



**Brand Marketing:
A Strategy for Successful Differentiation**

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To succeed in destination brand marketing – Ditch the cliché!

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Marketing the ‘why’ of a destination is more important than marketing the ‘what’ of a destination, and branding needs to be more than just a cliché or stereotype. In this clip, you can see why all of the ‘bad practices’ of destination marketing are no longer effective or acceptable for success. In a marketing savvy and internet connected world – authenticity, creativity and focus are the requirements for marketing that is memorable and persuasive.

[Watch ‘HERE’ video](#)

Kitchen Sink

This clip illustrates the ‘kitchen sink’ approach to a marketing strategy. All the features with no benefits or advantages. No clear positioning or storyline. A lazy reliance upon stock shot images and hyperbole soundbites results in a disconnected narrative that yields no convincing argument or evidence of ‘why’ to choose ‘Here’. The 60 second format means it is like drinking from a fire hose of information with an afterthought of social media channel promotion as an appendix just to make sure that no second goes wasted in communications. As a parody of every traditional marketing destination Ad, ‘Marketing Here’ exposes the fundamental misunderstanding of what good marketing and good branding needs to do in order to create recall and appeal.

A cliché is an overused phrase, opinion or image that demonstrates a lack of original thought or perspective. All too often, cliché images and copy in advertising or marketing are used as substitutes and ‘short cuts’ for doing the hard work of thinking and creating a differentiating or distinctive strategy or campaign. The travel industry has been particularly slow to recognise that the real value in spending money on strategy in brand communications is this forms a blueprint for more effective marketing briefs that leads to more effective and consistent communications. Truly effective brand strategists understand the connection points between how a destination is perceived via content and associations and how the experience can be delivered via consistent and compelling brand images, narratives and storylines.

Strong marketing connects a destination’s story with unique and creative perspectives through images, copy and experiences across all communication touch-points and channels. In doing so, the brand message becomes more effective for audience recall, stimulus and ultimately persuasion. The goal for marketing is to resonate and be remembered for associations that amplify and direct preferences to enable choice. Too many times, marketing professionals and agencies believe their own hyperbole or ignore the



requirement for being unique and authentic in all aspects of communications. They fail to put their own unique angle onto copy or imagery that reinforces the destination's positioning or competitive advantage. The use of stereotype and stock-shot imagery creates or perpetuates cliché marketing that only serves as wallpaper to create backdrops that the potential visitor and consumer either fails to notice or believes to merely be hyperbole. In some cases, this lazy approach to marketing prompts ridicule and reinforces all of the reasons why someone should not visit or consider the destination. One particularly egregious error is to use imagery that is not authentic to or from the destination being marketed. The authenticity of marketing claims or promotion can often rise or fall on the basis of imagery and copy that appears to either be stock-shot imagery, photo-shopped imagery or over-claims and meaningless sound-bites. The challenge for all brand marketing is to aim for differentiation, distinction and desire. Marketing content should also be meaningful, motivating and memorable. At all times, it must be authentic.

Brand strategy & customer experience

An effective brand strategy should be soundly based on data driven insights, analysis and evaluation of a destination's 'product' truths, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. A strong element of creative thinking and communications execution must bring these to life. The customer experience and expectation for a destination is always based upon how well a destination brands itself and connects imagery, description and testimonial through content and promotions. The website and social media channels are the most important means of leveraging awareness and associations for destinations and the brand strategy for countries, cities, regions, states and locations must balance both promoted content and user generated content in offering credible and compelling support for why someone looking for a vacation destination should become a visitor. The ability to convert consideration to purchase is the critical role of brand marketing and imagery, both static and dynamic images along with copy content are the primary means of influencing decisions. When a potential visitor is looking for a destination for vacation or holiday they are 'hiring' the brand of a destination to do a job for them. It is the role of the marketing team for a destination that must understand the target audiences and their drivers of purchase so as to then connect the relevant content through the appropriate channel to the potential visitor. In doing so, and assisted by compelling, creative and distinctive content the potential visitor determines if the destination fulfils the rational requirements and the emotional expectations of what they want from their next travel destination. It is worth noting, that this is where emotions and storytelling are most valuable.

All too often, marketing content does not have a 'storyline' or 'narrative' for the destination and a laundry list of features become the substitute for good communications. Marketing content should be aligned with the creative and compelling truths of a destination but it must also work hard to engage the emotions and imagination of the potential visitor without resorting to clichés. The visitor needs to imagine and project themselves 'in' the destination at the point they are considering or choosing their vacation. They need to be able to identify what activities, experiences and sights they will see and potentially use for their 'Instagram' moment to fulfil their emotional projection of 'why' they should visit. The role of filmed content, imagery, good storytelling and authentic testimonials is to provide the context, stimulus and evidence that influences choice.

And, one last point is worthy of consideration for marketing professionals in the travel and tourism industry. Increasingly, the role of marketing is not merely to broadcast and spotlight the existing attributes or features of a location but it is also to help create new products, services and experiences for a destination. Marketing teams must think like new product development experts and work with business and commercial partners to develop new offers and perspectives that bring a destination's brand promise to life. This approach not only means the brand story is authentic but it provides tangible expression and evidence of the unique advantages and benefits of the destination.

Overall

Overall, the travel and tourism sector is a sector with one of the highest levels of engagement and interest for consumers as visitors. The unique attributes and associations for every destination requires marketing to be more than just stereotype and cliché ads or messages.

The power of destination branding to achieve results from investment is well documented.

In the case of Britain is Great, FutureBrand worked with the National Audit office to determine the effectiveness of promotion. The conclusion of overall effectiveness was the for a marketing investment of £113.5 million pounds the net return was £1.2 billion in value. In the recently published U.S. Travel Association report on promotional brand effectiveness, several case studies highlight the wider economic benefits of Travel and Tourism marketing and vital need for branding to be at the heart of any strategy. The State of New Mexico identified that for every \$1 invested in a recent Ad campaign \$30 in visitor spending was directly attributed to the promotion and an extra \$3 in tax revenues was generated. The impact of Travel and Tourism cannot be underestimated as a category which accounts for 11% of total U.S. goods and services exports. One in nine private sector jobs are in the sector and travel is a top 10 employer in 49 of the 50 U.S. States.

Links

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/exploiting-the-uk-brand-overseas/>)

<http://esto.ustravel.org>





**For further information please contact:
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Thank you