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October 2024

Cinnamon Toast × Niagara Falls



Report of Findings

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Executive Summary

03

The City of Niagara Falls (Niagara Falls), Ontario, has a proud history as a major tourist destination. While continuing to support and welcome visitors, the city is currently focused on fostering community pride, enhancing local identity, attracting and retaining businesses, driving economic growth, and cultivating a fresh, modern, and innovative public image.

Gathering insights from various stakeholders is essential to developing a fresh, consistent, and unified image for Niagara Falls. Between September 16th and October 4th, 2024, Cinnamon Toast (CT) released a digital survey, conducted one one-on-one interview, and held a one-hour open house with Niagara Falls residents. The details below summarize our findings from these engagement efforts.

Findings

Stakeholder Engagement Findings

The digital survey was distributed through various channels from September 16th to October 4th, gathering 182 responses. Of the participants, **44%** reside in Niagara Falls, while **30%** both live and work in the city. Additionally, **62%** of respondents have lived and/or worked in the area for more than 21 years.

Based on the results of the digital survey, the following themes were identified:

Natural Scenery and Heritage:

- × Respondents place great importance on the natural beauty of Niagara Falls, especially the waterfalls, rivers, and green spaces. This theme is dominant, with **79%** of participants valuing the natural environment, while **54%** highlighted history and heritage. Some participants also expressed concern for the lack of environmental protection due to urban sprawl.

Tourism and Community Identity:

- × A recurring theme is Niagara Falls' strong identity as a **tourist-friendly** destination, with **33%** of respondents choosing this as a key attribute. However, there is also an emphasis on the city's **historic** and **picturesque** qualities, showing that both tourism and local pride in history are significant.

Connection to Canada:

- × About **50%** of respondents feel it's important for the new brand to reflect Niagara Falls' **connection to Canada**. This indicates a desire to see **national pride** embedded in Niagara Falls' brand identity and avoid confusion with the American Falls.

Community Spirit and Safety:

- × **Community** services, **pride**, and **safety** also resonate strongly with respondents. People feel that Niagara Falls offers a close-knit, safe community where residents care about each other (**37%** agree).

Visual Representation Through Iconic Features:

- × **Waterfalls** (**91%**) are the most favoured symbol for representing the Niagara Falls' identity. This suggests the new brand should focus heavily on these **iconic natural features** to align with community sentiment.

Cultural Representation:

- × While respondents value **cultural** aspects, such as diversity and innovation, the focus on **historic** and **community-oriented** values was much stronger, showing a preference for a brand honouring tradition (specifically European immigrant contributions) over modernity or entrepreneurship.

Simplicity and Relatability:

- × Respondents favour imagery and representation that is straightforward and recognizable, like **waterfalls** and **local landmarks**, avoiding overly complex or politically sensitive visuals.

Building Brand Loyalty:

- × Respondents favour **wearable** branded items such as t-shirts, sweaters, and hats, as well as **tangible** items like coffee mugs, tote bags, pens, and tumblers.

Statement Responses

Responses

01. Niagara Falls is a convenient place to live and has everything I need.



02. The residents of Niagara Falls care about each other.



03. Niagara Falls is a great place for all ages to live.



04. Niagara Falls is a great place to visit.



05. Niagara Falls has an easy-to-identify personality; we know what makes us unique.



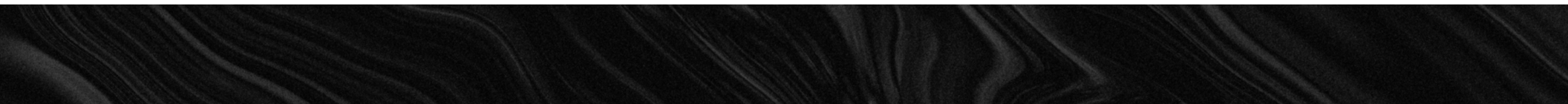
06. The culture and history that we come from are a very important part of Niagara Falls.





Open House Highlights

To gain insights from various stakeholder groups, including BIA members, councillors, residents, and more, CT conducted an open house session which included two activities, and time for participants to engage with printed copies of the public survey.



Activity One: Keyphrases

When asked to select four words that best describe Niagara Falls, three groups of six participants expressed the following key themes. Niagara Falls is:

Welcoming

Emphasizing hospitality, diversity, and inclusivity, making both residents and visitors feel at home.

Historic and Emerging

Balancing the city's historical significance with its growth and modernization efforts, including evolving services and infrastructure.

Picturesque

Celebrating the scenic beauty of Niagara Falls and its surroundings.

Family-oriented

Highlighting attractions and amenities that appeal to families, including educational institutions, tourist events, and recreational facilities.

Entertaining

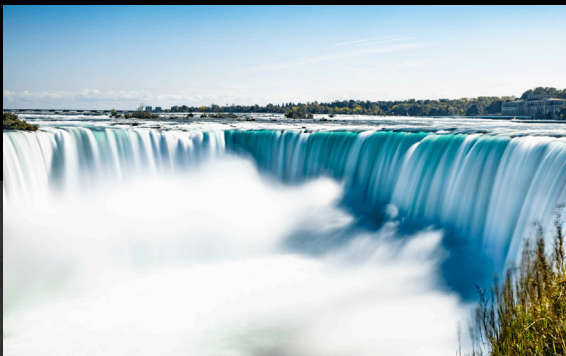
Offering diverse entertainment options for all ages.



Activity Two: Visual Identification

The second activity required participants to reflect upon a series of images and indicate which they felt could inform the direction of Niagara Falls' brand identity vs which they felt could not.

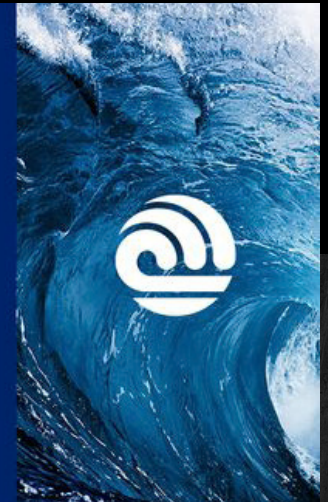
Images That Could Inform



Images That Could Not Inform



Coq
Marée



Interview Results

CT was granted a one-on-one interview with Mayor Jim Diodati, CAO Jason Burgess, and Director of Business Development Serge Felicetti, the results of which have been summarized below:

Niagara Falls Overview:

Niagara Falls is an iconic natural wonder with a strong community identity. It offers a high quality of life, proximity to the U.S. and Toronto, diverse experiences, and historical charm. It combines small-town charm with big-city amenities, including extensive trails, golf courses, and wineries.

Symbols and Imagery:

Imagery should reflect Canadian identity and the falls in a simple, unique way. The city aims to attract entrepreneurs, emphasizing innovation and risk-taking. Branding: "Innovation flows from here."

Local Business and Community:

Niagara Falls has a thriving business environment with companies like Walker Industries and emerging sectors beyond tourism. The city encourages diverse experiences, highlighting history, entrepreneurship, and family-friendly attractions.

Economic and Business Environment:

Niagara Falls has a strong entrepreneurial base and focuses on attracting innovative businesses. It offers personalized experiences and a supportive business environment, with efforts aimed at enhancing quality of life and attracting top talent.

Future Outlook:

Growth is expected, including urban expansion, a more diverse community, and downtown revitalization. The area is becoming a vibrant hub with improved infrastructure.

Mood Board Results

Mood Board One

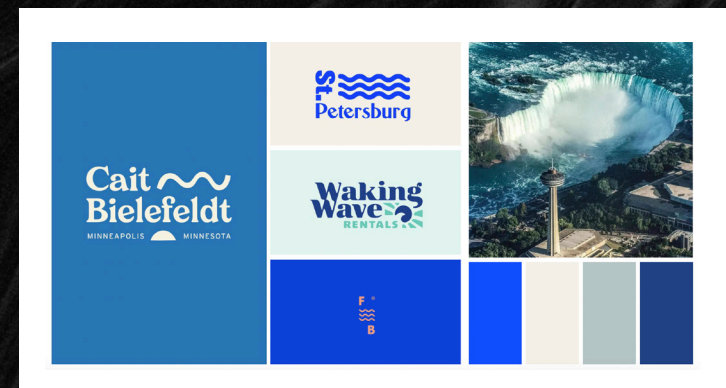
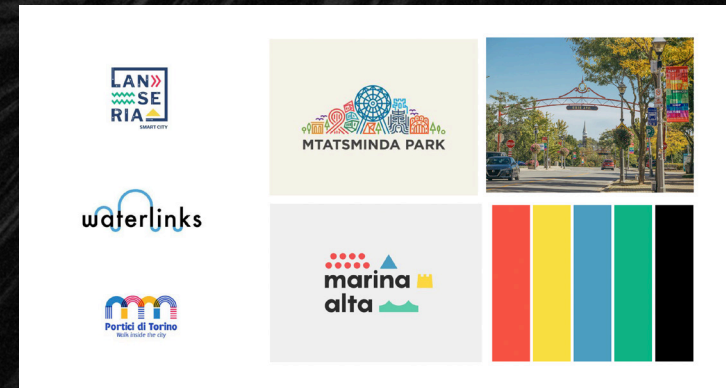
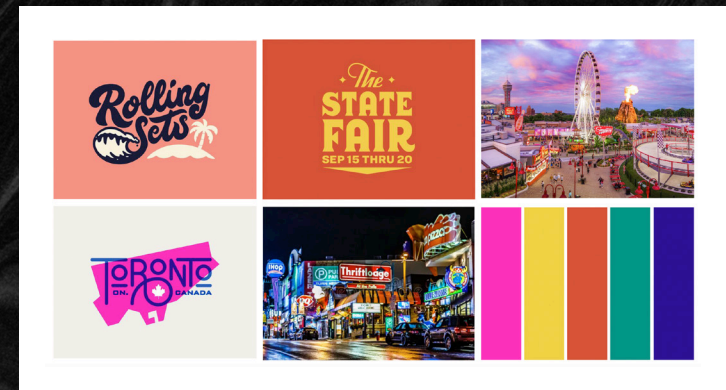
- ✖ Energetic but too focused on one aspect of Niagara Falls.

Mood Board Two

- ✖ Community-driven but lacking uniqueness to Niagara Falls.

Mood Board Three

- ✖ Effectively captures the energy of the falls.
- ✖ Incorporates the community aspect within the imagery of the falls.
- ✖ Open to abstract representations of the falls.



Opportunities and Recommendations

Based upon the conversations and insights collected during Niagara Falls' engagement methods, the following opportunities and recommendations emerged:

Emphasize Natural Beauty and Heritage

The overwhelming majority (**91%**) of stakeholders stated the waterfalls and natural scenery as key to Niagara Falls' identity. Niagara Falls' greatest asset is its natural wonder and the surrounding greenery. Center the brand around the falls and surrounding greenery, using imagery that reflects the city's natural beauty and iconic status as a world wonder. The brand should highlight its connection to the natural environment to appeal to both residents and visitors.

Promote a Strong, Welcoming Community Identity

Community pride and safety are important to residents, with many respondents highlighting Niagara Falls as a close-knit and family-oriented community. Position the city as family-friendly and community-oriented, emphasizing safety, inclusivity, and the small-town feel that residents value, alongside its role as a major tourist destination.

Reflect Canadian Pride and Simplicity

Around **50%** of respondents want the brand to reflect Niagara Falls' connection to Canada. Use visual elements that connect the city to its Canadian identity, such as the maple leaf, national landmarks, or symbols of Canadian pride and use simple, easily recognizable visuals that appeal to both locals and visitors.

Focus on Sustainability and Economic Growth

Respondents favour straightforward and recognizable imagery for the city's brand, steering away from complex or overly modern representations. Address concerns about environmental protection and urban sprawl by integrating sustainability into the brand, while, at the same time, promoting Niagara Falls as a thriving business hub with economic opportunities.



Conclusion

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The engagement exercises executed with Niagara Falls' stakeholders uncovered crucial insights to help guide the development of an effective brand identity for the city.

By referring back to these insights in conjunction with the assets and information previously provided, CT will be able to craft a compelling result for the Niagara Falls brand project.