

The Ultimate Branding Guide for Vacation Rentals



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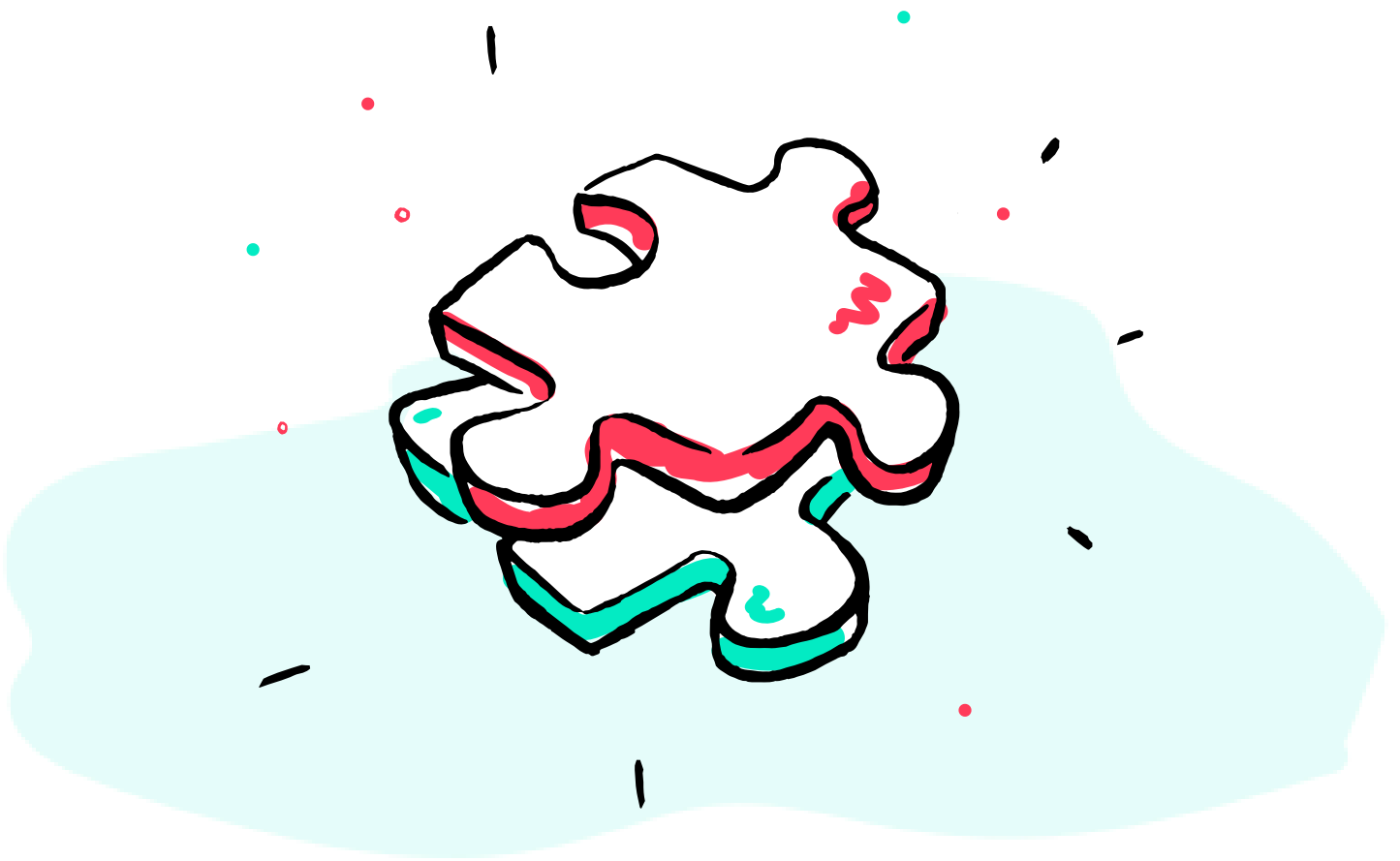
Introduction

Whether you're in the business of vacation rentals or shoelaces, most consultants and marketing savants will emphasize the importance of branding. Branding helps to define and bring your business to life, but what is it and how do you achieve successful vacation rental branding?

According to the Business Dictionary, branding aims to “establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market that attracts and retains loyal customers”. Your brand is not only what is expressed in the client-facing side of your business, but it also encompasses your guests' complete experience – it defines the purpose of your company and is in everything you do.

We've going to dive a little deeper into what branding means for your vacation rental business, how to achieve it, as well as some stellar examples to follow. By the end of this guide, you'll be a branding expert!

What is a brand?



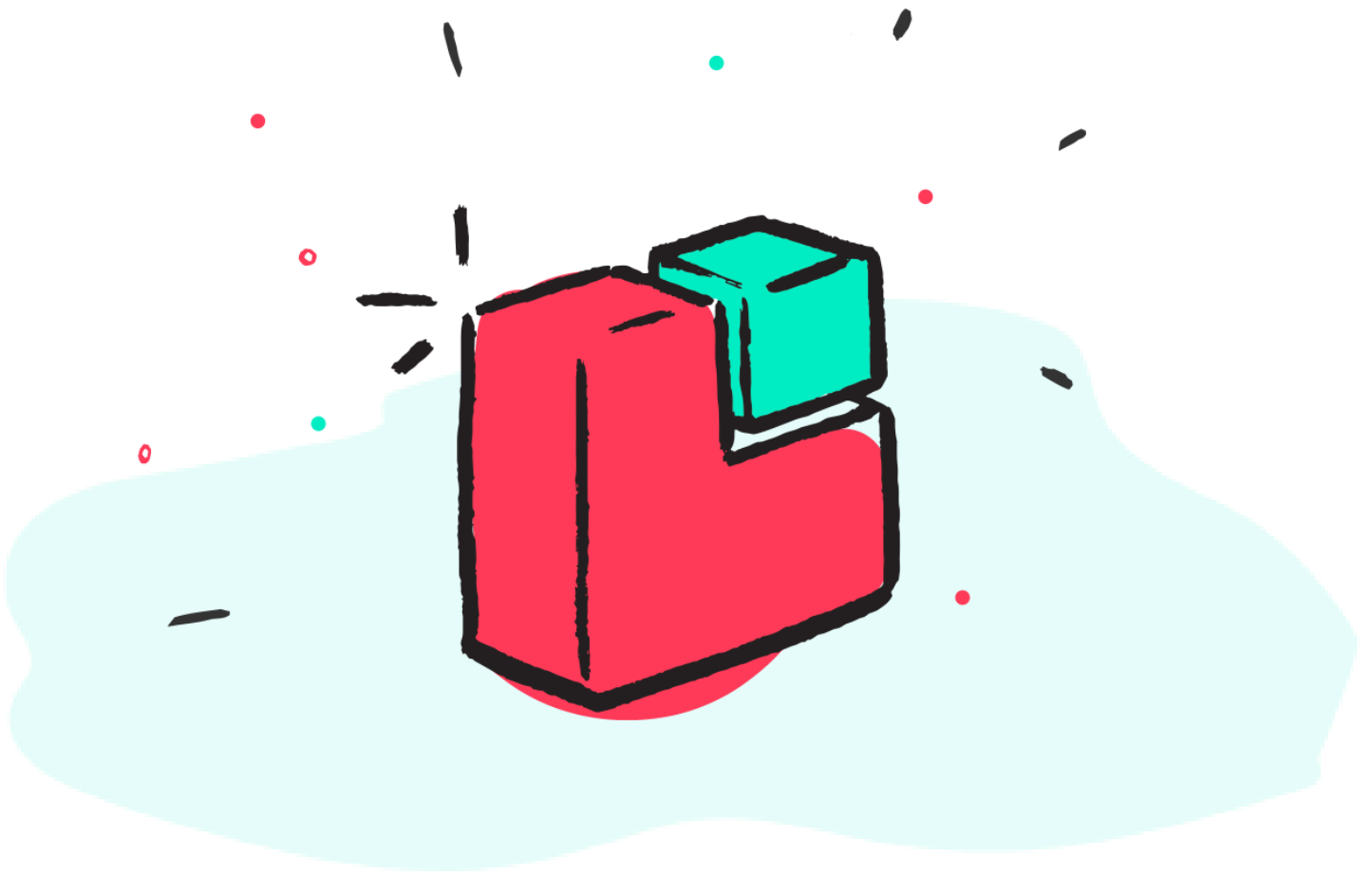
It's not just about having a recognizable name or logo to make you stand out in a crowded industry. Your brand is how customers perceive you when they connect with your business — both the impressions you can control and the ones you can't.

If you think about it, all of us have brands too; we each have a name, style, tone of voice and we make different impressions on people. Likewise, vacation rental businesses have names, listings, logos, colors, fonts, property styles, and reputations to manage that make up who they are and affect how they're perceived. Essentially, it's how people feel and the gut feeling they get about our vacation rental properties and services.

And although you can't fully control what potential guests think about you, you can have an impact on it by being consistent and extending your brand to every part of your business.

It all starts with establishing what that consistency is going to look like and the feeling you want it to evoke. If your properties have a rural charm, leading guests to feel like they're going to get in touch with nature. Or if you target families, bright colors in your logo and pictures of kid-friendly areas in your property would play a huge part in your branding.

Why is vacation rental branding important?



There are plenty of reasons to take the time to invest in your vacation rental brand. Your branding goes well beyond colors and logos. Vacation rental branding is vital for your business and we're here to tell you why.

1. A brand helps you stand out from the crowd

It can't be stressed enough: your vacation rental business isn't the only one in your state – it might not even be the only one on your street! So the importance of defining your vacation rental brand primarily comes from the need to distinguish yourself from your direct competitors. If you have a sleek, consistent and coherent brand across all content (we're talking copy, photographs, videos, everything) on the channels you use, this becomes your identity and is what travelers use to differentiate between the market.

Guests are faced with endless options of vacation rentals in each particular place. What is more eye-catching: “Holiday apartments in Lisbon” or “The Lisboans” (The Old Beach)? Not only does your brand name communicate something unique to your audience, but it is also going to be what they remember and liked most about your site.

2. A brand sets expectations

Never forget that your brand also acts as a tool for communication. How you decide to present your vacation rental business from the very outset will help you identify your brand voice, message and to an extent, communicate some guest expectations.

Let's imagine your vacation rental is called “Amazing Villas” – without any other information, the name in itself is going to generate some kind of idea about the vacation homes you are offering to your viewer. But names don't just have to be descriptive for you to have a strong brand. After all, Amazon has nothing to do with rivers, but it has grown

to become the largest e-commerce retailer in the world, so it at least has the 'largest in the world' title in common.

The objective is just to have a great brand that evokes positive experiences and expectations, which leads to the next point...

3. A brand becomes self-explanatory

In the long term, your brand becomes a synonym for your business and vice versa. Setting out your brand objectives early on only helps prepare you for success in the future. To put it in Matt Landau's words:

"There's a reason McDonald's uses giant yellow arches [...]. It's because a brand is the quickest way to explain what a business has to offer."

If your vacation rental brand is recognizable, memorable and has a catchy name, you're halfway there. If you have a logo that speaks for your business, even better. Both first-time and return guests alike will draw associations between your brand and what it means for them. There are few people who see a bitten apple these days and don't immediately think of the technology giant, or a tick and the slogan 'just do it' without thinking of Nike.

When branding is done well, it speaks volumes for the business.

4. A brand is the basis for your marketing

Defining your vacation rental brand isn't as simple as choosing a name and a logo, there are many other factors to consider. It will involve having coherent color schemes, styles and design choices across your whole vacation rental site.

These choices will, in turn, play a huge role in the marketing of your property. Whether that's in the creation of a special offer banner you upload as your Facebook cover photo, or a local newspaper advert, every piece of marketing material should aim to be consistent with your vacation rental website. After all, that is the first and best way travelers interact with your offering.

What's more, 60% of US millennials expect consistent experiences when dealing with brands online, and as one of the biggest growing markets for vacation rentals, you're going to want to appeal to them. Good marketing of your property will bring you more inquiries and more direct bookings, and this can't be achieved without a sound brand.

5. A brand buildstrust and loyalty

According to The Marketing Donut, people can't remember you and will struggle to trust you if you don't have a strong brand. Given that less than 50% of people trust brands, it's even more essential you get it right.

Featuring reviews on your site also helps to reinforce the trust you've built with your guests and strengthens your online credibility, which in turn all adds to the overall brand ideology you have created.

Return customers

When you provide your guests with great customer service, an easy booking system, clear communication processes and a beautiful vacation rental, they're more likely to return to your home time and time again. It's also likely you'll encourage word-of-mouth recommendations from your visitors to their friends, family members and so on.

When guests feel comfortable with your brand and know what they can expect out of your business, they're that much more likely to book with you again in the future.

Future direct bookings

OTAs bring in a huge yield of bookings. In fact, for many owners, the majority of their bookings come from listing sites. With the right branding, you can convert these clients into direct bookers.

When you create trust through your brand, guests can feel comfortable reserving your vacation rental on multiple platforms; including your own! If your brand embodies quality and a great guest experience, guests will feel more confident to venture beyond OTAs and book with you directly.

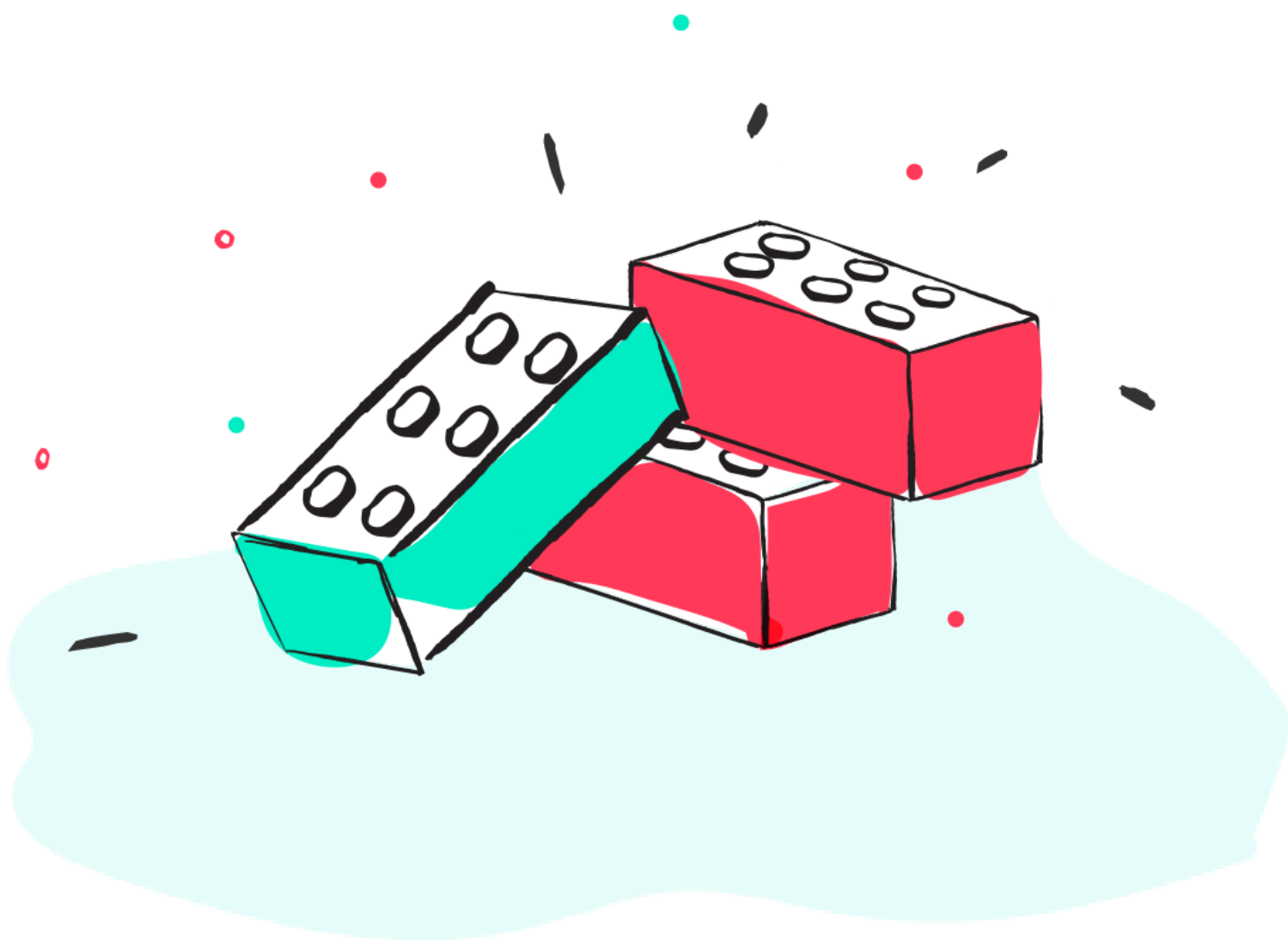
6. A brand can build value

There's a reason why Gucci boots are \$900 and "knock-offs" can run you about \$30. Customers are willing to pay more for brand-name because they know that encompasses a certain level of quality. Having a good brand for your vacation rental prevents your business from being seen as a "knock-off."

Once you've achieved brand-name status, your vacation rental gains value and notoriety just for its branding. Are guests willing to pay more just for your brand? If so, that's a true vacation rental success! But how do the experts achieve this level of branding recognition? Let's find out!

Chapter 3

How to build your vacation rental brand





Building your own brand essentially boils down to these simple 7 steps:

- Analyze your target audience and your competitors
- Pick your focus and personality
- Choose your business name
- Write your tagline or slogan
- Choose colors and fonts that reflect your brand
- Design your logo
- Apply your branding across your business .

Apply your branding across your business and evolve it as you grow. Although you may revisit these steps when you've already launched your vacation rental business for a refresh, it's crucial that you consider each step when you shape your branding.

Let's start by setting the groundwork to go over the different ways of developing your brand.

1. Analyze your market

Before tweaking or getting started with your brand, it's important to understand who you want to cater to and who you're competing with. You can start your research by:

- Googling “vacation rental + (your location)” to analyze the direct and indirect competitors that come up. Make a note of the services they offer, logos, colors, pictures and how they describe their listings. Also, review their social media accounts and see what their followers are saying about them.
- Talk to past guests or friends who would be your target market and ask them what stands out about your property.
- Search on Instagram or Facebook for similar accounts (even if they're not a competitor), analyze their content (what they're saying and communicating) and what their followers comment on.
- Navigate through websites of other vacation rental businesses to get a feel for how potential customers would browse and book.

Make a note of:

- Who your main local competitors are: the businesses that pop up on the first results in Google and listing sites.
- Who your “lowest hanging fruit” potential guests are: the customers you can easily convince to book.
- Interests and tone of voice of your potential guests: how they speak (formal/informal), what their interests are (e.g. yoga, wine, etc).

It's crucial to do this research and be aware of this data because it will help you decide on what to focus on, how to position your brand and how to stand out from the competitors.

2. Define your brand's focus and personality

Although you want to target all types of travelers and cater to anyone that wants to stay in your area, it's important to focus on specific segments to build your brand.

Here are some exercises to help you define what to focus on and decide on what tone of voice to use:

Start with your positioning statement

A positioning statement is simply one or two lines that define your business in the industry. It's not really what you put on your website, listing or business card – it's just a summary of what you want your business to represent. It'll also help you answer all the questions that will come up while building your brand.

Your positioning statement would be something like:

Our [TYPE OF VACATION RENTAL] offer [SERVICES] for [TARGET AUDIENCE] to [VALUE PROPOSITION]. Unlike [COMPETITORS], we [KEY DIFFERENTIATORS].

E.g. Our Bali villas offer self-catering accommodation for travelers to find a home away from home while discovering a new culture. Unlike the other competitors, we offer personalized onsite cooking classes and local tours.

Your value proposition is the one thing that makes your business stand out. It can be as simple as having luxury bedsheets to offering special services. Think about it, find it, and make it part of your brand's identity.

What words would you associate with your brand?

Another way of defining your brand's personality is by looking at it as if it was a person. What would they be like and what kind of friends would they have?

This will help you think about how you're going to be writing on social media, listing or website and how your images would be like.

A fun and very useful exercise is to pick 3-5 adjectives that describe the type of brand that might resonate with your audience. Here's a couple of concepts to help you get started:

Brand words

If your **brand** was a person, what **3-5 words** would define them?

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adventurous | <input type="checkbox"/> Energetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Quirky |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Airy | <input type="checkbox"/> Exclusive | <input type="checkbox"/> Rebellious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable | <input type="checkbox"/> Experienced | <input type="checkbox"/> Refined |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Artistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Flamboyant | <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beachy | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly | <input type="checkbox"/> Reliable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beautiful | <input type="checkbox"/> Fresh | <input type="checkbox"/> Retro |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bohemian | <input type="checkbox"/> Fun | <input type="checkbox"/> Romantic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bold | <input type="checkbox"/> Funny | <input type="checkbox"/> Rugged |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Breezy | <input type="checkbox"/> Geometric | <input type="checkbox"/> Sassy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bright | <input type="checkbox"/> Glam | <input type="checkbox"/> Secure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calm | <input type="checkbox"/> Goofy | <input type="checkbox"/> Serious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charitable | <input type="checkbox"/> Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chic | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy | <input type="checkbox"/> Simple |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chill | <input type="checkbox"/> Hipster | <input type="checkbox"/> Smart |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Classic | <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Soft |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean | <input type="checkbox"/> Humorous | <input type="checkbox"/> Southern |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Colorful | <input type="checkbox"/> Laid back | <input type="checkbox"/> Trendy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comfy | <input type="checkbox"/> Liberal | <input type="checkbox"/> Tribal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservative | <input type="checkbox"/> Loving | <input type="checkbox"/> Traditional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cozy | <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creative | <input type="checkbox"/> Modern | <input type="checkbox"/> Vibrant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cute | <input type="checkbox"/> Natural | <input type="checkbox"/> Warm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daring | <input type="checkbox"/> Nautical | <input type="checkbox"/> Weird |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dramatic | <input type="checkbox"/> Organic | <input type="checkbox"/> Welcoming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Earthy | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoorsy | <input type="checkbox"/> Whimsical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eclectic | <input type="checkbox"/> Over-the-top | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Edgy | <input type="checkbox"/> Playful | <input type="checkbox"/> Zen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elegant | <input type="checkbox"/> Polished | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

What metaphors or concepts describe your brand?

In addition to thinking about the words that describe your brand, you can also use metaphors or concepts to help you identify the individual qualities you want it to have.

It can be anything; an animal, a celebrity, a famous quote, anything as long as it makes you think of what you want your brand to portray. For example, a beach house that targets families might choose elephants as a starting point: they're beautiful creatures, focused, family-oriented and loyal. They love working in small groups.

If your vacation rental business was an animal, what animal would it be and what does it represent to you?

3. Choose a brand name

Although a brand is way more than just a name, your company name is one of the most important commitments you have to make when you're getting started. Your name will impact your logo, domain (website address) and your marketing strategy.

Essentially, you want a brand name that's hard to copy and harder to confuse with your competitors.

Learn more: [7 Tips on How to Choose a Vacation Rental Brand Name](#)

4. Write your tagline or slogan

A good slogan is short, catchy and makes a strong first impression. You can use this on your website's header, business card and on your social media accounts.

A great example is Airbnb's tagline: "Belong Anywhere" – it says a lot with only two simple words. It gets travelers excited about traveling, exploring new and unfamiliar territories and at the same time, feeling like you'll be welcomed and safe wherever you go. It also goes hand in hand with what the company represents: Why stay in a hotel if you can find a great vacation rental that will give you a taste of the place and make you feel like you belong.

Here are some ways to approach writing a slogan of your own:

- Be blunt: "The World's Most Luxurious Villas"
- Turn it into a metaphor: "WTF: With The Family."
- Describe your guests' mindsets: "Adventure Time."
- Describe what they'll find: "Luxury, Location, and Convenience."
- Write a rhyme: "Don't Fuss with The Bus." (for a school bus rental)
- Describe it literally: "Holiday rentals in Costa brava"

5. Choose colors and fonts that reflect your brand

Now that you have a business name and tagline, think about how you want to represent your brand visually with colors and font styles. This is especially important when you start building your own vacation rental website.

Choosing your brand colors

Colors are important not only because of how it's going to make your website look, but they will also evoke emotions and feelings in your potential guests. You're going to want to use colors that represent your business concept and differentiate you from competitors.

There are a lot of studies about color psychology and although it isn't an exact science, it'll help you decide your brand colors:

Remember to think about how legible colored text might look over white and black backgrounds and how white and black text work over your brand colors.

Choosing your fonts

We recommend picking two fonts that will also look good on your website. Choose one for headings and titles and another for body text. Just like your brand colors, keep in mind what those fonts represent and what feelings they evoke to users.

6. Design your logo to fit your vacation rental business

A logo is the face of your company and is shown almost everywhere your brand exists. So it's important to create a unique and identifiable logo that can be easily scalable in all sizes. Most brands overlook the adaptability of their logos; it has to look great on a Facebook page, a little favicon on your browser and many other channels and devices. Learn more: [8 Free Logo Maker Tools for Your Vacation Rental Business](#)

7. Apply your branding across your business and evolve it as you grow.

Building a brand doesn't end with creating a logo or slogan, it has to "live" and be consistent everywhere travelers interact with you, from the template you choose for your website to the automated messages you send before/after they check-in or out of your vacation rental. You'll continue to define and grow your brand as you get more bookings; the more travelers you expose your brand to, the more you'll learn about the customers you're attracting and how to deal with them.

Where to show off your vacation rental brand



Remember that your brand is going to be what unifies your values, image, and reputation across multiple channels like your website, social media, and even in person. If you've developed a great brand strategy, rich with color schemes, a compelling logo, and a great font selection, you're probably eager to show it off. Your brand is going to be representative of your brand on the whole, so here are some ideas for where to flaunt your fancy new brand.

Welcome book and guest book

Your welcome book and the guest book might be some of the first interactions your guests will have with your property. Your vacation rental welcome book is going to be where guests get acquainted with your property while the guest book is going to be where they leave their mark. The front page or cover of each book should be branded. It's the easiest way to get your logo, font, and color scheme together in one cohesive place and it's something physical for the guests to see as representative of your business.

The guest book in particular is a great place to show off your vacation rental brand, as guests frequently will take pictures of their response, read through other stays, and might give it a bit more attention than some other vacation rental material.

Toiletries

At first, you might be thinking, "Why would I want to brand my shampoo?" but it's actually a clever way to subtly remind guests of your brand. Here's how:

Oftentimes, guests will bring their vacation rental toiletries home with them, be it shampoos, soaps, sewing kits. If your brand finds its way into your guests' homes that can serve as a future reminder of your business and, in turn, great potential for future bookings and repeat clients.

Interior design

Many hosts opt to make the color scheme the paramount of their brand. Whether that means neon colors or smooth, muted tones, themes, and design can have a huge impact on your brand in a very positive way if done right.

As implied by the name, interior design is a form of brand expression. When it comes to vacation rentals, interior design and brand alignment are vital. Imagine you paint your business to be a fun, colorful, family-friendly stay, but your home consists of whites, creams, and Scandinavian minimalism. Guests might feel confused by your brand, or worse yet, misled.

Let your interior design be an echo of your brand at large to really drive home your branding efforts.

Tip: Use paint swatches or try out color-matching apps to exactly replicate your brand's colors for interior design elements like wall color and wood staining.

Website

The online world is the best place to let your brand shine. You can experiment with fonts, sizing, format, colors, and design as much as you want! Remember that you'll still want to follow your basic branding guidelines, but you can consider your vacation rental website a virtual playground for your brand.

Not only will it be a fun place to work with your brand, but it's also going to be one of the first places that guests see your brand. Why not introduce them to something professional and aesthetically pleasing?



Takeaways

Creating a good vacation rental brand is so important that it might be the difference between a full reservation calendar and amateur results. The first step to going professional is using a vacation rental business and the close second is defining your brand.

Remember that you're never going to be able to control how people perceive your brand but you can tug them in the right direction. Make an outstanding first impression, manage their expectations and build your reputation by implementing our easy-to-follow steps.

Grow your bookings with our vacation rental software.

Get started for free

