

Linguistic and Philosophical Aspects in the Analysis of City Slogans – An Investigation of the Slogans of Hungary’s Major Cities and the Districts of Its Capital, Budapest

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ABSTRACT: Cities and districts can benefit from finding a good slogan and using it consistently. But what makes a good slogan, and more specifically, what makes a good slogan for a city or a district of a city? In the literature review, we sought answers to this question through the examination of various sources.

The empirical part of the research focuses on Hungary, a landlocked country in Central Eastern Europe whose capital is Budapest. We examined the slogans of major cities and the districts of its capital. Among the 47 cities and districts studied, we identified slogans for 39 of them. Seven Budapest districts had no identifiable slogan, and one major city also lacked one.

An interesting, although not surprising, key finding is that district slogans tend to be more administrative in tone, often resembling guiding statements from local government, and are primarily aimed at residents. In contrast, major cities are more likely to use slogans that target tourists. Another key conclusion, with both linguistic and philosophical implications, is that most slogans are not unique, except perhaps for including the name of the city or district itself. In many cases, the slogans could be interchanged, meaning that a particular slogan could just as well belong to another city or district, or be equally meaningless there.

Keywords: city slogans, district slogans, Hungary, Budapest, place branding, tourism marketing, urban communication, linguistic aspects, philosophical aspects

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1. Introduction

In simplified terms, a brand consists of three core identity elements: the brand name, the logo, and the slogan. These elements play different roles in shaping the identity and image of the brand, yet each is essential. As some authors note, while names and logos may have limited capacity to convey a message on their own, slogans can help bridge this gap by adding meaning and emotional resonance (Galí, Camprubí & Donaire, 2017).

From a marketing perspective, slogans can be regarded as the shortest form of storytelling (Papp-Váry & Hajeer, 2025). According to Kotler & Keller (2006), the role of the slogan is to provide customers with a reference point, enabling them to understand what lies behind a brand and why it is distinctive.

Although slogans are undeniably important and useful, people tend to recall surprisingly few of them. Good slogans can be valuable marketing tools, but their impact should not be overestimated; they must be assessed within the broader context of branding.

Slogans are not a “magic bullet”, yet they clearly play a useful role in brand building. In addition to shaping

brand image in the minds of consumers, a well-crafted slogan can support sales objectives, whereas vague or poorly designed slogans may weaken both brand building and commercial performance.

The same logic applies to places as to products and services: by authentically communicating the values of a location, slogans can enhance its appeal. Conversely, overused clichés or irrelevant phrases can diminish a place's brand.

Creating effective slogans for places is more complex than for products, as a city slogan must capture a wide range of factors that shape the visitor and resident experience, while also reflecting the social, cultural, economic, and political context (Supphellen & Nygaardsvik, 2002). This complexity makes finding a truly distinctive and effective slogan a challenging and often uncertain task (Klenosky & Gitelson, 1997; Lehto, Lee & Ismail, 2014).

Beyond marketing and branding considerations, city slogans also invite linguistic analysis, as they must achieve maximum impact with minimal words, using stylistic devices and semantic precision. At the same time, they raise philosophical questions about identity, belonging, and the ways in which places choose to represent themselves through language. Our study therefore interprets city slogans not only from a marketing perspective, but also through these linguistic and philosophical lenses.

Although empirical research in this field is relatively limited, some common characteristics of slogans have been identified. For example, an analysis of 120 tourism destination slogans found that they typically consist of only a few words, convey clear meaning, are supply-oriented, and make a specific geographical reference (Galí, Camprubí & Donaire, 2017).

While tourism destination slogans aimed primarily at visitors have received some academic attention, far less research has examined slogans that address both tourists and local residents. This paper seeks to fill that gap by analysing the slogans of Budapest, the capital of Hungary, its districts, and the country's major cities with county rights.

2. Theoretical Overview of the Main Concepts

2.1. What Makes a Good Slogan?

The origins of the term slogan can be traced back in time to Gaul and geographically to Scotland. The phrase derives from the Scottish Gaelic (Celtic) expression *slaugh gairm*, meaning a gathering cry, which in times of war served as a battle cry (Healey, 2009). Upon hearing it, soldiers would assemble, ready to sacrifice their lives for the common goal of victory. Over time, *slaugh gairm* evolved through forms such as *slughorn* and *sluggorne* before entering the English language as slogan (Ries, 2015). This historical journey itself offers an interesting linguistic perspective, showing how meanings shift and adapt over centuries.

While the word is no longer used as a literal battle cry, slogans remain powerful tools for building brand equity, as highlighted by Kotler and Keller in their book *Marketing Management* (2006). They emphasise that a slogan serves as a reference point, helping customers understand what makes a brand distinctive (Kotler & Keller, 2006).

Similarly, Kohli, Leuthesser & Suri (2007) stress that slogans act as "hooks" that encapsulate a brand's meaning and communicate its uniqueness. They further note that slogans can be adapted over time, supporting the ongoing development of brand identity and the creation of a modern image. This adaptability also reflects a philosophical dimension, as it raises questions about continuity, change, and identity over time.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a slogan as a word or phrase that is easy to remember, used for example by a political party or in advertising to attract people's attention or to suggest an idea. According to Kiss (2016), the slogan is the essence of the advertising message, and should be understandable, short, and easy to memorise. A good slogan, she argues, acts as a reliable recall cue for the audience. In the words of Sárközy (2009), a slogan is a sentence that carries the textual message of the brand, ideally expressing the unique selling proposition (USP). In this sense, the slogan is both the foundation and the pinnacle of brand communication, linking linguistic conciseness with conceptual clarity.

Ries (2015) underlines that slogans without memorability are unlikely to succeed. She identifies five techniques for creating memorable slogans: rhyme, alliteration, repetition, reversal, and double entendre. These techniques show that the creation of slogans is not only a marketing task but also a linguistic craft, where sound patterns and semantic play significantly influence audience recall.

Rosengren & Dahlén (2006) further argue that slogans can contribute to building brand prestige because they draw on human interaction and everyday language while effectively conveying brand values. This interplay of common speech and strategic messaging can also be considered from a philosophical standpoint, as it touches upon how language shapes perception and collective meaning.

The importance of slogans is therefore undeniable. However, it is not easy to determine exactly what makes a slogan truly effective. The literature on slogans identifies a number of features that an effective slogan should possess in order to be both impactful and successful. As Papp-Váry (2020) explains in his book, a good slogan should:

- capture the brand's positioning;
- have a clear message that conveys the product's (or in the case of cities, the city's) story;
- be appealing and highlight consumer and customer benefits;
- carry a positive connotation (or at least avoid negative ones);
- be inspiring, motivating purchase or further interest (in place branding, motivating visits, investments, local product purchases, or fostering residents' pride);
- be relatively short (generally no more than five words);
- be distinctive and original, differentiating it from competitors;
- be usable and sustainable in the long term without needing replacement;
- be easy to remember and repeat;
- harmonise with the logo;
- be catchy and striking;
- be liked not only by customers but also by colleagues (in the case of place branding, not only liked by tourists but also supported by locals).

Although it is rare for a product or place brand slogan to meet all these criteria, they can serve as a useful checklist in slogan development.

Interestingly, despite their importance, only a handful of slogans tend to be widely recalled. For example, while Nike's slogan "Just do it" is almost universally recognised, few can recall the slogan of its biggest competitor, Adidas. This demonstrates that finding the right slogan is challenging even for major global brands. This does not mean that a good slogan has no real impact, but rather that its influence should neither be overestimated nor underestimated. A slogan is not a magic solution, yet it plays a highly valuable role in branding. From a linguistic perspective, its brevity and memorability are crucial, while from a philosophical perspective, it embodies the paradox of being both fixed and adaptable, both a marketing tool and a cultural artifact. A strong slogan shapes brand image and can generate sales, while a poorly conceived slogan can undermine marketing and sales efforts.

2.2. What Makes a Good City Slogan?

As Kohli, Leuthesser & Suri (2007) point out, slogans have three interrelated roles: they strengthen brand image, aid brand identification, and promote brand differentiation in consumers' minds.

At the same time, there have been few analyses of city slogans, and those that exist have mostly focused on tourism-oriented slogans, without addressing the fact that a city can have many more target groups, such as investors or, indeed, local residents. Below we primarily summarise what theoretical and practical experts have concluded with respect to tourism slogans.

As scholars in the field emphasise, such slogans can contribute to a place's attractiveness. According to Pike (2007), the slogan is an indispensable part of brand strategy, the publicly articulated message of the place. Its purpose is to communicate the most important characteristics of the place as clearly as possible (Supphellen & Nygaardsvick, 2002), in a linguistically compact way.

According to Piskóti (2023), a slogan is a place-specific promise to target groups, for which it is particularly important to produce associations that clearly communicate strengths and uniqueness. Some destinations feature dynamic, thought-provoking, and easily recognisable slogans that are aligned with strategic positioning. Others, however, do not achieve comparable success because their chosen slogans fail to generate a similar impact (Lehto, Lee & Ismail, 2014). There is broad agreement that slogans carrying distinctive and unique messages can strengthen a place's positioning and contribute to greater distinctiveness and recognition (Kozma, 2005; Donaire & Galí, 2012). In contrast, overly generic or unoriginal slogans can substantially reduce a city's attractiveness (Hidasi, 2016; Gera, 2023).

In tourism, slogans act as essential marketing instruments that encapsulate the identity and appeal of a destination. They have a strong influence on a place's attractiveness and can either reinforce or weaken the effectiveness of its branding (Wang et al., 2019; Zharkenova et al., 2023; Seidualin et al., 2025). These slogans are crafted to evoke emotions, create lasting impressions, and shape travelers' perceptions and decisions (Haryono & Albetris, 2022; Cole, 2017). A well-designed slogan can emphasise a destination's unique qualities, cultural importance, or experiential offerings, thereby increasing its appeal to potential visitors (Bakti, 2024; Li, 2024).

From a linguistic perspective, research indicates that shorter slogans are generally more memorable and impactful, as they are easier for audiences to recall and connect with the destination (Haryono & Albetris, 2022; Cole, 2017). Rhetorical tools further enhance the effectiveness of tourism slogans. The use of rhetorical devices such as metaphors can create vivid imagery and evoke strong emotions (Kovács, 2019), which may heighten a destination's attractiveness (Lever & Abbas, 2018).

Studies suggest that slogans incorporating rhetorical strategies are more likely to engage tourists by fostering a deeper connection with them (Miller & Toman, 2014). The integration of Aristotle's three rhetorical appeals, pathos, ethos, and logos, can significantly strengthen a slogan's persuasive capacity (Amjad, 2023; Christopher, 2013). Linguistic analysis also highlights the importance of rhetorical features such as duality and analogy, underlining that originality is key to effective branding. Moreover, examining rhetorical devices can reveal cultural and contextual factors that shape slogan effectiveness. Slogans that reflect local traditions or heritage may resonate more deeply with particular target groups, increasing their impact (Akram & Iqbal, 2021; Lora & Rivas-de-Roca, 2022). Understanding such cultural nuances allows for the creation of slogans that are concise yet culturally meaningful and engaging (Kovács, 2024).

According to Piskóti (2023), an effective slogan should be supported by a "philosophical" concept, which is then reinforced through broader communication activities. A good tourism slogan carries storytelling power, conveying the essence and narrative of a place in just a few words. Despite the growing recognition of storytelling's importance in marketing, its application within travel and tourism remains relatively underexplored (Sureshbhai, 2024; Papp-Váry and Hajeer, 2025).

Storytelling has become an essential means for communities to communicate, enabling the promotion and differentiation of destination brands in the increasingly competitive digital landscape (Caso and Giovanella, 2015). By embedding a destination's story into a slogan, marketers can create a concise yet emotionally resonant message that captures cultural identity, evokes curiosity, and fosters a lasting connection with potential visitors. This implies that both the slogan and the associated marketing content require sustained, explanatory, and educational communication; otherwise, even a well-crafted slogan may fail to achieve its intended purpose. Conversely, with consistent communication, even unconventional slogans can gain trust and acceptance. On the other hand, slogans attempting to "sell everything" tend to lack specific details about the destination, resulting in an overly generic and unoriginal message.

Ultimately, the success of a slogan in attracting visitors depends on its ability to capture the essence of a destination in a concise and engaging way (Bakti, 2024; Li, 2024; Gera, 2023). In this sense, tourism slogans remain a key branding tool designed to evoke emotions, create strong mental associations, and influence travel decisions (Haryono & Albetris, 2022; Cole, 2017).

Research by Klenosky & Gitelson (1997) and Obiol (2002) indicates that many tourism slogans are produced without professional grounding and do not indicate the existence of a well-developed, coordinated destination marketing plan. A good slogan should be simple, concise, clear, direct and substantial. If a slogan is only understandable together with other promotional materials, this suggests that the slogan is less effective on its own (Pike, 2004).

Developing slogans for places, or more narrowly for tourism (destination) marketing, is a complex process that involves many more considerations than in the case of products or services. For places, professionals must also consider the factors that shape the overall experience, which include not only tourism-related aspects but also social, cultural, economic, and political factors (Supphellen and Nygaardsvik, 2002), as well as philosophical questions of identity and belonging. For this reason, creating effective tourism destination slogans is a significant challenge (Klenosky & Gitelson, 1997; Lehto, Lee & Ismail, 2014; Kovács, Keller & Kaszás, 2024). This is even more true for broader place marketing slogans that do not target only tourists.

With regard to creating tourism slogans, Galí, Camprubí & Donaire (2017) identify five unique challenges to consider:

- The first challenge is to avoid choosing a slogan that could apply to any other city. Messages that can be applied elsewhere do not provide uniqueness (Lee, Cai & O'leary, 2006).
- The second challenge is to avoid creating "all-encompassing" messages, that is, messages that try to convey too much information. If a slogan is too general and tries to pack too many attributes into the phrase (nature, culture, shopping, ethnography, etc.), it may lose effectiveness (Lee, Cai & O'leary, 2006). Sometimes the list of attributes is so long that the slogan cannot effectively convey the essence of the place (Donaire & Galí, 2012). In such cases, clichés like "Everything is here," "All year round", and "More than..." often occur, but these messages are generally completely ineffective.
- The third challenge is decision-making, which is often constrained by the political context. If a slogan is confusing or too abstract, not unique or simply clichéd, this is often due to politics, as international authors also highlight (Aaker, 1996; Morgan & Pritchard, 1998; Obiol, 2002; Pike, 2005). In many cases, these slogans are influenced by political power or ideology, for example by the party the mayor represents. Political changes often affect slogans, since a new mayor or political force often replaces the existing slogan, even if the previous one was successful (Garrido, 2005).
- The fourth challenge is the wide range of target groups and stakeholders: campaigns appear in heterogeneous and dynamic markets, and a given focus may not be relevant for every market segment involved (Pike, 2004). Therefore, one of the greatest challenges is to develop slogans that can adapt to these diverse target groups.
- Finally, the fifth challenge is that organisations promoting places must create slogans for an increasingly diverse and micro-segmented demand (Obiol, 2002).

It is also important to consider what Piskóti (2022: 2) writes: “We should definitely break with the general simplifying approach of place marketing, as well as with the still frequent implementer roles that assume this is only about communication, reaching residents, tourists and investors with messages, sales support, or branding with good slogans.” Even if it helps, a slogan on its own is therefore not a solution; place marketing is much more complex than that.

As noted above, it is a serious challenge for a city’s slogan to be effective, memorable and unique, and to address multiple target groups simultaneously. As a result, the outcome is often a slogan that is less unique and provides a safer solution, but at the same time is less effective in addressing target groups.

Although relatively little empirical research has been carried out in this area, an analysis of 120 tourism destination slogans identified several common features. These slogans are generally short, consist of few words, carry meaning, focus on what the place offers, and contain specific geographical references (Galí, Camprubí & Donaire, 2017).

However, as Lee, Cai & O’leary (2006) and Pike (2009) also emphasise, very few studies have analysed city slogans to date. The present study seeks to address this by analysing the slogans of Budapest, the capital of Hungary, its districts, and the county seats and other major cities with county rights.

3. Methodology

The empirical part of our research focuses on Hungary, a landlocked Central European country with a population of around 9.6 million, whose capital is Budapest. Hungary is administratively divided into 19 counties, but the highest-ranking urban municipalities are referred to as “major cities with county rights”. In the time of our research there were 23 of these, including the county seats. In addition to these major cities, Budapest is divided into 23 districts, each operating with its own local government.

Our study targeted the slogans of Budapest, its 23 districts, and Hungary’s county capitals and other major cities with county rights. Data collection took place in the spring of 2022 and aimed to gather a total of 47 slogans. The primary method was systematic online research. Each municipality’s official website was visited first. If the slogan could not be found on the homepage, further searches were conducted within the site, exploring archived articles and documents. In many cases, the slogan was easy to locate, often placed in the website header or in one of its corners. When the official website provided no results, the official Facebook and Instagram pages were consulted. Only as a last resort was Google used, as the main objective was to obtain slogans through official channels whenever possible.

The data collection process lasted about one week, although in some cases slogans were identified later. It became clear during the research phase that not every city or district uses a slogan. Out of the 47 locations studied, a total of 39 slogans were found. These are presented in Table 1, which includes both Budapest and its districts, as well as the Hungarian county capitals and other major cities with county rights.

Table 1. Slogans of Budapest and its districts, and Hungarian cities with county rights

City, district	Slogan (in Hungarian)	Translation of the slogan (in English)
Budapest (the capital)	A város, amely egyesít	The city that unites
Budapest 1st District	Szívünkben az első	First in our hearts
Budapest 2nd District	N/A	N/A
Budapest 3rd District	Otthonunk Óbuda-Békásmegyer	Our home Óbuda-Békásmegyer
Budapest 4th District	Az ember a legfontosabb érték	People are the most important value
Budapest 5th District	Belváros: a jövő V.árosa	Downtown: the city of the future
Budapest 6th District	Terézváros, WOW!	Terézváros, WOW!
Budapest 7th District	A kultúrnegyed	The cultural quarter
Budapest 8th District	N/A	N/A

City, district	Slogan (in Hungarian)	Translation of the slogan (in English)
Budapest 9th District	Otthon, város, Ferencváros	Home, city, Ferencváros
Budapest 10th District	Az élő város	The living city
Budapest 11th District	Veled épül	Built with you
Budapest 12th District	Több mint kerület	More than a district
Budapest 13th District	N/A	N/A
Budapest 14th District	N/A	N/A
Budapest 15th District	A holnapot építjük	We are building tomorrow
Budapest 16th District	Fejlődő Kertváros	Developing garden city
Budapest 17th District	Modern Kertváros	Modern garden city
Budapest 18th District	A mi szívügyünk	Our heartfelt concern
Budapest 19th District	N/A	N/A
Budapest 20th District	N/A	N/A
Budapest 21st District	Sikerre hangolva	Tuned for success
Budapest 22nd District	Kisváros a nagyvárosban	Small town in the big city
Budapest 23rd District	N/A	N/A
Békéscsaba	Fejlődés és hagyomány	Development and tradition
Debrecen	Együtt vagyunk Debrecen	Together we are Debrecen
Dunaújváros	Dunaújváros az ellentétek harmóniája	Dunaújváros the harmony of contrasts
Eger	A te történeted	Your story
Érd	A mi városunk	Our city
Győr	A jövő Győrben épül	The future is built in Győr
Hódmezővásárhely	Generációk jövője az Alföldön	The future of generations on the Great Plain
Kaposvár	Virágok városa	City of flowers
Kecskemét	Jövő. Menő. Kecskemét.	Future. Cool. Kecskemét.
Miskolc	Miskolc a te helyed	Miskolc is your place
Nagykanizsa	Nagy álmok, nagy lehetőségek, Nagykanizsa	Big dreams, big opportunities, Nagykanizsa
Nyíregyháza	Többet ad!	Gives more!
Pécs	A kultúra városa	The city of culture
Salgótarján	Salgótarján 100 éve város	Salgótarján, a city for 100 years
Sopron	A hűség és a szabadság városa	The city of loyalty and freedom
Szeged	A Napfény városa	The city of sunshine
Székesfehérvár	Székesfehérvár – A királyok városa	Székesfehérvár the city of kings
Szekszárd	Szekszárd, több, mint jó bor	Szekszárd, more than good wine
Szolnok	A Tisza fővárosa	The capital of the Tisza
Szombathely	Szombathely, a mi otthonunk	Szombathely, our home
Tatabánya	N/A	N/A
Veszprém	A királynék városa	The city of queens
Zalaegerszeg	Zalaegerszeg, a Göcsej kapuja	Zalaegerszeg, the gateway to Göcsej

Source: Own edit based on the collection of city and district slogans

The compiled database serves as the empirical foundation of this study. It enables both the individual analysis of each slogan and the thematic categorization of slogans into distinct types. From a linguistic and cultural perspective, the database is more than a mere repository of marketing expressions as it reflects how urban entities present themselves, the socio-cultural values they seek to emphasize, and the narrative frames they use to shape their identity. This dual role as both dataset and cultural artifact makes the database central to understanding not only the specific wording of slogans but also the broader worldview they communicate.

4. Findings

4.1. Analysis of the slogans of Budapest and its districts

In the first part of the research we collected and examined the slogans of Budapest, the capital of Hungary, and its 23 districts. We found a total of 16 taglines, which means that there was a slogan in only 66.6 percent of the cases. One of Budapest's taglines reads "A város, amely egyesít" ("The city that unites"). This perfectly describes one of the main tasks of the capital, namely to bring together its 23 districts to form a single whole. It may also allude to the fact that the city of Budapest was formed in 1873 through the unification of several municipalities. While this Hungarian-language slogan is aimed primarily at those who live here, the citizens of Budapest, there is another slogan that targets tourists. This is "Spice of Europe", which can already be read at the airport upon arrival and is illustrated with places popular with tourists such as the Fisherman's Bastion, the Széchenyi Thermal Bath or Heroes' Square. From a linguistic point of view the two taglines address different audiences, and philosophically they encode different notions of unity and experience.

The 1st District uses the tagline "Szívünkben az első" ("First in our hearts"). This refers not only to the fact that Buda Castle District is the 1st District ("first"), but also to the love its residents feel for their home. A third, although minor, interpretation could be that the district and its residents are considered highly important by the political leadership, which does everything for them. In this way, the creator of the slogan infused the phrase with emotion and addressed the local population. From a tourism point of view, the slogan also works as a warm and inviting message, suggesting that visitors too can feel a special connection to the district. The 3rd District's motto is simple and concise: "Otthonunk Óbuda-Békásmegyer" ("Our home Óbuda-Békásmegyer"). Residents can feel this as their own, the sentence strengthens the sense of belonging and creates a district that signifies safety. The message of the slogan is that those who live there should feel the 3rd District as their own. From a tourism perspective, however, this slogan says little. Linguistically both examples rely on affective vocabulary rather than concrete attractions.

The 4th District greets visitors to its website with the tagline "Az ember a legfontosabb érték" ("People are the most important value"). At first hearing this could sound like a campaign text, yet it also has a nobler purpose, namely to emphasise that material objects are less important than the most fundamental value, people, that is, local residents and citizens. The 5th District addresses people with the motto "Belváros: a jövő V.árosa." For those who might not know where to place this part of the city, the creators hinted at it through the tagline to make it clear, since the letter V is also a Roman numeral meaning 5. The slogan also conveys that the Inner City is oriented toward development and that only the future matters. Although many historically important events happened here and there are many sights to see, the most important is the period ahead. Here the linguistic play on the Roman numeral serves identification, while philosophically it signals a future-oriented narrative.

The 6th District uses the slogan “Terézváros, WOW!” The expression “wow” can suggest surprise or amazement, for example in relation to a reconstruction that signals development in the district. At the same time it is somewhat odd, since Hungary’s tourism slogan is currently also “WOW” (Papp-Váry & Kerti, 2022). The 7th District seeks to formulate a unique selling proposition with its slogan: “A kultúrnegyed” (“The cultural quarter”). This points to one of the district’s special features, since Erzsébetváros has a rich historical past, numerous entertainment options and trendy social spaces, including ruin pubs, making it a truly vibrant district. It is also very popular among tourists precisely because of the entertainment options mentioned above. From a linguistic perspective this is a clear USP that compresses identity into a compact label.

The 9th District strengthens the sense of belonging among residents and tourists with the slogan “Otthon, város, Ferencváros” (“Home, city, Ferencváros”). Its special message may be that Ferencváros is both a city and a home, and perhaps it also alludes to the fact that the country’s most popular football team, Ferencváros, plays in the district. The 10th District’s slogan is “Az élő város” (“The living city”). The mayor also considers Kőbánya to be the geometric centre of Budapest, so it is no coincidence that this motto was chosen. The 10th District is among those parts of the city that are territorially extensive and include important transport hubs. This is one reason it is “living,” since tens of thousands of people pass through it every day. Linguistically both slogans rely on broad metaphors of home and life.

The 11th District’s motto prompts residents to take action. The slogan “Veled épül” (“Built with you”) may suggest that the district leadership actively seeks residents’ opinions on development, in other words it encourages residents to act. The 11th District is known to be developing dynamically. One need only think of the BudaPart area, where the Kopaszi-gát has been completely transformed and a “city within the city” has emerged, or Etele Plaza, which has become one of Buda’s largest malls, or the Citadella, the surroundings of which are currently undergoing major reconstruction. The 12th District uses the slogan “Több mint kerület” (“More than a district”) and they are likely referring to the fact that the area known as Hegyvidék offers numerous possibilities, including entertainment, housing, study and hiking. People living in other districts also enjoy going up to Normafa, riding the Libegő chairlift or simply looking out from the Elisabeth Lookout. At the same time the “More than” turn of phrase is one of the most clichéd solutions in slogans and is generally to be avoided (Papp-Váry, 2022; Papp-Váry, 2023; Mészáros, 2021). Philosophically, these examples lean toward participatory development and experiential value, yet the linguistic execution can slip into cliché.

The 15th District addresses people with the slogan “A holnapot építjük” (“We are building tomorrow”). Although it may sound a bit clichéd and like political text, it certainly suggests that development occupies an important place in the district. Both the 16th and the 17th Districts use the word “kertváros” (“garden city”). While the 16th District uses the slogan “Fejlődő Kertváros” (“Developing Garden City”), the 17th District has opted for “Modern Kertváros” (“Modern Garden City”). The 16th District thereby seeks to communicate that numerous investments and renovations are being carried out in the district according to residents’ needs. The garden-city character is reinforced with strong environmental projects. Examples include publishing a green information booklet, the Bee- and Bird-Friendly Municipality project, the cat-neutering programme, setting up a district community composting site and establishing collection points for used cooking oil. The 17th District is adjacent to the 16th District, so they sometimes reinforce the garden-city feeling with joint projects. There is a cycle path along Lake Naplás and the Naplás-lake lookout was recently opened. From a linguistic point of view, the repeated “garden city” label creates a shared semantic frame across district boundaries.

The 18th District appeals to our emotions with the slogan “A mi szívügyünk” (“Our heartfelt concern”). Since this part of the city is also far from the inner city and is more of a family-oriented district, it is important to make the reader feel that the district is not only a matter of the leadership’s heart but also of the residents themselves. The 21st District’s slogan seeks to convey a strong message: “Sikerre hangolva” (“Tuned for success”). There is no question about Csepel’s goal, namely achieving the milestones it has set and implementing its objectives.

The last district slogan analysed belongs to the 22nd District. Budafok-Tétény uses the tagline “Kisváros a nagyvárosban” (“Small town in the big city”). This is an interesting way of pointing out that this district was annexed to Budapest in 1950 and that Budafok and Tétény had previously been independent small towns. With this slogan the district addresses both prospective residents and visitors or tourists. If you want to live or explore in Budapest but prefer a small-town lifestyle, it is worth choosing the 22nd District. Linguistically the contrast between “small town” and “big city” is a neat antithesis, while philosophically it signals a search for community scale within metropolitan life.

Among the analysed slogans we find interesting ones that call attention to the USP, that is, the unique attribute of the product which in this case means the cities and districts. We also find call to action (CTA) slogans that urge action, and some that are entirely average. It also became clear that in most cases the aim is not to address tourists but residents. As a result, the mottos tend to have a more municipal tone. What is certain is that those who devise the slogans are not in an easy position, since there is enormous competition within Budapest for the favour of both residents and tourists. From a linguistic perspective the spectrum runs from USP to CTA, while from a philosophical perspective the choices reveal competing narratives about who the city is for and how it wishes to be seen.

4.2. Analysis of the slogans of county seats and cities with county rights

According to our survey conducted in the spring of 2022, out of the 23 county seats and major cities with county rights examined, only one municipality does not use a tagline: this is Tatabánya. Interestingly, the municipality does not have a unique logo either and uses the classic coat of arms, so one might say its visual and verbal identity is rather incomplete.

Békéscsaba uses the slogan “Fejlődés és hagyomány” (“Development and tradition”). There is a slight tension here, since development and tradition may evoke ambivalent feelings in the reader. If we think about it, however, the two can coexist: preservation of tradition can go hand in hand with outstanding change. In 2021 Békéscsaba held a Munkácsy memorial year, when the slogan “Munkácsy városa” (“City of Munkácsy”) also appeared. It is widely known that the painter Mihály Munkácsy grew up in the county seat of Békés, so one encounters his name and face throughout the city. Philosophically, the pairing of development and tradition frames an identity narrative; linguistically, the balance is carried by two abstract nouns in parallel.

In the case of Debrecen, we found several slogans on the internet, but most recently the tagline “Együtt vagyunk Debrecen” (“Together we are Debrecen”) has been used (Debreciner.hu, 2019). This phrase points to the “Debrecen feeling”: the city, with its historic civic identity, becomes Debrecen only together with its residents and anything can be achieved through joint effort. With this slogan an emotional line is being tapped. From a linguistic perspective the inclusive pronoun “we” is central.

Dunaújváros wanted a slogan that also works abroad. “Ellentétek harmóniája” (“Harmony of Opposites”) likely sounds appealing in English and faithfully reflects the city’s diversity (Dunaujvaros.hu, 2017). The justification is that Dunaújváros stands out not only in industry, sport and culture, but also in education. The philosophical paradox of “opposites in harmony” is the core idea.

Eger entices tourists with the slogan “Te történeted” (“Your story”). We encounter a bit of CTA (call to action) here, since the city suggests that many things lie in Eger that, once discovered, can become “your story”. Eger and its surroundings are undoubtedly wonderful, where one can discover more and more details and stories. Linguistically the direct second person creates immediacy.

Érd also uses an emotionally charged slogan: with the motto “A mi városunk” (“Our city”) it draws attention to the values, residents and history embedded in the settlement. The city with county rights in Pest County is a popular suburban municipality. Many young people choose Érd because it is close to the capital, offers excellent transport connections and real estate prices are not as high as in other suburban settlements.

Győr draws attention to itself with, among others, the slogan “A jövő Győrben épül” (“The future is built in Győr”). This clearly suggests not only that the city is being built, but also that things are being built in the

city, such as Audis, since the German premium brand has been manufacturing in Győr for decades. The unique tagline can thus be interpreted in two ways. (Gyor.hu, 2023). Linguistically the double meaning hinges on the verb “is built”.

Hódmezővásárhely brings past, present and future together in its slogan: “Generációk jövője az Alföldön” (“The future of generations on the Great Plain”). This tagline emphasises that it is worth staying on the Great Plain, since the future begins there as well. With this distinctive motto it also calls the attention of the new generation to remain in Hódmezővásárhely. Philosophically it argues for rootedness.

In the case of Kaposvár it is unclear whether the slogan “Virágok Városa” (“City of Flowers”) is still in use. Their brand manual does not mention it. The city may have chosen this motto when, in 2003, it won the title of Hungary’s most flowered settlement. However, already in 1929, after post-war reconstruction, it had received this title (Tourinform Kaposvár, 2023).

Kecskemét draws attention to itself with three words: “Jövő. Menő. Kecskemét.” (“Future. Cool. Kecskemét.”). Several slogans contain references to the future, which Kecskemét also reinforces. Like Győr, Kecskemét is famous for car manufacturing — the other German premium brand, Mercedes, established a plant here — so the word “cool” may also refer to this. “Cool” can also be read as suggesting that it is cool to live in Kecskemét. It is undoubtedly a youthful, catchy, short slogan in which the name of the county seat also appears, so we can link the motto to the city. Linguistically the staccato three-word structure boosts memorability.

Miskolc used a similar solution with the slogan “Miskolc, a Te helyed” (“Miskolc is your place”). This draws attention to the possibility that the county seat of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén could be the place where we continue our lives, which we can call our home.

Nagykanizsa addresses us with the motto “Nagy álmok, nagy lehetőségek. Nagykanizsa” (“Big dreams, big opportunities. Nagykanizsa”). The city with county rights also has a vast history and was already inhabited in antiquity. It is territorially extensive as well, which the “big opportunities” in the motto may also allude to. With “big dreams” the city suggests that nothing is impossible. We should also note that the slogan is full of the letter “N,” that is, it uses alliteration. Here the linguistic device strongly supports recall.

Nyíregyháza added a distinctive slogan to its logo: “Többet ad” (“Gives more”). Beyond accommodation, leisure options and green spaces, Nyíregyháza also boasts one of Hungary’s largest zoos.

Pécs used the slogan “A kultúra városa” (“The city of culture”) at the time the research was completed, i.e. in spring 2022, and a slogan competition was announced then as well (pecs.ezalenyeg.hu, 2022). It is no coincidence that Pécs used this slogan: in 2010 it was the European Capital of Culture. Looking at the city’s assets we can find the Zsolnay Quarter, the mosque and the Cathedral, structures and values that have survived wars; the mosque, for example, has been in Pécs since the period of Ottoman occupation. There are also opportunities for active leisure, such as the Mecsek mountains. Philosophically the slogan stakes a claim on cultural identity.

In the case of Salgótarján the message is easy to grasp: “Salgótarján 100 éve város” (“Salgótarján, a city for 100 years”). The municipality is extremely proud of its past, so it is no accident that it positions itself with this slogan. It also offers a glimpse of urban history and prompts readers to look into that history a bit.

Perhaps Sopron’s slogan is the best known: “A hűség és a szabadság városa” (“The city of loyalty and freedom”). It is taught in history classes why Sopron is the city of loyalty. Following the Treaty of Trianon and after several uprisings and acts of resistance, Sopron’s residents decided by referendum that they wished to belong to Hungary. The result is well known: Sopron belongs to Hungary, so it is no accident that it earned the title of “the most loyal city.” The philosophical pairing of loyalty and freedom condenses a complex legacy into a compact verbal formula.

Szeged’s slogan hides a characteristic: “A Napfény városa” (“The city of sunshine”). This hardly needs explaining: in the county seat of Csongrád-Csanád the number of sunshine hours can reach 250–280 per month in summer. Tourists also love it, since not only is the city beautiful, but there are several places to

bathe, including the River Tisza. The city consciously builds its marketing around “sunshine.” For example, Szeged’s spa is called Napfényfürdő (Sunshine Spa), and one of its shopping centres is named Napfény Park Shopping Centre. Linguistically the single vivid metaphor unifies multiple initiatives.

Székesfehérvár also refers to its historical past with its motto: “Székesfehérvár A Királyok Városa” (“Székesfehérvár the city of kings”). With the exception of three, all Hungarian kings were crowned in Székesfehérvár. Not only was the ceremony held here; the burial places of several kings are also found in the city.

With its slogan Szekszárd also refers to the city’s distinctiveness: “Szekszárd: több mint jó bor” (“Szekszárd: more than good wine”). This reinforces that, beyond wine tours, the city is worth exploring.

A touch of boldness can be detected in Szolnok’s slogan: “A Tisza fővárosa” (“The capital of the Tisza”). It is an interesting approach, since the river flows through several cities, including much larger Szeged, yet Szolnok dared to call itself the river’s capital. Linguistically this is a semantic elevation of status.

Szombathely — similar to Miskolc and Érd — uses a slightly more ordinary slogan that puts itself in the foreground: “Szombathely, a mi otthonunk” (“Szombathely, our home”). This strengthens the bond to the city and the sense of belonging.

Veszprém uses the motto “A királynék városa” (“The city of queens”), since, for example, the consort of Saint Stephen, Gisela, was crowned here. The atmosphere of the city still reflects this royal heritage, with its historic buildings, castle district, and churches evoking the centuries-old tradition that connects Veszprém to Hungarian queens. Walking through its streets, visitors encounter a unique blend of medieval character and cultural vibrancy.

Zalaegerszeg also references the past and a region with its slogan: “Zalaegerszeg, a Göcsej kapuja” (“Zalaegerszeg, the gateway to Göcsej”). This slogan is somewhat unusual, since Göcsej is not a widely known region, and such a slogan is only advisable if that regional name is a much stronger brand than the municipality itself (see, for example, the “Szolnok: the capital of the Tisza” case). From a linguistic standpoint the “gateway” metaphor is straightforward; philosophically it positions the city as a threshold space.

4.3. Categorization of the slogans of districts and major cities with county rights

After analyzing the individual slogans, it is useful to categorize them according to their dominant characteristics. This allows us to see the main directions and strategies applied in the place branding of Hungarian districts and major cities with county rights. While some slogans appeal to emotions, others highlight values, actions, or uniqueness, and several also make use of the city’s name or explicitly refer to the concept of “city.” The following subsections present this categorization in detail.

4.3.1. Emotionally evocative slogans

These slogans are designed to evoke an emotional impact both among local residents and tourists. After all, which settlement would not want to make visitors and inhabitants alike feel that they are valued and important? From a linguistic perspective, such slogans often rely on affective semantics, where the choice of words aims to resonate with the audience’s sense of belonging and attachment. Philosophically, they touch on notions of place identity and the human need for recognition within a community.

Table 2. Emotionally appealing slogans

City, district	Slogan (in Hungarian)	Translation of the slogan (in English)
Budapest	A város, amely egyesít	The city that unites
Budapest 1st District	Szívünkben az első	First in our hearts
Budapest 4th District	Az ember a legfontosabb érték	People are the most important value
Budapest 6th District	Terézváros, WOW!	Terézváros, WOW!

City, district	Slogan (in Hungarian)	Translation of the slogan (in English)
Budapest 18th. District	A mi szívügyünk	Our heartfelt mission
Budapest 21th District	Sikerre hangolva	Tuned for success
Békéscsaba	Fejlődés és hagyomány	Progress and tradition
Debrecen	Együtt vagyunk Debrecen	Together we are Debrecen
Eger	A te történeted	Your story
Sopron	A hűség és a szabadság városa	The city of loyalty and freedom
Szeged	A Napfény városa	The city of sunshine
Szolnok	A Tisza fővárosa	The capital of the Tisza

Source: Own edit based on the collection and grouping of city and district slogans

4.3.2. Slogans containing spatial and/or value-based positioning

In these slogans we can observe an emphasis on a distinctive characteristic or a central position relative to something else. Such positioning may be cultural or geographical, with the motto subtly enriched by this framing.

Table 3. Slogans containing spatial and/or value positioning

City, district	Slogan (in Hungarian)	Translation of the slogan (in English)
Budapest 5th District	Belváros: a jövő V.árosa	Downtown: the V. city of the future
Budapest 7th District	A kultúrnegyed	The cultural quarter
Budapest 10th District	Az élő város	The living city
Budapest 12th District	Több mint kerület	More than a district
Budapest 16th District	Fejlődő Kertváros	Developing Garden City
Budapest 17th District	Modern Kertváros	Modern Garden City
Budapest 22th District	Kisváros a nagyvárosban	Small town in the big city
Hódmezővásárhely	Generációk jövője az Alföldön	The future of generations in the Great Plain
Kaposvár	Virágok városa	City of flowers
Pécs	A kultúra városa	The city of culture
Salgótarján	Salgótarján 100 éve város	Salgótarján, 100 years as a city
Székesfehérvár	Székesfehérvár – A királyok városa	Székesfehérvár – The city of kings
Szekszárd	Szekszárd, több, mint jó bor	Szekszárd, more than good wine
Veszprém	A királynék városa	The city of queens
Zalaegerszeg	Zalaegerszeg, a Göcsej kapuja	Zalaegerszeg, the gateway to Göcsej

Source: Own edit based on the collection and grouping of city and district slogans

The precise geographic context serves as an attempt to locate the place in relation to higher-order geographical brands, which may already be well positioned in the public consciousness (Caldwell and Freire, 2004). As noted earlier, this may be somewhat unclear in the case of the slogan “Zalaegerszeg, the Gateway to Göcsej,” but is evident in Hódmezővásárhely’s “The Future of Generations in the Great Plain.”

4.3.3. Action-oriented slogans

Whether referring to visiting or to experiencing some aspect of local life, these slogans employ a more direct and often informal tone, whether abstract or concrete. It can be observed that the cities and districts using

such slogans aim primarily to raise awareness of their characteristics and to encourage action. They attempt to persuade tourists to travel to the destination and residents to take an active role in supporting and improving the city in cooperation with the local leadership. Linguistically, the imperative or suggestive form in these slogans reflects a pragmatic strategy, appealing to the audience's agency and sense of participation.

Table 4. Slogans encouraging action

City, district	Slogan (in Hungarian)	Translation of the slogan (in English)
Budapest 11th District	Veled épül	Built with you
Budapest 12th District	Több mint kerület	More than a district
Budapest 21th District	Sikerre hangolva	Tuned for success
Eger	A te történeted	Your story
Nagykanizsa	Nagy álmok, nagy lehetőségek, Nagykanizsa	Big dreams, big opportunities, Nagykanizsa
Nyíregyháza	Többet ad!	Gives more!
Szekszárd	Szekszárd, több, mint jó bor	Szekszárd, more than good wine

Source: Own edit based on the collection and grouping of city and district slogans

4.3.4. Slogans emphasizing uniqueness

In this category, uniqueness is the defining criterion. The creators have crafted a motto that, even if not entirely exclusive to the locality, highlights a notable feature that is perceived as special. This can be considered a way of signalling a core strength, sending a message of distinction. From a philosophical standpoint, this aligns with the idea of authenticity, where the essence of a place is distilled into a communicative phrase that claims a singular identity.

Table 5. Slogans containing a unique feature

City, district	Slogan (in Hungarian)	Translation of the slogan (in English)
Budapest 7th District	A kultúrnegyed	The cultural quarter
Budapest 10th District	Az élő város	The living city
Dunaújváros	Dunaújváros – az ellentétek harmóniája	Dunaújváros – the harmony of contrasts
Győr	A jövő Győrben épül	The future is built in Győr
Hódmezővásárhely	Generációk jövője az Alföldön	The future of generations in the Great Plain
Kaposvár	Virágok városa	The city of flowers
Salgótarján	Salgótarján 100 éve város	Salgótarján – 100 years as a city
Sopron	A hűség és a szabadság városa	The city of loyalty and freedom
Szeged	A Napfény városa	The city of sunshine
Székesfehérvár	Székesfehérvár – A királyok városa	Székesfehérvár – the city of kings
Szekszárd	Szekszárd, több, mint jó bor	Szekszárd, more than good wine
Szolnok	A Tisza fővárosa	The capital of the Tisza
Veszprém	A királynék városa	The city of queens
Zalaegerszeg	Zalaegerszeg, a Göcsej kapuja	Zalaegerszeg, the gateway to Göcsej

Source: Own edit based on the collection and grouping of city and district slogans

4.3.5. Slogans containing the city's name or the word "city"

This category includes settlements that have incorporated their own name into the slogan, or have positioned themselves explicitly as a home or as a certain type of city. This creates a strong foundation for memorability. As several studies have shown, integrating the brand name into the slogan facilitates brand recall and the association of the slogan with the brand itself (Garrido, 2005; Kohli, Leuthesser and Suri, 2007; Obiol, 2002; Ortega, Mora & Rauld, 2006). Although embedding the brand name in the slogan may limit creativity, the potential advantages can be significant (Kohli, Leuthesser & Suri, 2007). Integrating the brand name reinforces the intended messages, supports associative links, and enables the inclusion of a distinctive and inimitable element, as Pike (2004) points out. Particularly for destinations that are not yet well known, this practice aids in identification (Ortega, Mora & Rauld, 2006).

Table 6. Slogans containing the name of the city or district

City, district	Slogan (in Hungarian)	Translation of the slogan (in English)
Budapest 3rd District	Otthonunk Óbuda-Békásmegyer	Our home Óbuda-Békásmegyer
Budapest 6th District	Teréztváros, WOW!	Teréztváros, WOW!
Budapest 9th District	Otthon, város, Ferencváros	Home, city, Ferencváros
Debrecen	Együtt vagyunk Debrecen	Together we are Debrecen
Dunaújváros	Dunaújváros – az ellentétek harmóniája	Dunaújváros – the harmony of contrasts
Győr	A jövő Győrben épül	The future is built in Győr
Kecskemét	Jövő. Menő. Kecskemét.	Future. Trendy. Kecskemét.
Miskolc	Miskolc, a Te helyed	Miskolc, your place
Salgótarján	Salgótarján 100 éve város	Salgótarján – 100 years as a city
Székesfehérvár	Székesfehérvár – A királyok városa	Székesfehérvár – the city of kings
Szekszárd	Szekszárd, több, mint jó bor	Szekszárd, more than good wine
Szombathely	Szombathely, a mi otthonunk	Szombathely, our home
Zalaegerszeg	Zalaegerszeg, a Göcsej kapuja	Zalaegerszeg, the gateway to Göcsej

Source: Own edit based on the collection and grouping of city and district slogans

4.3.6. Slogans containing the word “city”

There is always the question of whether the word “city” should appear in a city’s slogan (or “district” in the case of an urban district). After all, there is one fact that people are almost certainly aware of: that it is a city. Nevertheless, this approach does appear in several cases. From a linguistic viewpoint, this can be seen as a tautology, where the message contains an element already known to the audience. Philosophically, however, the explicit mention of “city” may be interpreted as a performative act of identity declaration, reaffirming urban status and pride.

Table 7. Slogans containing the word “city”

City, district	Slogan (in Hungarian)	Translation of the slogan (in English)
Budapest 9th District	Otthon, város, Ferencváros	Home, city, Ferencváros
Budapest 10th District	Az élő város	The living city
Budapest 12th District	Több mint kerület	More than a district
Budapest 22th District	Kisváros a nagyvárosban	Small town in the big city
Érd	A mi városunk	Our city
Kaposvár	Virágok városa	City of flowers

Source: Own edit based on the collection and grouping of city and district slogans

5. Discussion

Our analysis of Budapest and its 23 districts, alongside Hungary's county capitals and other cities with county rights, shows that municipal slogan practice only partially mirrors the ideals outlined in the branding and tourism literature. While the literature consistently frames slogans as compact carriers of positioning, distinctiveness, and memorability (Kohli, Leuthesser & Suri, 2007; Pike, 2004, 2005; Rosengren & Dahlén, 2006), our corpus reveals uneven adoption, audience focus, and rhetorical craft—especially at the district level.

Adoption and audience focus: resident-first vs. visitor-first

A first, simple discrepancy is adoption itself. Only two thirds of Budapest districts had an identifiable slogan, whereas almost all county-level cities did (with Tatabánya as the notable exception). This gap aligns with the literature's observation that much empirical work and practice emphasize tourism-oriented destinations rather than sub-municipal units (Galí, Camprubí & Donaire, 2017; Lee, Cai & O'Leary, 2006). It also reflects a philosophical tension in place branding: is a slogan primarily an outward-facing promise to visitors or an inward-facing social contract with residents? Our findings suggest that district slogans skew toward the latter, where a "municipal" tone, service orientation, and community sentiment dominate. Cities, on the other hand, more often reach for tourism-facing narratives. This divergence resonates with Piskóti's insistence on a holistic place marketing model where stakeholder identification and consensus precede messaging (Piskóti, 2022, 2023)

Uniqueness vs. interchangeability

Across the corpus, many slogans could be swapped between places with little loss of fit ("A holnapot építjük" – "We are building tomorrow", "Több mint kerület" – "More than a district", "Az élő város" – "The living city"). This confirms long-standing warnings that generic messages undercut distinctiveness and recall (Klenosky & Gitelson, 1997; Donaire & Galí, 2012; Lee, Cai & O'Leary, 2006). Conversely, stronger examples align with the literature's call for clear positioning and USP: "A kultúrnegyed" (Budapest 7th district – "The cultural quarter"), "A Tisza fővárosa" (Szolnok – "The capital of the Tisza"), "A hűség és a szabadság városa" (Sopron – "The city of loyalty and freedom"), or the oxymoronic contrast in "Dunaújváros – az ellentétek harmóniája" ("Dunaújváros – the harmony of contrasts"). These validate claims that distinctive, place-anchored meanings support recognition and preference (Pike, 2004; Wang, Huang, Li & Yang, 2019; Lever & Abbas, 2018).

Linguistic craft and rhetorical devices

From a linguistic perspective, the literature links memorability to brevity and formal devices such as rhyme, alliteration, repetition, reversal, and double entendre (Ries, 2015; Rosengren & Dahlén, 2006; Miller & Toman, 2014). Our data offer concrete instances: repetition and alliteration in "Nagy álmok, nagy lehetőségek, Nagykanizsa" ("Big dreams, big opportunities, Nagykanizsa"), assonance and rhythmic brevity in "Jövő. Menő. Kecskemét." ("Future. Cool. Kecskemét."), oxymoron and reversal in "Dunaújváros – Az ellentétek harmóniája" ("Dunaújváros – The harmony of contrasts"), and duality in "A hűség és a szabadság városa" (Sopron – "The city of loyalty and freedom"). These align with rhetorical analyses showing that such devices deepen imagery and aid recall (Lever & Abbas, 2018; Haryono & Albetris, 2022). However, many district slogans forego these tools, privileging administrative clarity over linguistic punch, consistent with their resident-facing purpose but at a cost to distinctiveness.

Brand-name integration and the "city" marker

Integrating the place name into the slogan is widely recommended for recall and brand-slogan linkage (Garrido, 2005; Ortega, Mora & Rauld, 2006; Kohli et al., 2007; Papp-Váry, 2023). Our dataset confirms frequent and often effective name integration: "Miskolc, a Te helyed" ("Miskolc – Your place"), "A jövő

Győrben épül” (“The future is built in Győr”), “Együtt vagyunk Debrecen” (“Together we are Debrecen”). By contrast, including the metonymic category word “város/city” is a double-edged sword. While the literature notes it can anchor geographic hierarchy and context (Caldwell & Freire, 2004), overuse risks redundancy. The better cases make “város” (city) semantically work: “A Tisza fővárosa” (Szolnok – “The capital of the Tisza”), “Kisváros a nagyvárosban” (Budapest 13th district – “A small town within the big city”), by adding hierarchy, paradox, or river-based identity rather than merely stating the obvious.

Congruence, testability, and translation

Lehto, Lee & Ismail (2014) emphasize congruence between destination imagery and slogan affect; Supphellen & Nygaardsvik (2002) advocate normative testing. Our translations highlight an additional risk: meaning may attenuate or shift across languages. “Belváros: a jövő V.árosa” exemplifies clever local wordplay (V as Roman numeral, “városa”), but the hook dilutes in English. This underlines the need for pre-testing across key audience languages and for ensuring that the linguistic form carries across markets without losing rhetorical force.

Storytelling capacity and philosophical stance

Recent work frames slogans as triggers for micro-narratives that help audiences “get” the destination swiftly in digital contexts (Caso & Giovanella, 2015; Sureshbhai, 2024; Papp-Váry & Hajeer, 2025). Our corpus shows both ends of this spectrum. “A te történeted” (Eger – “Your story”) explicitly invites narrative projection, while “A kultúrnegyed” (Budapest 7th District – “The cultural quarter”) cues a lived script of venues, nightlife, and creative heritage. By contrast, formulaic claims such as “Több mint kerület” (Budapest 11th District – “More than a district”) are philosophically thin: they promise transcendence without specifying essence. Put differently, the strongest slogans marry linguistic economy with a philosophical claim about identity (“who we are”) that stakeholders can own and enact, precisely the “concept behind the line” Piskóti urges to be built through sustained explanatory communication (Piskóti, 2023).

Practical alignment with communications intensity

The literature warns that even excellent lines require orchestration to take root (Pike, 2007; Piskóti, 2023). Our findings corroborate this: where the slogan appears consistently in visible touchpoints (e.g., city gateways, flagship venues, digital headers), it accrues meaning; where it is buried or absent, even a solid line fails to function. This is as much an organizational and political challenge, as Morgan and Pritchard (1998) note, as it is a linguistic one, particularly in settings where leadership change can reset identity work.

Where our data confirm, nuance, or challenge the literature:

- Confirm: The perils of genericity and the gains of clear, place-anchored USPs (Klenosky & Gitelson, 1997; Donaire & Galí, 2012; Wang et al., 2019) are strongly evident.
- Nuance: At the district level, slogans often prioritize resident identity-work over tourist persuasion; rhetoric is correspondingly plainer. This suggests a two-track ecosystem (resident-first vs. visitor-first), which is not fully captured in tourism-focused studies.
- Challenge (softly): The assumption that brevity alone yields recall needs coupling with culturally legible hooks. Some very short lines in our set are forgettable; slightly longer ones that encode paradox or place-specific heritage travel farther in memory, supporting the view that rhetorical salience matters at least as much as word count (Ries, 2015; Lever & Abbas, 2018; Miller & Toman, 2014).

Implications for practice:

- Begin with essence, not with the line. Our results endorse Piskóti’s process view: clarify identity

and stakeholder consensus first; write the line second (Piskóti, 2022, 2023).

- Design for congruence and test it. Check that imagery, tone, and promise fit lived and promoted experiences (Lehto et al., 2014; Supphellen & Nygaardsvik, 2002).
- Exploit linguistic craft. Favor rhetorical devices that encode meaning (paradox, duality, repetition) and integrate the place name when helpful (Garrido, 2005; Ortega et al., 2006; Papp-Váry, 2023).
- Think bilingually. Where international audiences matter, ensure the slogan's semantic core and rhetorical effect survive translation.
- Sustain the story. Treat the slogan as a storytelling trigger to be activated across touchpoints with consistent, educational communication (Caso & Giovanella, 2015; Piskóti, 2023; Papp-Váry & Hajeer, 2025).

In sum, our findings both validate and contextualize the literature: the most effective Hungarian municipal slogans exhibit linguistic economy, rhetorical distinctiveness, and a philosophically intelligible claim about place identity, and they become truly powerful when embedded in coherent, long-term communication.

6. Limitations, Implications, and Further Directions of Research

This study is limited by its scope, focusing on the slogans of selected Hungarian cities and districts at a single point in time. The dataset, while representative of major urban areas and administrative divisions, does not include all settlements, nor does it consider historical changes in slogans over time. Future research could benefit from a longitudinal approach that examines how slogans evolve in response to shifts in political leadership, urban development, or tourism strategies. Such an analysis would also allow for the investigation of temporal patterns in language use and thematic emphasis.

Another limitation lies in the reliance on publicly available slogans, which may not fully capture unofficial or community-generated phrases that circulate in local discourse. These alternative expressions often reveal a more authentic or grassroots sense of place identity, offering valuable insights into the gap between official branding and lived experience. From a linguistic standpoint, exploring these unofficial narratives would enrich our understanding of how language operates in the construction of urban identity.

The findings carry practical implications for city branding and destination marketing. Policymakers and communication specialists should be aware that linguistic form is inseparable from philosophical content: a slogan is not merely a sequence of words but a symbolic act that positions the city in relation to both internal and external audiences. Overreliance on generic formulations undermines authenticity and risks diluting the brand. Instead, a slogan should emerge from a participatory process that engages stakeholders in articulating what makes their community unique.

Further research could extend the comparative dimension by examining slogans from multiple countries, enabling cross-cultural analysis of rhetorical strategies, semantic fields, and metaphorical structures. Such work would contribute to the broader field of linguistic landscape studies and to the philosophy of place branding, deepening our understanding of how language shapes and reflects collective identity in the urban context.

7. Conclusions

Cities and urban districts should seek to create a well-crafted slogan, as such a tool can speak directly to their primary target groups, namely local residents and tourists. From a linguistic perspective, slogans operate as condensed communicative acts that blend information, emotion, and identity into a compact verbal form. Philosophically, they can be seen as expressions of collective self-understanding, encapsulating the way a community wishes to present itself to others.

In the spring of 2022, we conducted a study in which we sought to collect the slogans of 47 cities and urban districts. In the end, no slogan could be identified for seven districts of Budapest and for one county seat, while 39 cities and districts did have a slogan in use.

One of the important, though not entirely surprising findings of our survey is that district slogans tend to take the form of municipal mottos, primarily aimed at those who live there. In contrast, the slogans of county seats and other major cities more often convey messages with a clear tourism-oriented purpose. This reflects a difference in communicative intent: the former functioning as tools of internal cohesion and identity reinforcement, the latter as outward-facing promotional devices.

Another important observation is that most slogans are not truly unique, apart from the fact that they often contain the name of the city or district. In many cases the same slogan could be used for a different place without sounding strange, but also without adding any real meaning. Such generic phrases are common not only in Budapest districts and larger Hungarian cities but also in other places around the world. From a linguistic point of view this shows the use of clichés, where the wording is too general to create a clear and distinctive brand identity. From a philosophical point of view it also raises a question of authenticity: if a slogan could fit anywhere, does it really describe the place it is supposed to represent?

All of this reinforces the point that before developing a slogan, it is essential to reflect carefully on what makes the settlement unique. As Piskóti (2023, 46.) states: “It is not advisable to begin the more integrated marketing work of a settlement or even of a tourist destination with the creation of identifying formal elements, the design of a logo, the invention of slogans or basic communication messages, or ‘image design.’ One must go through a — not easy — professional process in order to bring to the fore those identifying features that are accepted through consensus, genuinely lived, embraced and represented by stakeholders, and which at the same time form the most effective brand and message system toward external target groups.”

In essence, a slogan is not simply a decorative phrase but a crystallization of meaning. Its linguistic form should be rooted in the lived reality of the community, and its philosophical grounding should align with a shared sense of identity. Without this, the slogan risks becoming a hollow signifier — a phrase that speaks, but says nothing.

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