

PLACEMATTERS

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OUR APPROACH TO PLACE AND DESTINATION BRANDING

Below we summarise the approach that we use to develop brand propositions for places and destinations.

Core Beliefs and Values

We have a number of core beliefs and values that inform our approach to place and destination brand strategy development.

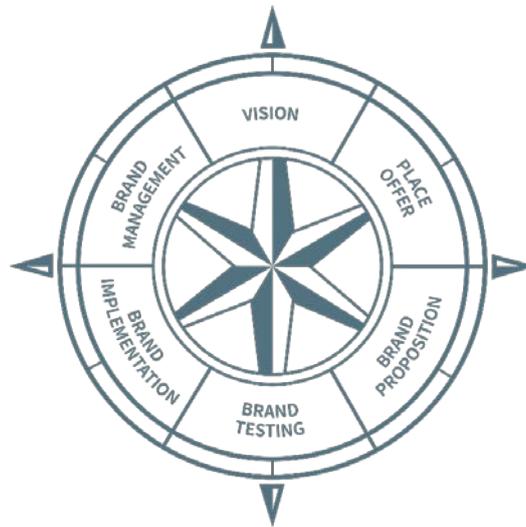
In summary they are:

- The focus of place brand strategy is on the offer of places (for residents, workers, learners, people in business and visitors) and the experiences they have there.
- Places without brand strategies are effectively allowing others to brand them, often with misconceptions and distorted perceptions.
- The most effective place brand strategies are created through partnerships of key stakeholders – people with a stake in the future success of the place, willing to invest in its development.
- Key stakeholders need to be (1) engaged in the development of the strategy – not just consulted about it and (2) encouraged to become involved in its implementation and management.
- Key stakeholders need to communicate their work on brand development to the wider community and engage with it to tap into their knowledge of and commitment to the place.
- Stakeholders and members of local communities can make very effective ambassadors for the place and advocates for its brand offer.
- The advent of digital communication technologies enables significant consultation between stakeholders and their communities on brand development and they need to be deployed for maximum benefit.
- Those technologies can be harnessed to promote and raise awareness of place brand propositions – offers and experiences – to greater effect and much less cost than traditional forms of print and media advertising and promotion.

A Clear and Rigorous Process using our Placematters Brand Compass

This tool, first created in 2003 and evolving ever since, especially during Malcolm Allan's time as one of the lead directors of the Colliers International Destination and Development consulting group, it was developed to assist places and destinations chart a pathway from their "current reality" to their "desired future place", a place described by their vision for the development of the place over a

period of time. It has been used to develop brand propositions for countries, city regions, cities and areas within them, for mixed use real estate development, for cultural attractions and destinations, for tourist attractions and long distance tourism driving routes. Below we summarise each of the components of the Compass.



Source: Placematters©

Clarifying the Vision for the Place

We work with an existing group of key stakeholders who represent investors in and users of the place to either (1) review an existing vision for its development or (2) to assist them to create one.

It often the case that this group of stakeholders will then come together on a more regular basis as a Brand partnership to manage the process of creating a Brand proposition and managing the action required to implement it.

Destination Audit – An Appraisal of the Current Place Offer

The diagram below illustrates and summarises the core elements of our Destination Audit tool.



Our place audit involves identifying and assessing:

Attractors – offers and experiences which raise awareness and pull the market; e.g. the cultural offer of the place, its education and learning offer, its business development and support offers and the opportunities for investment.

Infrastructure – which internally connects the place and to the world beyond its boundaries, helping to create a sense of place and ensure the smooth operation of the destination.

Services – which cater for visitors', residents', businesses' and organisations' needs and increase spending: accommodation, restaurants, bars, shops and event activities.

Markets - the target market audiences for the offer of the place – existing residents, workers, employers, visitors and investors.

Sustainability – the things that will ensure the continued availability and delivery of the offer of the place.

Management – the current approach to the management of the place.

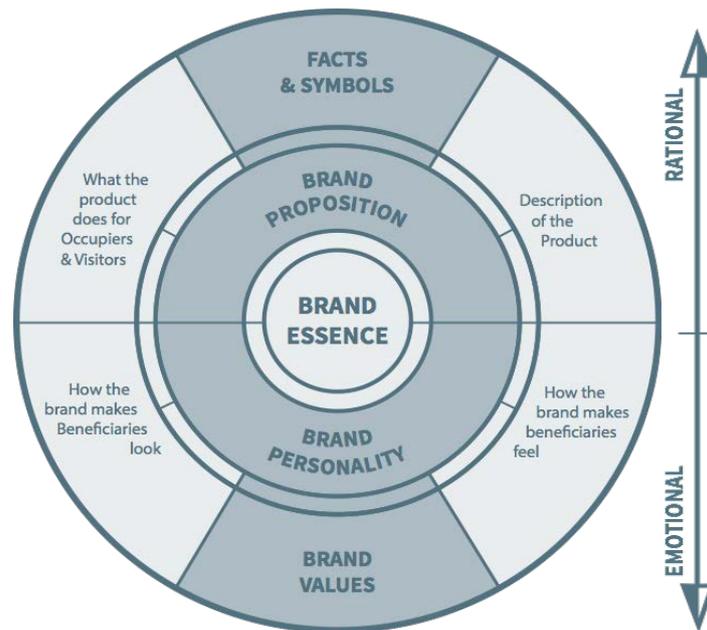
The Current De-Facto Brand – which captures all of these elements of the existing destination experience, the 'perception of place', to present it to its markets.

The place audit also helps identify the key stakeholders of the place who should be involved in consultation and engagement on brand proposition development, involvement in its implementation, and active in its management.

Constructing a Brand Proposition to Realise the Vision

We have developed a process which we use with key place stakeholders to create brand propositions which is illustrated below. When completed it identifies and describes:

- The brand product – its offers and experiences
- The rational and emotional benefits of the proposition offer and experiences
- What the product does for occupiers and visitors
- The core facts about the place and its offer
- Any symbols, such as logos, fonts, that represent the offer
- The values that drive the brand offer
- How the brand makes the beneficiaries feel about the place
- How the brand makes beneficiaries look
- The characteristics of the personality of the place



Source: Placematters©

Testing the Brand Propositions on Target Market Audiences – using A Brand Descriptor

When we have agreed brand propositions with our clients we test them on a wider group of stakeholders and invite comment from the wider public. To do so we create what we term a “Brand Descriptor” which summarises the core elements of the proposition – its offers and experiences. Typically, this is based on a Brand Pyramid, as illustrated below. This Descriptor is placed online and target market audiences are invited (usually through social media) to comment on its elements.



Source: Placematters©

Finalising the Brand Proposition

When we have analysed all of the feedback on the Brand descriptor we work with the key stakeholders in the brand partnership to finalise the brand proposition.

Preparing an Experience Masterplan to Build the Brand Proposition

Then, having agreed a proposition we usually prepare a draft plan for the client to guide them in identifying the range of actions required to make the proposition a reality. We term this as an “Experience masterplan” – a plan to create the desired experiences and planned offers.

Managing the Implementation of the Brand Proposition

Finally, we provide our client with advice on the most appropriate way to manage the creation of the brand proposition and the implementation of its key proposals. The Brand Partnership that puts this together usually undertakes this.

Our Approach to Consultation, Engagement and Involvement

Our recent experience indicates that effective use can be made of the new generation of web-based digital tools to organise and facilitate work between stakeholders of places and destinations to create, implement, manage and communicate brand propositions for them, enabling them to work effectively in partnership together and involve, engage with and communicate with the wider community.