

# The Importance of Investing in Promotion

Destination marketers are storytellers, economic developers, rural promoters, crisis managers and—perhaps most critically as it is part of every hat they wear—brand creators.

A strong and lasting brand defines a destination and sets it up for success. Taking this role away from the destination marketer allows others to tell the story of a place—not necessarily for the better.

Destinations' tourism marketing budgets face cuts or elimination far too regularly due to politics of expedience and convenience. But **before putting that funding on the chopping block, legislators would be wise to take a page from corporate America about the power of a strong brand.**



# The Importance of Promotion and the Value of Brand Affinity

The volume of messages consumers are hit with has risen dramatically in recent years. **A strong brand allows a company to break through the noise and deliver relevant content that translates to sales.** The results have driven advertising spend upward year after year, with eMarketer's 2018 advertising forecast predicting that \$221 billion will be spent on advertising in the United States alone.<sup>63</sup> For comparison, Comcast, the top corporate advertiser in 2016, spent \$5.6 billion, where the median state marketing budget for travel and tourism was just \$6.3 million last year.

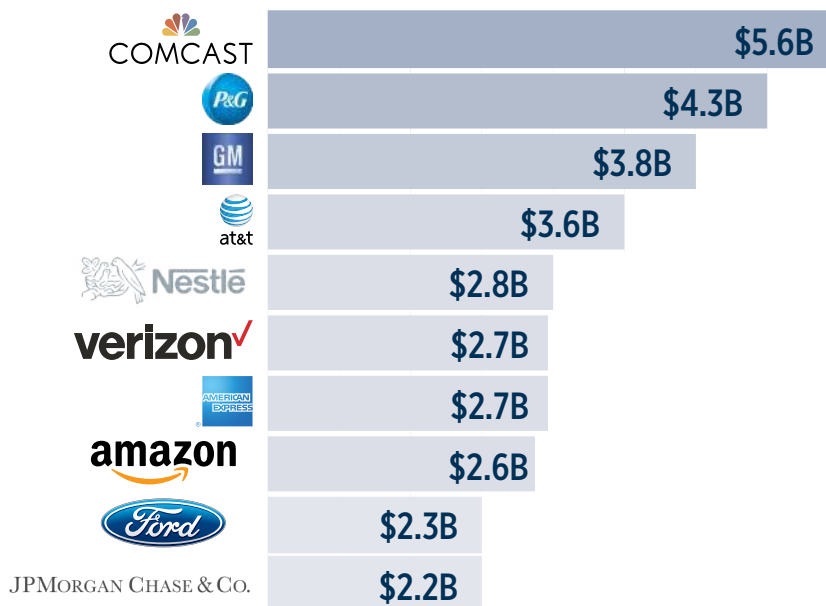
The intangible nature of branding can be difficult to understand. **At some point or another, most brands have faced questions about why marketing dollars are necessary. There is always a naysayer who feels the company or product is well-known enough to stand without marketing support.** Budget struggles and competing priorities force difficult decisions, and the dollars dedicated to promotion can be seen as an easy solution. **But this temporary financial salve leads to falling behind the competition, making it difficult—if not impossible—to recover.**

Relying on customers' awareness of a brand is insufficient. There is a sharp difference between brand awareness and brand affinity.

Brand affinity is where the real value is—the feeling and meaning created around a company or product will define its success or failure.

Practically every American is aware of brands like Nike, Apple, and Coca-Cola, yet these companies continue to invest heavily in shaping their brand's perception and cultivating customer affinity because they see a direct return. **Travel destinations, like corporate brands, need to engender brand affinity to remain competitive and to continue growing.**

Top 10 Corporate Advertisers in 2016



Source: AdAge Datacenter

## CASE STUDY



## Creating a United Brand: P&G's "Proud Sponsor of Mom"

### OUTSIDER PERSPECTIVE

P&G's products are not unlike a destination's features and attractions. Independently, they have value, but when coordinated together, the individual parts are elevated through the feeling and purpose created by the unified brand.

For the 2010 Olympics, P&G debuted its now long-running "Thank You, Mom" campaign. Designed to pay tribute to the moms behind Olympic athletes, **the campaign coordinated P&G's various brands in a way it typically had not.**

Consumers were long familiar with Tide, Pampers, Bounty, Pantene, Gillette\* and more, but for this campaign, while the product lines were featured, the close of each ad carried the P&G brand, positing it as the "proud sponsor of moms."

"We needed a big idea," Marc Pritchard, P&G's Global Brand Officer, told the audience at the Association of National Advertisers (ANA) Masters of Marketing Conference. "An idea that would integrate the purpose of P&G, which is to make life better through our products with the purpose of the Olympics, which is to make life better through sports."<sup>64</sup>

The resulting campaign connected emotionally with moms—who saw every Olympic athlete as someone's child—and in the background, they saw the brands that helped these moms as they made sacrifices in support of their children's dreams.

**The campaign fostered awareness, but more importantly, affinity for P&G.** In 2012, P&G elevated its Olympics sponsorship, becoming a "Worldwide Olympic Partner." According to the ANA, the 2012 iteration of "Thank You, Mom" was the most successful campaign in the company's 175-year history.<sup>65</sup> **Reuters reported that the 2012 Olympic Games gave P&G a \$500 million sales boost.<sup>66</sup> Favorability of the brand increased by 13 percent and trust by 11 percent.** Recall of the ads was 38 percent higher than other Olympic sponsors. AdWeek's Tim Nudd called P&G "the Usain Bolt of 2012 Olympic Sponsors."<sup>67</sup>



\* Tide, Pampers, Bounty, Pantene, Gillette and P&G The Proud Sponsor of Moms are trademarks of The Procter & Gamble Company, its subsidiaries or affiliates.

P&G has continued its "Thank You, Mom" campaign over the course of every Olympics since 2010. The latest iteration for the 2018 PyeongChang games tackled bias, featuring a Muslim speed skater and a female hockey player while asking consumers to "imagine if the world could see what a mom does." The Olympics marketing "has enormous impact, because it creates conversation," said Pritchard. "People like to talk about it, and it endears our brand to consumers because they see that we talk about things they care about."<sup>68</sup>

## CASE STUDY



## A Hotel Perspective: The DoubleTree Cookie Community

### OUTSIDER PERSPECTIVE

In today's environment, brand management is a minute-to-minute challenge for corporations and destinations. Building two-way relationships with a social media community can drive loyalty and advocacy in a way that traditional one-way marketing could not achieve alone.

Brand affinity is changing. **Marketing has changed from a monologue to customers into a dialogue with customers.** Building and protecting a brand in 2018 does not come with the luxury of total message control. Social media and review websites give consumers the power to influence brands. **Protecting a brand is not about trying to control these expressions, but about creating a strong community of storytellers that enhance the brand.**

Since 1986, Hilton's DoubleTree Hotels treat every guest to a warm cookie upon arrival.<sup>69</sup> Why? As the brown paper bag the cookie comes in explains, "Cookies are warm, personal and inviting, much like our hotels and the staff here that serves you."

This simple expression of hospitality has created a devoted fan base. Their social footprint is filled with cookie conversation on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. There are innumerable food bloggers putting forward their attempts at the DoubleTree cookie recipe, which remains a secret. Reviews of DoubleTree hotels are filled with comments about the warm cookies. Serious Eats' Erin Zimmer wrote of her experience, "DoubleTree seemed like just another hotel chain to me, until I stayed there—and was handed a warm cookie with my room card. Ah, that's right, this is the cookie hotel!"<sup>70</sup>

The DoubleTree cookie is central to the hotel's brand, and the company has continued to build around it. In 2017, DoubleTree launched its latest marketing campaign, "Your Warm Cookie Awaits," aimed at inspiring others to make the world a more welcoming place.

"At DoubleTree by Hilton, we know that the spirit of hospitality doesn't disappear after check-out—and that small actions can have a big, positive impact on individuals, groups and the world," said Stuart Foster, vice president of global brand marketing for DoubleTree.<sup>71</sup> "Through the 'Your Warm Cookie Awaits' campaign, we hope to encourage more people to fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality—whether that's extending a warm DoubleTree cookie, volunteering for a local charity or simply sharing a smile with a stranger."

**The "Your Warm Cookie Awaits" effort took a single brand element and made it about more than room nights—it established DoubleTree as part of the local community and the global community.**



# Destinations are Brands Worth Investment

## KEY TAKEAWAY

Brand awareness alone does not guarantee returns. The investment in cultivating brand affinity creates an emotional bond to a destination that will differentiate it from the competition and deliver greater long-term value.

Travel destinations, like products and companies, are brands. They work to define themselves in a way that makes them attractive, relevant and competitive—and at a fraction of the investment of corporate brands. **In 2016, the top 25 corporate advertisers spent \$61.5 billion marketing their brands.<sup>72</sup> By comparison, the 50 state tourism offices spent less than one percent as much—just \$595 million in FY16-17 to market their destination brands.**

By investing in travel promotion, communities are investing in their own growth. Travel promotion generates awareness and delivers additional visitors. Increased investments in travel promotion results in additional visitors and increases in travel-generated taxes. **Just a five percent increase in state and local taxes generated by travel would fund a \$1,200 wage increase for every public teacher across the country.<sup>73</sup>**



## CASE STUDY

PHOTO CREDITS: TRAVEL OREGON



## Travel Oregon is “Only Slightly Exaggerated”

**With its spring 2018 campaign, “Only Slightly Exaggerated,” Travel Oregon sought to build a brand that would take it beyond an itinerary.**<sup>74</sup> With Crater Lake, Mt. Hood and the Willamette Valley all within Oregon’s borders, the real imagery of the state is enough to motivate travelers. But Travel Oregon chose to do an animated campaign—the first of its kind for a destination—that builds the state’s unique brand of magic. “Every travel campaign had one thing in common—they all looked the same, and even the most beautiful nature photography and sexy rugged outdoorsy people start to fall flat in ad after ad,” Ansel Wallenfang, copywriter at Oregon’s agency Weiden+Kennedy, said. “We wanted to create the sweet spot of sophistication and whimsy.”<sup>75</sup>

With giant rabbits in fields of tulips and clouds that look like a pod of whales, the campaign conveys the feeling of an enchanted place—a feeling that cannot be captured on film. As the style guide explains, “It is a reminder that while the animation is fantastical, it really is only slightly exaggerated from the reality of Oregon.”<sup>76</sup>



It is the feeling of magic that is the essence of Oregon’s brand. It differentiates the state in a way that is meaningful for potential visitors and creates affinity that goes far beyond what awareness of “things to do” in the state.

Oregon has hiking, Pacific Ocean views and wine country—but so do Washington and California. “Only Slightly Exaggerated” made the state a standout on its own terms.

In its first 48 hours, the campaign video received 400,000 views on YouTube and more than one million on Facebook.<sup>77</sup> **To date, the video has been viewed more than 10 million times—seven million of which were on Facebook—and 85 percent of the views were organic. The video also succeeded in converting viewers to Travel Oregon’s website, with visits to the site up 40 percent and page views up 120 percent over the previous year.**<sup>78</sup>

# An International Perspective: America as a Brand

The United States is, itself, a brand. Like any destination, it is susceptible to fluctuations in visitors for reasons including but not limited to global economies, the strength of the dollar, shifting perceptions, natural disasters and other issues.

Actively promoting the U.S. to international visitors helps calm these fluctuations, protecting the 1.2 million Americans employed as a result of the \$156 million spent by international visitors in 2017.

**Brand USA is America's destination marketing organization, charged with promoting and enhancing the image of the U.S. to international visitors.** Since its inception in 2010, this vital public-private partnership has delivered 5.4 million additional visitors to the United States.<sup>79</sup> These visitors spent nearly \$18 billion, generating more than \$38 billion in total economic impact over that time period.<sup>80</sup> Additionally, Brand USA's efforts to draw international visitors to the United States' many unique sites and destinations created an average of 51,000 new American jobs per year, **all without costing U.S. taxpayers a dime.**<sup>81</sup>

While the world is familiar with the United States, Brand USA's role is essential in driving visitation to, through and beyond the U.S. "gateways," promoting awareness of

lesser-known destinations. Through innovative marketing and strong partnerships, Brand USA has the capacity to promote all 50 states, urban and rural areas, to demonstrate how vast, beautiful and exciting America is—and why international visitors should travel to our country.

To showcase some of the nation's most treasured assets—the U.S. National Parks, Brand USA invested in the production of *National Parks Adventure* film commemorating the 100th anniversary of the National Parks Service.

Through the spring of 2018, the film entertained seven million international viewers in 16 countries.<sup>82</sup> **In FY17 alone, the film is estimated to have generated visitor spending of \$4 billion and an ROI of 26:1 on visitor spending.**<sup>83</sup>

But America's travel economy is at risk. During the past several years, as global travel has continued to increase, America's share has been on the decline. Brand USA is now more critical than ever, but its funding is on the line after 2020. Renewing Congress' commitment to Brand USA also renews its commitment to the jobs and economic impact travel delivers and puts America in a stronger position on the global stage.



MacGillivray Freeman's  
**NATIONAL PARKS  
ADVENTURE**

