

Book

8



The Keys to Winning City Taglines

‘The Keys to Winning City Taglines’,
is the eighth in a series of e-Books from
Bill Baker of Total Destination Marketing.
It provides valuable insight for leaders
who are considering launching a branding
initiative for their community.

The Keys to Winning City Taglines

I'd love to have a dollar for every time I have heard, "What we need is a tagline like 'I Love NY' or 'Virginia is for Lovers.'" These statements are usually from an elected official or those who are making their first foray into place branding and are seeking a magic wand to transform the image of their city on a small budget. Tagline envy can be an alert that the branding effort may be entering hazardous territory.

Taglines and logos for places can be either a great window into the brand or a controversial lightning rod. At play are the very close emotional ties between residents and their perceptions of the place they live, the need to counter-balance with the perceptions and needs of external audiences and the strengths of competitors. Maintaining this objective, market focus can be challenging.

Creating the perfect tagline for a city that

is going to be embraced by all citizens and stakeholders is virtually impossible.

Too often officials in coveting an "I Love NY" tagline are holding out for a grand slam home run from the magical words they will create. A tagline (or look) alone cannot stimulate visitation, relocation or economic development unless that prospect has also been exposed to other compelling brand messages and experiences.



What's More Important than a Tagline?

With the rollout of a new brand strategy, care has to be taken to ensure that the tagline doesn't become a distraction that erodes the importance of the more potent parts of the destination's brand toolkit. While the logo and tagline frequently receive a lion's share of attention, it's

actually the task of pinpointing the positioning that should really be given the most consideration. If you don't get this part right, everything else will miss its mark, since it is the positioning that informs and shapes all other elements of the brand strategy – not your tagline.

We like to challenge our clients to think beyond their logo and tagline, to ask them, “Will customers know what your brand is if they don't see your logo or tagline?” This stimulates them to optimize the right positioning, products, experiences, copy, colors, style, voice, and brand focus. Your tagline simply represents another tool that you may or may not need in your arsenal.

Action Point:

Don't let your tagline distract your brand strategy development.

What is a Tagline?

Many still don't fully appreciate that a brand is much more than a logo, tagline, or advertising theme. Firstly, a tagline (or logo) is not your brand! And it's not the theme

for an advertising campaign. A tagline is a word or short phrase that concisely captures the spirit of the Destination Promise and brand essence. In a nutshell, a tagline (and logo) should act as a key or cue to unlock what the target customer can recall of the positive associations they may hold about the place.

Successfully crafting a tagline involves examining the context and space in which the city fits into the customer's world. There is no shortcut or room for politics, parochialism, appeasement or self-interest. This is quite a challenge for communities that may have many competing voice. It's essential that the tagline be founded on a strong strategic foundation and not just clever, meaningless puff.

Action Point:

A great tagline should 'explode' with meaning and benefits for target audiences.

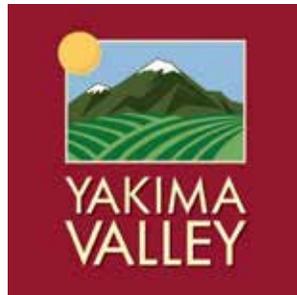
Do You Need A Tagline?

After defining what the place stands for, your first challenge is to consider whether

to have a tagline. That's correct! A tagline is optional, not essential. What's Starbucks' tagline? They don't have one! Neither do Yakima Valley WA, Durham NC or Dunedin, New Zealand. They leave their brand communications and excellent experience delivery to express who they are and what sets them apart.

All successful place brands do not always enjoy universal endorsement or agreement within the community. And that particularly applies to logos and taglines. At this point you must be extra vigilant to ensure that weak, diluted or off-brand elements don't start slipping into the toolkit simply to keep everyone happy.

John Cooper, President of Yakima Valley Tourism, explains why Yakima Valley WA doesn't have a tagline, "In our branding we focused on identifying what people think and feel about the Yakima Valley, rather



than a catchy slogan. We've concentrated our efforts on reinforcing and building on the emotional benefits for our visitors through the content and style of our communications and the experiences we deliver."

Action Point:

Consider whether you need a tagline at all.

Are Taglines Dead?

To say that taglines may be dead is certainly an exaggeration. But some destination and marketing leaders are increasingly saying that they are relics of the analog era when long-form advertising ruled. In addition to Starbucks, many of today's most admired brands such as Nordstrom, Lululemon, and Whole Foods have consciously decided not to use taglines.

The ubiquitous rise of social media campaigns and the corresponding decline of traditional advertising and long copy advertising have heralded the reduced need for taglines. With messages being

confined to 140 characters on Twitter, short videos and posts on Facebook and images on Instagram, there's little room for a tagline. Then of course there's the limited and compressed screen of a mobile phone onto which everything has to be condensed.

Action Point:

The role of taglines is diminishing.

Why Great City Taglines Are Few and Far Between

According to urban economist Richard Florida, "Attaching a catchy tagline to a place doesn't work unless it captures something real, authentic, and evocative - and that's a whole lot harder than it looks. Many cities end up with clunkers. Plus, it can't just be a cute catch-phrase. It needs to reflect something unique or special the city has to offer."¹



The tagline should promise or infer something that has meaningful benefits and can be valued by customers. It must be more than simply a clever line that carries no clear meaning, value or benefit. Great taglines for place brands are few and far between. This is partly because of the perilous path they must endure from creation to deployment.

Too many destination taglines are simply marketing speak or clichés that do nothing to advance the identity of the place. Some aspire for a Nike-like "Just do it!" tagline but settle on something that's so esoteric or abstract that it needs expensive marketing communications to convey its meaning and make it persuasive. These are resources that most small city destination marketing organizations don't have.

Action Point:

Taglines never stand alone. They must be given meaning and context.

¹ Richard Florida, "America's Most Ridiculous City Slogans" (The Atlantic May 23 2011)

The Value of Descriptive Taglines

I like the perspectives of destination branding specialist Tom Buncle from Yellow Railroad based in Edinburgh, Scotland.

“Taglines are brilliant when they are inspired, convey a destination’s benefits succinctly in a way that evokes the essence of the place, and could be nowhere else. It helps too if they say something new to you and say it in a way that grabs you, make you smile or think ‘yeah, that’s nicely put’, i.e. impactful, memorable, and usually containing one strong idea. But mostly they fail spectacularly. And how much money has been wasted generating these mediocre calls to action in insipid taglines?

“If you can’t come up with the Holy Grail of a killer tagline, use a descriptive one or one that anchors the place in a single powerful idea, e.g. Angus: Scotland’s Birthplace or Innsbruck: Capital of the Alps which at least paints a picture of your destination, or be brave and *don’t have one*. In other words trust your product, get your brand and marketing communications right.”²

Action Point:

Taglines should anchor the place in a single, believable and powerful idea.

Descriptive Taglines Hit the Mark

Further to Tom Buncle’s point, descriptive taglines speak simply and directly. Importantly, they’re unambiguous and work 24/7 in a single powerful idea. They’re probably not sexy, but they earn their keep – especially if

you have a small budget. Other examples of these are Oshkosh Wisconsin’s

Event City; Sitka AK Where Art Meets Wild Alaska; and Austin TX, Live Music Capital of the World. They provide a clear window into what customers can expect and espouse a clear beacon for the marketing of partners.



Action Point:

Taglines are best when they succinct and unambiguous.

² Destination Branding for Small Cities – Baker – Creative Leap Books)

Evaluation Checklist for Taglines

Effective taglines are always challenging to craft, but as I have outlined for places, it can be an even trickier journey. For cities and regions the bar is a lot higher than for individual businesses. Just because you like or don't like a particular line isn't enough. It needs to be objectively evaluated to pass your strategic criteria, but a deeper consideration is needed to determine whether a tagline will actually add value or whether it will be a distraction. Here are some of the criteria to consider when evaluating the appropriateness of various tagline options.

- It's a tagline you can own and not the same or similar to other places
- It hints at a reward or benefit
- It's credible and sustainable
- It's short, usually less than five words
- It provides a "window" into the brand
- It's instantly understandable
- It works with and enhances the logo
- It's easy to remember

- It does not have negative connotations

Others (other what?) are devalued because the customer suspects that the proposition is an exaggeration or simply cannot be true. Lines such as "the best of", "we've got it all", "best kept secret", "friendliest place" and "warm welcome" are usually not credible and are considered inane and patronizing. Other words that are at risk of being over-used include explore, discover, and friendly and perhaps the worst of all, a great place to live, work and play.

Action Point:

When evaluating taglines establish criteria to assess appropriateness.

Success Stories

Tillamook County OR

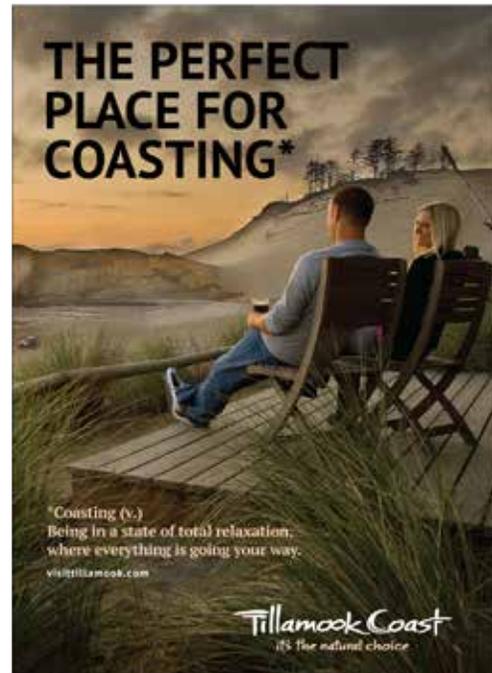
Tillamook County OR is a large county on the Oregon Coast that includes vast unspoiled beaches, four bays, nine rivers, dramatic seastacks, three National Wildlife Refuges, six county parks and 10 state parks. Total Destination Marketing and

Axia Creative were engaged to develop a destination branding strategy to guide the marketing of Tillamook County as a unified destination for the first time.

TDM's comprehensive methodology involved extensive stakeholder outreach, consumer research in Portland, the simultaneous creation of a brand strategy and a tourism development strategy, a new name for the region and the introduction of a new destination marketing organization (DMO).

Because of the past fragmented marketing focus on individual communities, the Tillamook County name was not widely recognized as a tourism destination. The creation of the Tillamook Coast name provides a strong connection to the famed Oregon Coast experience. It brings focus to the dramatic coastline, diverse waterways, abundant recreational opportunities and beachfront villages. The tagline, 'It's the Natural Choice' highlights the region's natural attractions, but importantly pro-actively positions the region against its much more urbanized competitors.

The brand has resulted in record visitation, strong recognition of the new name and unprecedented levels of collaboration in destination marketing across the region.



How Can We Help?

When you're ready to start your brand planning and design, we can introduce you to techniques specifically designed to meet the special needs for branding and marketing cities and regions.

Free Consultation: Take advantage of a no-charge consultation with a destination branding expert to discuss your community branding challenges and needs.

To get started, send us an email at: billb@destinationbranding.com

TDM's One-Day Branding Retreat is the ideal way to kick-start your branding journey through an intensive day that features interactive presentations, brand workshops and discussions.

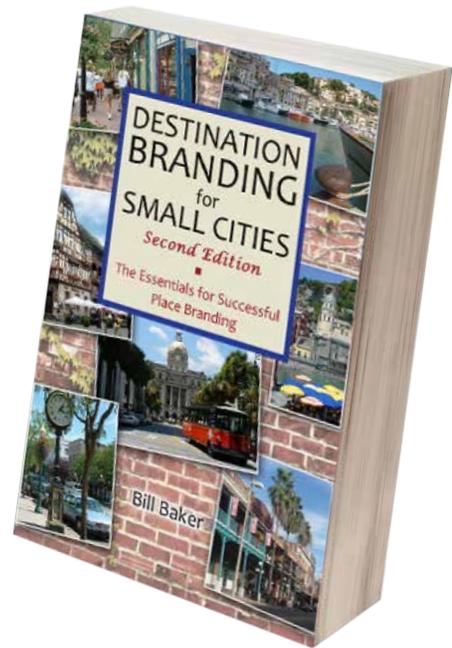
TDM's Brand Discovery Lab is an intensive 4 to 6-week program that is custom-designed for communities wanting to fast track their brand.

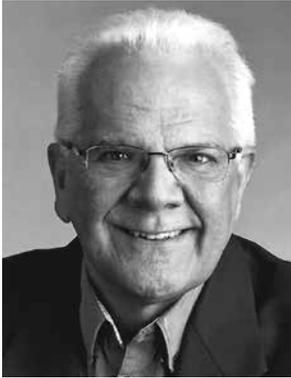
TDM's Destination Branding Strategy follows our proven 7A Destination Branding process. It involves extensive qualitative and quantitative research to enable solutions deeply grounded in thorough research in your operating and competitive environments.

Destination Branding for Small Cities

If you liked this e-Book, you'll love our comprehensive book, Destination Branding for Small Cities. This best-selling book cuts through the theory, advertising-speak and jargon to simplify and clarify the practice of branding places improved tourism, economic development, placemaking and urban design. It provides real world examples, as well as affordable, proven tools, templates and checklists to help breathe life into small city branding and marketing.

Available at
amazon.com





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Todd Mayfield is a Principal and the Group Creative Director for Axia Creative. Axia is an industry leader in the design of brand identity, wayfinding and visual communications for destinations throughout the US and Canada.



Both Bill and Todd serve on the international expert panel for the Place Brand Observer which is a library of research, case studies, lively expert interviews and reflections on latest trends, ideas and opportunities. We invite you to visit and explore placebrandobserver.com.





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