

How to create a unique brand identity for your blog

Creating a brand identity. Photo: Amador Loureiro/Unsplash; Edited: Jessie on a Journey.

The post was written by our friend Jessie. The original post was published on [her blog](#).

Okay, so you've researched the [essentials for starting a travel blog](#) and have a pretty clear idea of what this entails (ie it's not as easy as laying on the beach and snapping a pina colada-sipping selfie). Step one in this entire process will be coming up with your brand; which, for many, is also the hardest.

Both through my one-on-one blog consulting and my Writers.com [beginner and advanced blogging courses](#) I've seen people who desperately wanted to ditch their 9-to-5 jobs, travel the world and have their voice heard by many by creating blogs that resonated with their community. One problem is these people often don't know who their community is, or even what exactly they want to tell them.

If you're serious about starting a blog — travel related or otherwise — that's also profitable and engaging, you'll need a unique brand identity. To create this, grab a pen and paper, get comfortable somewhere where you can think and...

1. Write Down Your Passions

Remember, if you want a blog that's here to stay you'll need to focus on a topic you can write about on a regular basis. This should be something you are well-versed in and can cover from a variety of angles. Just because you spent a month in Mexico doesn't mean you're qualified to create an entire, never-ending publication on it; however, if you're an American moving to Mexico, documenting your triumphs and struggles of this journey could be interesting to those making a similar transition into expat life or wanting to visit Mexico.



Figure out what makes you uniquely you. Photo: Jessie on a Journey.

2. Narrow Your Topics

You've maybe heard this before, but it bears repeating: try to reach everyone and you'll reach few; try to reach few and you'll gain a dedicated audience who sees you as an expert (pending your content warrants this). Saying you're an expert in travel is too broad. I've been blogging for over six years and traveling since I was a toddler; however, I still wouldn't say I'm a miles and point expert (that would be [The Points Guy](#)) or a scuba diving authority (for that, I direct you to [Alex in Wanderland](#)).

Where does your expertise lie in the wide world of travel?

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3. Research What Gaps You Can Fill

When I started Jessie on a Journey in 2011 I did notice a gap in the blogging world: there weren't a ton of [solo female travelers](#), especially those covering more [offbeat experiences](#). Thus, my brand was born. Along my travels I've also noticed a lot of irresponsible practices taking place, many of which travelers don't even realize are irresponsible. For example, when I was 22 I took an elephant ride in Thailand, unaware beforehand of [how unethical this activity truly is](#). When the ride was over I felt an intense nausea in my stomach, a feeling that what I had done had been wrong somehow. I did some research — which I should have done BEFORE the activity — and learned I was right.

How could I have not known the elephant trekking industry literally broken the souls of elephants?

In 2012 I also started [Epicure & Culture](#), an online responsible tourism and culture magazine that aims to educate travelers on ethical travel experiences and the beauty of full immersion on the road. While the brand itself has taken time to fully develop — and it's still a work in progress — this came to me when I realized

plenty of writers were covering how fun (*NOT!*) elephant trekking is and the “wonders” of tiger temples. I wanted to create something more honest that would lead to positive change.



Narrow your potential blog focus. Photo: [Green Chameleon/Unsplash](#).

4. Draft A Content Strategy

I will be crafting a followup post that goes more in-depth into this so [stay tuned for that](#), but I still wanted to touch on it here. Start thinking about [the different types of content out there](#) and what might work best for your blog. Often, it will be a variety of types. For example, maybe Tuesday you post a photo memory, Wednesday an interview and Thursday a feature. Once you decide on your content types stay consistent so your audience knows what to expect.

5. Think Ahead To Your Products & Services

Continuing on the Epicure & Culture example, the publication has gone way beyond content. Because I aggressively tackled a niche I felt was underserved other opportunities arose. I co-founded a Twitter chat (#RTTC) and group called the Responsible Tourism & Travel Collective as well as a media group affiliated with the United Nations, the [Travel+SocialGood Media Network](#). I've published an [e-book on responsible tourism](#), helped USA TODAY Travel boost their online responsible tourism content, and have been invited to speak about responsible tourism at events and conferences. Most recently I've launched a walking tour company, [NYC Tours & Photo Safaris](#), that's one of the founding companies of the Travel+SocialGood NYC Business Coalition of responsibly operating businesses.

I'm not saying all this to brag, but to show you that your blog should eventually go beyond just content. If this is going to be something you turn into a profitable business your brand identity needs to be something you can live beyond the words you write in a post.

You likely won't be able to come up with all of your future products and services

just yet, but start to think about what possibilities are out there. The next step can help you with this.



Perhaps you could create an e-book on your chosen topic. Photo: James Tarbotton/Unsplash.

6. Create A Pro/Con List

Once you've gotten an idea of what you might write about, start researching other blogs with similar topics. On pen and paper create a pro/con list jotting down what you like about a particular site and what you don't. Also note any gaps you notice on a site and how you think you could fill them on yours.

- Is the site hard to navigate? Why?
- Is there a way you could get readers involved more? How?
- Is there a relevant product that you could create a better or cheaper version of?

Keep this list for later reference.

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7. Think About Your Target Audience

Who will you be speaking to? Or better yet, who do you want to be speaking to? Make sure the messages you're conveying are digestible to this audience. According to Neil Patel of [QuickSprout.com](#) there are three people you should be focusing on when it comes to audience, in order of importance:

- The Person That Will Pay You
- The Person That Influences The Person That Pays You
- Your Supporter

He recommends identifying who it is that will be helping you to advance in your blogging career, and creating a full profile of this person on paper. How old are

they? Gender? Income? Job? What are their motivations for reading your site? Really create a clear picture of this person in your mind. Once you've done this it will be easier to understand how you can reach them with your content.

Just be your wacky, weird self, in life and on your blog!

8. Don't Be Who You're Not

If you think to make it as a professional travel blogger you need to create a brand identity that depicts you as perfect, prim and proper, think again. If you like to curse, go for it. Love to tell dirty jokes? Write em' up. When you make a mistake on the road let your readers know. I've told tales of everything from [having my boyfriend dump me](#) to [epic research fails in Easter Europe](#) and beyond.

I'm not saying you need to tell dirty jokes or curse if that's not you; but if it is, be yourself. Your personality showing through your content is ultimately what will draw your readers in and keep them there. People also tend to enjoy blogs and online personalities that are real and transparent.

9. Create A Name & Tagline

Once you've got an idea of what you'll write about it's time to think about your name and tagline. While a bit old, I still love Adventurous Kate's post on [choosing a name for your blog](#), so give that a read as you think about the name that will be your definite brand. Because it's 2016 and so many people have created websites, finding a URL that is available can be tricky, though remember having endings like ".org," ".net" and ".co" over ".com" can open your possibilities.

You'll also want to make sure your chosen name is available on social media, or at least some form of it. For example, on Twitter I'm [@JessOnAJourney](#) (JessieOnAJourney was too long), while on Instagram I'm [@JessieOnAJourney](#). It doesn't need to be exact, but should resonate as the same brand to those who see it. You can try adding underscores or removing some vowels if your first choice isn't available.

As for your tagline, think short, punchy and having personality. If you're funny

and plan for this to reflect on your blog, make that clear by adding some humor in your tagline. For example, [Life Without Pants](#)' tagline is "Work Harder. Live Better. Pants Optional." I'm sure (or at least I think) he isn't being literal when saying you don't need to wear pants, but it's a metaphor and it's humorous...and it works. If you want to inspire, make your readers feel something right away. For instance, Twenty-Something Travel's tagline is "Why wait to see the world?" Likely, you're already asking yourself that by just reading that question!

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10. Define Your Mission Statement

It may sound silly to create a mission statement when you're starting a travel or lifestyle blog as opposed to a nonprofit organization or charitable brand, but as your blog grows people will want to know what you stand for. If you write about responsible tourism and then share an Instagram of yourself riding an elephant nobody will take you seriously. If you're against gambling and then let a casino buy an ad on you're sidebar you're a hypocrite.

Your mission statement doesn't need to be just morals, either. What is your intent with the site? Is it to tell the stories of the local people you come into contact with on your travels? To highlight the world's toughest treks? To deliver photo essays with stellar images? Define your purpose and morals beforehand, starting with "My goal is to...."



Remember, design counts. Screenshot: Ryanair.

11. Remember, Design Counts

In the pro/con list you made above you should have included design and navigation elements. A branded design doesn't mean the sleekest, the brightest or the sexiest; it means that it fits your image. Take Ryanair for example. Their simple, bubbly and cartoony site in sky blue and mustard yellow doesn't scream luxury — nor should it, as they're a budget airline. If you're running a 5-star hotel,

however, that design would not convert in the minds of your readers.

Basically, to play the part you also need to look the part. It's the same as if you showed up to give a science lecture to university students in sweatpants. Your audience likely wouldn't take you seriously no matter how smart you were. Show up in a nicely pressed suit, however, and you could tell them almost anything.

Note: this is also where [WordPress.com vs WordPress.org](#) come into play. If you're serious about becoming a professional blogger you need WordPress.org for the ability to monetize and the versatility in functionality and design. With the right plugins (only available with WordPress.org) and developer you can make your website look like anything. [I recommend Bluehost](#) for hosting, which you'll need with WordPress.org. Their prices start at \$3.95 for month, so great for business owners and bloggers on a budget.

One theme I highly recommend is [X Theme](#), which I recently downloaded for my tour company site [NYC Tours & Photo Safaris](#). It's a game changer for sure! What makes this different from many themes is it works like a drag-and-drop page builder. So instead of having to download tons of plugins and additional software, the theme comes with essentially every customizable option you'd need built right into it. There are 20+ homepage style options built in, as well. In short, it took months for me to build out my travel blogs AND I had to hire a developer which cost thousands. It took mere hours to do the same thing on my tour site using X Theme without needing assistance.

Keep your design, color scheme, logo, fonts, icons and style consistent throughout the site.

Have advice to add on how to create a unique brand identity for a new blog? Please share in the comments below!

Recommended:

[10 Things You Didn't Know About Travel Blogging](#) [Blog Inspiration]

[How To Blog For Profit: Without Selling Your Soul](#) by Ruth Soukup [Great Reads]

[How To Create A Blog Webinar Series](#) [Blogging Help]