

# Destination Branding for Small Cities

REVIEW BY BILL GEIST, ZEITGEIST CONSULTING

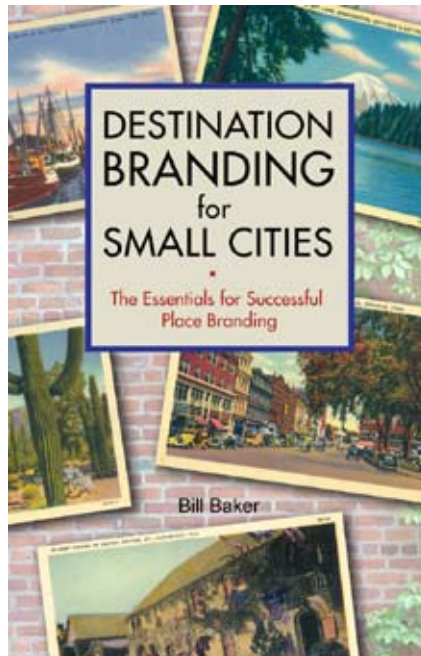
Destination Marketers around the globe are scrambling to develop, freshen or re-articulate their destination's brand identity. Sadly, most of these efforts fall far short of the mark because proponents confuse the science of branding with the art of advertising or the creation of a tagline or logo.

Internationally respected destination marketer Bill Baker makes the distinction crystal clear in the new book "Destination Branding for Small Cities." And, don't let the title confuse marketing practitioners in larger destinations. The tenets in Baker's book apply to virtually all destinations, regardless of size.

As traditional marketing strategies find less and less of a foothold with today's consumer, a strong brand is essential for any product. Baker makes the case that for destinations, it isn't even an option.

While many communities believe they do not possess a brand identity, Baker points out that virtually every place does. The challenge is that these organically grown brands may not communicate the desired marketing message to resonate with prospective visitors and provide a competitive advantage. Baker stresses the need to be honest about existing brand identities because what is already in the mind of the consumer will drive further experiential branding.

Thus, rather than "putting make-up on an aardvark," Baker suggests a seven step process that includes assessing the organic brand that currently exists, positioning the destination's attributes against consumer needs and desires and articulating the brand. And, to his credit, the seven step approach



is far from being a cookie-cutter approach. Baker knows that every destination is different and, thus, each process needs to be unique within his framework.

One of the strongest facets of the book is how Baker defines the differences between taglines, logos, slogans, key words and images. And, he does it with a wide array of examples of those destination brands that are sensationally effective...and those that fail to be distinguish themselves as anything more than a "me-too" slogan.

Baker has been in the tourism trenches for decades and was part of the team that brought Australia's "Shrimp on the Barbee" campaign to life. Thus, he knows that it takes far more than research and great creative to develop a resonant destination

brand. And, that's why three of the seven steps focus on the implementation stage. That's good news for Destination Marketers, as an ill-designed brand roll-out has cost many DMOs credibility in the eyes of their stakeholders. Baker cautions brand managers to be just as cautious with implementation as they are doing the initial brand assessment.

Just as the best brands are a collection of stories that make up a persona, Baker is a wonderful storyteller, weaving case studies in and out of his easy-to-follow steps for brand success. Readers will learn why the best brands got that way. They'll also read cautionary tales of destinations that veered away from the process and ended up with a snappy tagline that says little, if anything, about who they are and why anyone should care.

"Destination Branding for Small Cities" is the finest treatise on this much misunderstood topic to date. Baker's debut book clearly defines what destination brands are and aren't...and outlines a clear path for those that want to do branding right. If you are involved in the marketing of destinations, this is a must-read.

Destination Branding for Small Cities is published by Creative Leap Books, the list price is \$24.95 and is available from Amazon.com.

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*Consultant, speaker and author Bill Geist is the President of Zeitgeist Consulting, specializing in the Destination Marketing field. The second edition of his book, "Destination Leadership for Boards" has just been released. You can learn more about Bill at BillGeist.com.*

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