt at a really good price – ideal for Thomas, and an ideal birthday present he'd really appreciate.

My youngest sister Helen was still eager to visit a specialist swimwear store. She was only four weeks from a round the world cruise, and had been furiously dieting to look good in her swimsuit – it had to be just perfect. On the third floor there was a swimwear shop, but it was more targeted towards kids. The shop manager was particularly helpful, and directed us towards a specialist swimwear shop where we would be more likely to find what we were looking for.

Helen was very pleased with the vast range of swimsuits in their shop, and they had loads for her to choose from. Although this store was slightly more expensive, it was really high quality, and definitely worth the money.

We reverted back to the directory to help find somewhere good to eat our lunch. We decided on a great little restaurant right next door to an accessory shop that caught our eye. We each found

accessories to match our earlier purchases, and were delighted overall.

Our visit to the mall was great fun, and a really exhausting day out. We each found stores to meet our budget and taste, and were delighted with what we bought, although we didn't manage to visit even a fraction of the stores in the mall. We all agreed that the best tactic is to go with a list of what you're looking for and consult a directory to find the best places to go.

Cheryl is the editor of a top

<http://www.reviewshopping.com>

website, and she also runs a site about

<http://www.rebeloutdoors.com>

The Bold and The Beautiful

By Karen E. Hipp

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Many of you may never used billboards in your marketing efforts, but there is much that can be learned in terms of marketing by studying them.

I happen to live in Orlando, Florida, probably one of the largest "billboard capitals" of the nation. Our major Interstate, I-4, is littered with them. There are so many you can't help but look at them. And they're expensive. Plan on about \$6,000 a month for one billboard on I-4, and that's without lights or any special production elements.

The big guys here, Disney World, Universal Studios and Sea World has most of the billboards on I-4. Well, they are the ones with the money. And they are quite elaborate.

Three-dimensional, specialty lights, moving pieces, top-outs. The first time they put the ET (you know "phone home") billboard up on I-4, I almost drove off the road, it looked so real.

Unfortunately, not all creative teams who come up with designs for billboards have the same knowledge or skill level that the folks at Universal have. Too bad, because if you have a poor billboard design, you might have well stuffed your money into that perennial black hole (this goes for poorly designed newspaper and magazine ads too).

I hate to pick on one company's billboards, but they are so bad, it makes them an easy target. We'll call this company's billboards Easy Target Mall (the billboards happen to be promoting a mall). Because there was a new mall opening in our town, right on I-4, the Easy Target Mall wanted to put lots of billboards on Interstate-4. So they proceeded to buy several billboards right at the ramp entrances and exits to the new mall. OK. Not a bad strategy so far. While the new mall was under construction, Easy Target Mall already had their billboards up. (Just to say, "Hey don't look at them, look at me!).

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The first problem arose with the first billboard series for Easy Target Mall. One had a very colorful background with a wrapped present on it. The copy read "It's somebody's birthday somewhere." My first reaction was "So? How does this pertain to me?" I thought about it as I continued down the road (that's a bad sign if someone has to try to figure out your advertising message). Half way home it hit me "Oh," I said. "They are trying to imply that because someone is having a birthday somewhere, you might also happen to know someone having a birthday and that means you should go to Easy Target Mall to buy a gift. Right?"

Hands on buzzers. True or False. Do you think it's a good idea that the consumer has to try to figure out what your ad means? Reading a billboard while going 55 miles an hour? If you even see it your lucky. How many of you think that consumers would even bother to try to figure out what it meant?? Oh, maybe one in 10,000? I started laughing and wished I had a piece of the action in selling that billboard space to Easy Target Mall.

This is what happens when creative types have no common sense. And believe me, there are a lot of them out there. But aren't the people from Easy Target Mall supposed to be intelligent enough to say

"No, ad agency, this won't work. Go back and come up with something else." But, it got approved at the mall level, then the company's regional level and most frightening at the corporate headquarters that own Easy Target Mall. Wouldn't ya think someone would say, "Hey, the emperor has no clothes." I swear that ad agencies must cast some kind of spell on their clients to get some of their work approved!

But yet, it gets worse.

Now the new mall is getting ready to open in a week. So Easy Target Mall, who obviously has been planning this new strategy for months, changes all of their billboards that are near the new mall to a new series of "Hey, can you figure this out" billboards.

Because Easy Target Mall has more department stores than the new mall, they decide that will be their new angle. "We're bigger, so we must be better." So what do their new billboards say? "You Need Big." Followed with visuals of big blown up pictures of various merchandise like sunglasses and a purse. This might work if the mall was trying to attract local residents. They could follow it up with TV and magazines and newspaper ads so that people would eventually get it. Which is what Easy Target Mall has been doing.

BUT, they are trying to mostly attract tourists! Who will maybe only see the billboard once, if they are lucky. So the tourist says as they drive down I-4, "You Need Big." And all of these billboards are right outside this new BIG mall that they are looking at as they read the billboard. All the tourist is getting in his mind is "Big Mall." Like the one we're staring right at. Yeah, let's shop there!

One of the big blown up pictures on the billboard looks like cigarettes criss-crossed on top of a red background (at least that's the way it looks at 60 miles an hour). I thought "No way, they CAN'T be promoting buying large cigarettes at Easy Target Mall. It took me several times of really trying to stare at the billboard (and not get in a wreck at the same time) to finally figure

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out what it was. It was a blown up picture of white shoelaces on a red tennis shoe. All you see are the white shoelaces. Trust me, it doesn't look like big white shoelaces.

And here's the REAL fun part. The creative types for Easy Target Mall have made the logo for Easy Target Mall so SMALL (not big) that you can't READ what mall it is! So you just assume it's the mall you're currently staring at, the new mall.

If I were the new mall, I would send a great big thank you letter and fruit basket to Easy Target Mall for advertising their new mall, for FREE!

What does all of this mean? You can get a great, free education by just studying the variety of TV, newspaper and magazine ads out there to learn what you shouldn't do with your advertising! It's everywhere. And, feel grateful that you aren't spending \$6,000 a month for a billboard on I-4.

Easy Target Mall should have used this for their copy:

We have more stores than they do.
Easy Target Mall

Just 3 miles down the road



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