

# Growing Our Destinations

Creating our 'competitive advantage'



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## INTRODUCTION

**“Our destinations will be the foundation of our success”.**

The Queensland tourism industry and the Queensland Government have recognized that the future success of tourism rests on growing our state’s many destinations. Achieving our 2020 target will rely on every destination growing.

What lessons can we learn from around the world to support the growth of our destinations?

This paper presents a set of principles, based on best practice around the world, which will be useful in helping industry to benchmark itself and, potentially, identify new approaches to accelerate growth in our destinations.

Each principle is supported by a case study, an explanation of what the principle is, and how this principle is implemented in other destinations. A set of questions are asked at the end of each principle to encourage you to think about how the principle currently applies in Queensland and the relevance (or not) of these ideas to our future.

## GROWTH, COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE AND THE PROMISE

- A growing destination has a strong competitive advantage.
- A destination’s competitive advantage is embodied in its Promise.
- The Promise has to deliver a superior value proposition.
- There are five key principles that best practice destinations adopt to identify, deliver and maximise the influence of their Promise, enhance their competitive advantage, and grow.

## Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage occurs when an organisation acquires or develops an attribute or combination of attributes that allow it to outperform its competitors. For a tourism destination, gaining a competitive advantage over other destinations and converting that competitive advantage into increased visitors and visitor expenditure is the ultimate goal.

So what is at the heart of a ‘competitive advantage’ for a destination? The acclaimed economist Michael Porter defined two types of competitive advantage that an organisation can achieve relative to its rivals – lower cost or differentiation.

If there is one thing that everyone in tourism in Queensland and Australia more generally can agree on it is that tourism in this country cannot compete on price. Our costs of production – wages, regulations and general overheads and the costs associated with our high levels of safety, clean green environment and general high quality of life that make us an attractive destination – means that we can’t and we shouldn’t try to compete on price with much cheaper rival destinations. This doesn’t mean that we should not be as efficient as we can be, but that lowering costs will not be the source of our competitive advantage.

Therefore our competitive advantage must lie in ‘differentiation’ – providing a variety of products, services, features and/or experiences to consumers that competitors are not offering, are unable to offer, or that we can offer in a different way, and at a price that is considered good ‘value for money’.

So where do we start in achieving a competitive advantage for our destinations, are there some fundamental principles that a destination needs to adhere to so as to bring together and manage all those different elements that constitute a destination of choice for visitors?

## The Promise

In his book ‘Global Destination BrandScience’ Duane E Knapp argues:

“...what gives a destination a competitive edge over similarly perceived destinations....is the destination’s internal ‘**Promise**’, the strategic mindset that makes a destination unique in the minds of guests, influencers and stakeholders.”

So what constitutes a destination’s Promise where does it come from? As Knapp goes on to explain “Cities are more than a mere collection of buildings, just as places are more than mountains, trees or beaches. Cities and places are about people’s aspirations, their hopes and dreams – most important – their memories.”

From Knapp’s perspective then the key for a destination to establish a competitive advantage is to focus on the destination’s Promise.

## The Promise

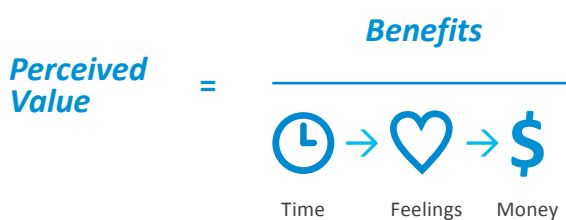
The Promise is the fundamental building block on which a destination differentiates itself, builds its competitive advantage and delivers a superior value proposition. A destination's Promise embodies the personality and reputation that distinguishes it from the competition and portrays an identity that is true to what it stands for and the perceptions it wants to create. The Promise defines a destination's distinctive experiences that:

- reflect the destination's character, people and places,
- enrich the lives of visitors, and
- provide lasting and memorable impressions.

It is all about the Promise. Perceived value is at the crux of everyone's perception of his or her experience with any organisation or destination. All too often, companies and destinations are singularly possessed about the price of their products and services. While price is important, it's only one part of the three fundamental perceptions used to determine whether customers believe that what they are buying is worth the price – time, feelings and money. It's very important to exceed customer's emotional expectations and time-related expectations.

Customers develop their perception of value through a subjective feeling as a result of comparing a destination brand's product and service offerings with those of its competitors based on their own needs, preferences, buying behavior, and characteristics. Thus, a customer's perception of value constantly changes. Consequently, the destination brand's ability to deliver value and delight customers is deeply rooted in the Promise. The purpose of the Promise is to set the tone for every guest experience.

## BRAND CONCEPT OF VALUE



## Best Practice Principles

The purpose of this paper is to present a set of principles that Queensland can use to measure its current performance in creating 'competitive advantage' in the market place for Queensland and Queensland's thirteen destinations. Assessment against these principles will also highlight what more could be done to assist Queensland in realising its potential, achieving its 2020 targets and improving its perception as a world class tourism destination.

## Duane Knapp and Global Destination Brand Science

This paper draws significantly from the book *Global Destination BrandScience* by Duane E Knapp. Duane Knapp is founder and chairman of BrandStrategy Inc. which has advised over 300 brands in 15 countries worldwide including destinations, corporations, communities, societies, professional associations, institutions, countries, celebrities and successful professionals who desire to optimise their perception, image and success. In his book Knapp highlights that marketing programs alone are no longer enough to set a destination apart from the rest and attract visitors in a highly competitive market place of increasingly savvy travelers. Destinations and tourism operators need to focus on how they can create a strong competitive position that will distinguish themselves from competitors in a way that is meaningful to their guests. To help destinations achieve the sort of exalted position in the marketplace that creates preference in the minds of target audiences, Knapp has developed a five step process which has been adapted, with permission, for this paper to create a set of best practice 'destination competitive advantage' principles for Queensland.

Based on Duane Knapp's insights as depicted in the following figure, the principles for best practice destination growth are:

1. **Understand your destination value proposition** - the destination essence/experiences that differentiate your destination and current market perceptions of your offer
2. **Know your destination promise** – a unique destination Promise that encapsulates your differentiation that guests will experience
3. **Your destination promise is your brand**– the types of messages that will communicate the desired destination Promise and create the appropriate destination brand
4. **Everyone lives the destination promise** – bring the destination Promise/brand to life and ensure it endures - think like a brand live the brand
5. **Extend the influence of your destination promise** – building and enhancing the destination Promise/brand equity through strategic alliances

## HOW TO CREATE A GENUINE DESTINATION BRAND EXPERIENCE

### 1. Brand Assessment

Define the community's essence and experiential commitment.

### 2. Brand Promise

Create a unique Promise and paradigm shift.

### 3. Brand Blueprint

Become distinctive in guests' minds apart from other destinations.

### 4. Brand Culturalization

Think like a brand; live the destination's Promise.

### 5. Brand Advantage

Optimise economic opportunity; form alliances to enhance brand equity.

By adopting a disciplined approach to assessing our destinations against these five principles Knapp contends that a destination will position itself as a destination of choice because it has:

- clearly defined its essence...its Promise,
- created a paradigm shift and become distinctive in its guests' minds, and
- established a sustainable competitive advantage.

In doing so the destination will have not only enhanced its tourism status, but with this new found status it will be more attractive to its residents, businesses, new development and potential investors. This point is highlighted in the words of Michael Gehrish President and CEO of Destination Marketing Association International "A successful destination.....goes beyond the tourism aspect; it becomes a benchmark for the entire community to become the focal point for making strategic decisions regarding growth and development."

The following sections provide a more detailed description of each of the five principles of 'destination competitive advantage' which in-turn serves as a health check for determining the current 'destination status' of Queensland and its thirteen destinations and a pointer to what more could be done to achieve our destinations' potential.



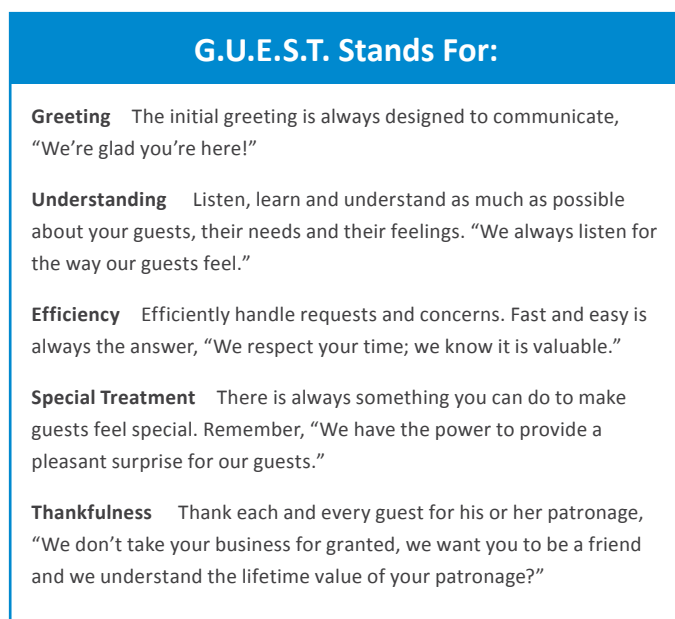
## Principle 1 - Understand your destination value proposition

### Case Study

The process for assessing the value proposition for Estes Park, Colorado, USA, uncovered a number of opportunities for uniqueness. It revealed that the destination had one season and no community-wide strategy to create a year-round destination. Research also revealed low visitor satisfaction during 'on-season' compared with 'off-season'. A result of the process for Estes Park was a shift in thinking about the destination towards it being 'always in season and always ready for guests'. There was strong support for this paradigm shift and it became an inspirational element of the destination's Promise.

'The perception of a destination is all in the eyes of the guests.'

Before outlining the details of this first principle it is valuable to draw an important distinction between looking at those people who visit your destinations as merely 'visitors' but more as valued and invited 'guests' as outlined in the following diagram:

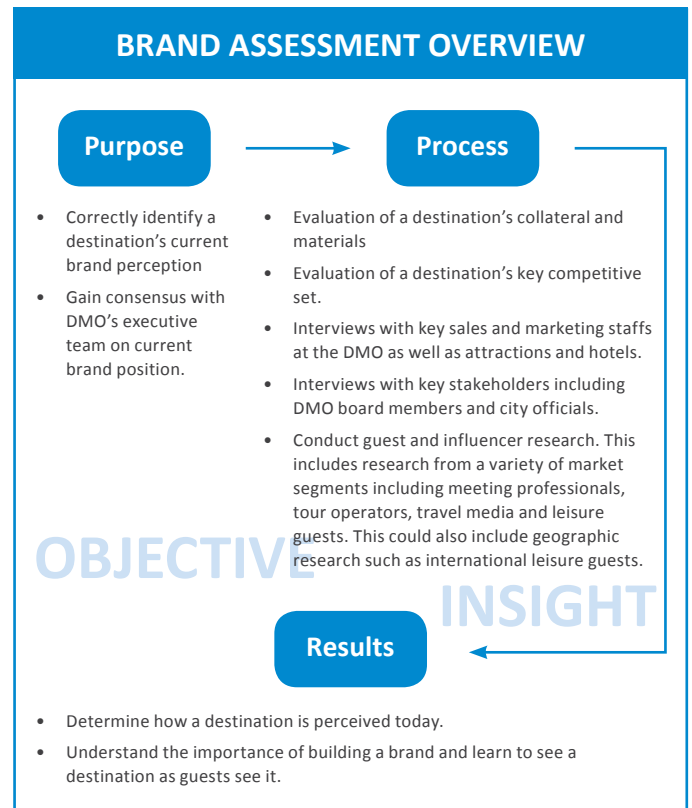


A best practice destination will understand its destination value proposition. That is, you will understand how guests, the industry and community feel about your destination and the opportunities to develop optimal guest experiences and perceptions. This understanding derives from an assessment/situation analysis conducted primarily through guests' eyes to achieve an objective view of the destination. Guests' perceptions are brought together with market trends and community perspectives to develop a consensus on the destination's current position that is consistent with guests' reality.

Research is imperative because 'you can uncover how to increase mind share in order to grow and maintain visitation.' Adherence to this principle will ensure that destinations effectively examine their image and get valuable insights to how to occupy a distinctive and valued position in the minds of guests, industry and community.

This principle, as summarised in the following figure from Knapp, requires understanding:

- key aspects of the destination's image
- current performance
- industry trends, present and future
- relevant critical success factors and strengths and weaknesses that could impact performance.



Some of the key issues that need to be understood include:

- the first word that comes to mind when guests and public think of your destination
- strengths and weaknesses of your destination
- strongest positive benefits or attributes for guests and tourism industry
- the destination's current position in the minds of guests
- current and potential target guest markets
- how guests do business with your destination
- market segments with greatest potential for visitation, meeting planner support, tour operator interest
- social media perceptions of your destination
- perception of the current destination Promise where there is one
- what Promise (if one exists) is being communicated by the RTO and different parts of the community
- what other brands could your destination associate with

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## Implementation

A destination can conduct an assessment of its value proposition. The main areas of this assessment include:

### 1. A comprehensive review of destination marketing materials

This includes assessing the destination's primary visual themes, whether the Promise is being conveyed, consistency of message across media, differences in message across market segments, and whether the message is consistent with reality.

### 2. Marketing strategy evaluation

The purpose of this is to establish the consistency and effectiveness of current and proposed marketing programs. The assessment includes:

- distribution and communication channels used
- target markets and why
- reach and frequency of program
- social media strategy
- performance measurement approach
- primary, secondary and tertiary competitors – current and future
- positioning statement that summarises marketing goals
- major expenditures and measured results over the past three years
- consistency of marketing messages throughout the tourism community

It is also valuable for comparison purposes to look at other destinations and commercial brands that are considered best practice.

### 3. Stakeholder research to gain local perspective

This process generates valuable insights and it can also gain stakeholder buy-in to the process and outcomes. Stakeholders can include public officials, government officials, chamber of commerce executives, tourism leaders and state tourism representatives. The intention is to gather both positive and negative insights to gain the 'truth' regarding the destination.

Community buy-in to the destination Promise is essential so it becomes a 'guiding star' for the whole community in decisions regarding its future development. If a quiet resort town becomes a congested metropolis, it impacts the ability of the destination to deliver on its Promise.

### 4. Market research to gather the insights from the destination's customers (guests, tour operators, travel media and meeting professionals)

This phase may include perception mapping to determine how customers associate key attributes with various destinations, for example whether a destination is associated with a relaxing and romantic atmosphere, or family friendly with lots to do. This assessment helps to identify the points of difference with which the destination is best associated.

When a guest identifies how a destination compares with competitors it is also possible to identify what can be done over time to increase the perception of distinctiveness.

In addition, interviews can be conducted with the influencers to gain their impressions about the destination.

## How are we tracking?

Queensland and its destinations already invest a considerable amount of time, money and effort on tourism research and destination analysis including:

reviewing visitation levels and patterns through the NVS and IVS at the state and destination levels,

understanding the nuances of the different domestic and international markets and their influence at the destination level,

segmentation of the domestic market based on consumer psychographics (wants and needs),

assessing community perceptions of tourism,

brand health assessment,

SWOT analysis of destination opportunities and challenges, and

recent development of the Destination Tourism Plans (DTPs) that summaries much of this research and analysis.

While this level of visitor research and analysis indicates that Queensland is in a sound position in terms of understanding the metrics and perceptions of our visitors, the ever changing nature of the market and visitor wants and needs means that we constantly need to be interrogating our markets, particularly via the multitude of digital channels, and understanding how we can better deliver world class visitor experiences.

### Think About

- What is your understanding of the motivations and perceptions of the visitors to your destination?
- Do you know what drives visitors to your product, what excites them and what brings them back?

## Principle 2 - Know your destination Promise

### Case Study

Tourism Vancouver launched a new destination Promise and identity in 2005 in preparation for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. Its Promise was:

*“The Vancouver experience will exceed guests’ expectations. We will deliver superior value within a spectacular destination that is safe, exciting and welcoming to everyone.”*

*To support the Promise, the organisation put in place a number of programs. Recognising superior value is not only about cost, but about giving people what they want and when they want it, so visitor information services staff were encouraged to be certified through a customer service training program. The staff also roamed the streets providing tourists with directions and information to help guests feel safe. Tourism Vancouver worked with the City of Vancouver on a range of initiatives to maintain a clean and sustainable environment. To support its positioning as an exciting city, Tourism Vancouver became actively involved in attracting numerous festivals and events throughout the year. In the lead up to the Paralympic Games, Tourism Vancouver and partners launched a program to improve the city’s accessibility to people with disabilities.*

*Following the Games, Tourism Vancouver carried out a visioning exercise to determine what the future could look like for Vancouver. ‘Rethink Vancouver’ was born—an industry led program to achieve the destination’s goals and refresh its commitment to delivering on its Promise.*

*‘Tourism Vancouver has reinforced its desire to invite the world to this special, world-class city, where hosts welcome guests with pride and where each guest is a guest of everyone who calls Vancouver home.’*

A best practice destination knows its Promise. This Promise provides a destination and the local community with an internal directive or ‘guiding star’ for everything the destination does by giving a clear understanding of what its guests want to feel.

As noted earlier, the Promise is ‘the essence of benefits (both functional and emotional) that current and potential guests can expect to receive from experiencing the destination.’ It is the destination’s commitment to its guests that should reflect the heart, soul and spirit of the destination.

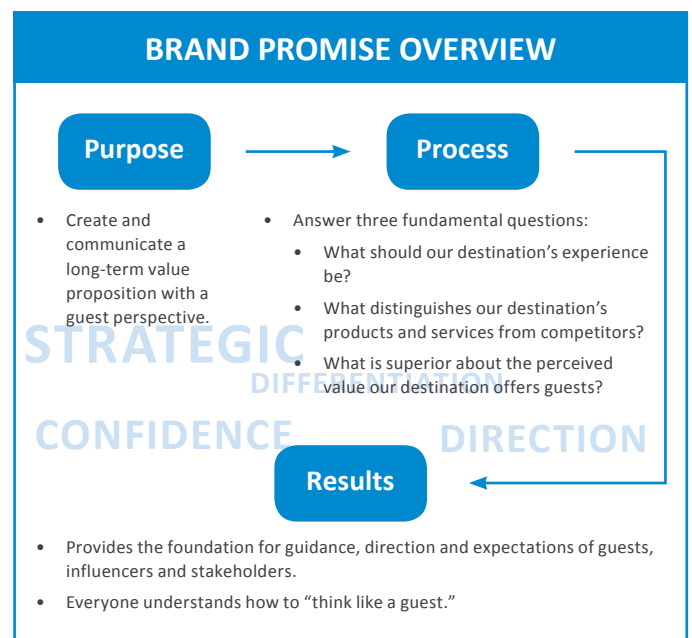
To achieve the right Promise for everyone involved in the destination (guests, community and industry), the following must be in play:

- A unique experience is provided with products and experiences that enhance guests’ lives. As a result guests talk positively about the destination and they have an emotional connection.
- There is community partnership, passion and support for the Promise
- It creates a perception of exceptional value and distinctive benefits.

It helps to understand what a Promise is not.

- It is not a description of a destination’s product attributes such as having beaches or theme parks.
- It is not an advertising message, and while it drives advertising and promotional messages the Promise should not be included as a slogan, but used as an internal directive.
- It is not a mission statement, which describes what an organization does. The Promise is how the destination wants its guests to feel.
- It is not a vision statement, which is focused on the future of an organization.

A Promise accomplishes something far more profound than a mission or vision statement. A Promise clearly defines a destination’s distinctiveness and ‘is an expressed assurance that something will occur with a clear perception of excellence.’





## Implementation

In developing a destination Promise the aim is to write it in three sentences or less and address the three fundamental questions noted in the above diagram:

- What should our destination's experience be all about?
- What distinguishes our products and services from competitors?
- What is superior about the value we offer our guests?

The words should be written from the guests' point of view, have emotional power and 'the ability to connect the guest with the destination in a distinctive and truthful way.' The actual words in a Promise can be revealed by guests as a result of the assessments undertaken as part of Principle 1. There needs to be an inspirational element as well to encourage the destination to aim high, although this needs to be kept honest. Not all theme parks can compare to Disneyland. To be successful and maintain a competitive advantage a destination needs to exceed guest's expectations, not over promise and under deliver.

Another consideration is that a Promise should not just define the destination's physical attributes but give a sense of the experience a guest can expect when they arrive.

A test of an effective Promise is to ensure guests fully understand the words and feel that the essence of the destination is conveyed, and it elicits the same feelings from community stakeholders. The ultimate test is when the guest actually benefits from the delivery of a destination's Promise. This becomes very powerful when they go on to tell their friends about their experience.

'There is nothing more valuable to guests than memories of feeling great. Create memorable experiences.'

## How are we tracking?

In recent years, Tourism and Events Queensland working with the Regional Tourism Organisations and industry, have identified the 'hero experiences' for each of Queensland's thirteen destinations. These hero experiences focus on what is truly unique, memorable and engaging about a destination and provide the basis for destinations to frame their definitive destination Promise. While the hero experiences aptly hone in on a destination's point-of-difference and present the key experiences that should be delivered to guests, the Promise provides the guest perspective of the hero experiences in terms of the value and benefits they will derive from the heroes – it's all about making a Promise to our guests that offers them experiences of exception value and that create long lasting memories.

### Think About

Are you familiar with your destination's hero experiences?

Do your destination hero experiences effectively portray what your destination is all about?

Do you know how your tourism product relates to your destination hero experiences?

Do you have a sense of how your destination hero experiences could be expressed as your destination Promise?



## Principle 3 – Your destination Promise is your brand

### Case Study

The Colorado Springs Convention and Visitors Bureau embarked on a brand development process involving the tourism industry, local community and other stakeholders. Following research and workshops a regional brand strategy and various assets including a tagline and logo were developed. The brand essence was identified as “Living Means Doing” and the tagline was “Live it Up”.

While the brand strategy was well received there was mixed feedback from the community on the logo. So the collaborative process was continued with the local community tasked to design a logo for the regional brand. A new design was unanimously recommended and the community also adopted the new logo and brand strategy to leverage their own marketing goals. Through this design process the broader community became aware of the destination’s Promise and how they could help communicate this consistently in their own messaging and promotions in a way that worked for them.

A best practice destination has a personality and reputation that distinguishes it from the competition. It needs a strong brand identity where its representation and messages reflect and are true to what it stands for and the perceptions it wants to create—the destination’s Promise. A well planned process for creation of that brand identity and nurturing and guarding it is critical.

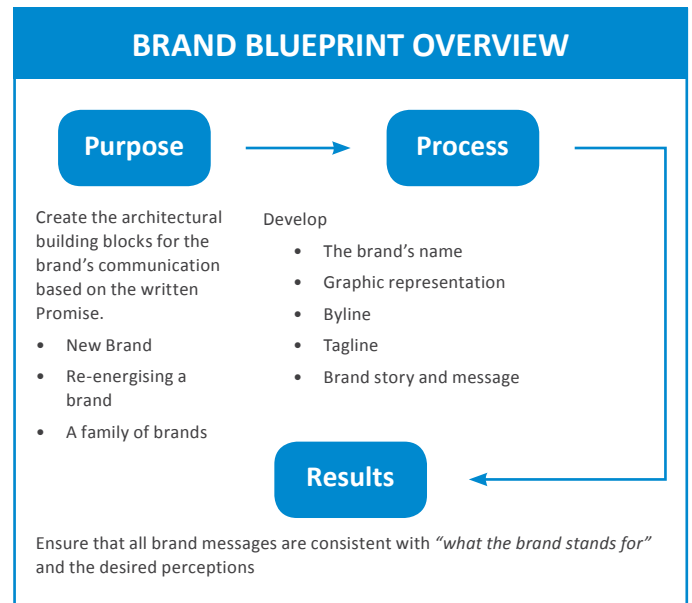
A destination needs a ‘blueprint’ for constructing and communicating its destination’s Promise consistently in all of the destination’s messages. If you get the blueprint right, it is a lot easier to achieve the desired perception amongst guests.

In creating a destination’s brand identity it is important to realise it is not just about the destination’s product and services that differentiate it from other destinations in the minds of guests. The perceived values, characteristics and attributes of the destination are critical. Therefore, a brand identity that positions the destination successfully needs to be based on the information gained through Principle 1 assessment and the Promise identified in Principle 2. The Promise and the overall strategy for the destination drive the process in identifying and executing its communications clearly and consistently.

### Implementation

There are five components that comprise the ‘blueprint’ under this principle. Before embarking on these, the destination needs to identify at least five clear ‘signals’ of what it delivers, in terms of experience and services, attitude and culture, that are easily recognisable by guests. Tiffany’s signature blue packaging is well recognised and can evoke a range of emotional responses and images ‘from envy to sheer delight.’ The Tiffany blue is a signal that tells consumers the product is authentic.

The five key components of this blueprint as outlined in the following figure from Knapp are as follows:



#### 1. Name

This is the expression of the destination that can be used to create a distinctive and positive positioning. There is a science and art to creating a name that can involve many different considerations. But fundamentally, it should be a name that resonates in guests’ minds and hearts.

#### 2. Graphic representation

This refers to the icon, symbol or image that graphically depicts the destination’s identity. Trademarks and logos enable us to recognise products, services and organisations and can provide reassurance as to their quality and authenticity. The challenge is to ensure the image effectively and appropriately communicates the destination’s Promise. If it is beautifully crafted but fails to do this then it is meaningless.

The key criteria for developing an effective graphic representation are:

- Protectability – ability to be registered as a trademark
- Acceptability – colours and shapes that can effectively cross cultural boundaries
- Uniqueness – ability to cut through complexity and ensure easy recall and association with the destination
- Compatibility – graphics would work well with other content and brands used in communications
- Flexibility – can be translated into various media (paper and digital)
- Recognisability – across the main languages
- Timelessness – timeless in style and won’t be caught in trends
- Crispness- representation is crisp across a range of mediums

#### 3. Byline

A byline accompanies the destination’s name to describe what business it is in. It provides the descriptor of the destination and communicates to guests and potential guests where to place the destination in their mind’s eye. A destination name may be sufficiently descriptive to communicate what it does in a distinctive way, in which case a byline may not be necessary.



#### 4. Tagline

Not to be confused with a byline, the tagline is used to clarify or dramatise the destination's emotional and functional benefits to guests and potential guests. In effect it tells guests how they hopefully will feel about the destination experience. They can help to communicate the destination's point of difference from competitors and attract potential guests to the destination. Examples include Vancouver - Spectacular by Nature; Gold Coast - Famous for Fun; Nike - Just Do It.

#### 5. Story

The story outlines how the destination came to be, to provide inspiration and aspiration to guests and the community. It can also put a face to the destination and communicate its essence.

Once the blueprint components are completed for the destination the real work begins. A Graphic Standards Manual or equivalent is needed which outlines the correct use of the visual components and approved variations to ensure the integrity of the Blueprint components.

Then importantly, the destination needs to consistently commit time and effort into engaging guests to achieve and maintain the desired position in guests' minds.

In summary, the blueprint that is the product of this principle encapsulates "A purposeful brand image is a symbolic construct created within the minds of people, consisting of all the information and expectations associated with a product, service or the company(ies) providing them. It is represented through a name, slogan, symbol, style or design- as well as a combination of these elements."

### How are we tracking?

Queensland and its destinations have arguably led the way in Australia in 'positioning' and 'branding' themselves in the domestic and international market places. Because of this the Queensland brand is synonymous in Australia in representing the quintessential holiday experience and Queensland's key destinations are consistently at the top of visitor's preference list highlighting the influence and appeal of the Queensland tourism brands.

#### Think About

- While the Queensland tourism industry can be justifiably proud of the standing of its tourism brands have we maximised their value by fully applying all five components of the brand blueprint?
- Do you fully understand the key components of your destination brand, the brand is much more than the tagline and graphics,
- Are you aware of the byline and story behind your destination brand and what it means for your tourism product?

## Principle 4 – Everyone lives the destination promise

### Case Study

*Seabourn cruise ships have a service philosophy that has created a prevailing staff culture. All staff's intention and action is focused on anticipating guests' needs and then satisfying their expectations and desires to the smallest details. To deliver this level of service staff are given autonomy to engage with guests as required. Staff are encouraged to add special, thoughtful touches to personalize their service. "The goal was to go beyond merely satisfying expectations, to create 'Seabourn Moments' that would surprise and delight guests.". This level of service has resulted in strong customer loyalty, with passengers returning often to enjoy the engaged, sincere service that is Seabourn's hallmark.*

*A list of standards, the Twelve Points of Seabourn Hospitality, are provided to staff as a pocket-sized card to guide them in their guest interactions. The culture encourages staff to proudly deliver high levels of service as well as have fun and enjoy their role in meeting the needs of their guests. In turn the guests feel appreciated and special.*

With a clear understanding of a destination's Promise and communications material created to be consistent with the Promise, a best practice destination brings the Promise to life to attract new guests and build lasting relationships with existing guests. The key is delivering the Promise experience in the last "three feet", i.e. when the guest experiences it!

In a best practice destination, everyone representing the destination, certainly the key destination stakeholders, live and breathe the Promise every day (this is the culturalisation of the promise). They recognise that at every touch point the destination can create a positive or negative perception on guests.

This goes beyond what you do in your daily contact with guests and prospective guests, to how you do it and the impact that has on your guests. While functional skills are important, everyone representing the destination needs to be 'emotionally capable of providing exceptional guest experiences in order to do their job well.' Regardless of how great a destination's Promise looks on paper, the reputation of the destination can be irreparably damaged if a guest experiences an indifferent or poorly trained person. A guest might not remember exactly what you said or did but they will always remember how you made them feel.

The goal of this principle is to create a strong positive culture across a destination where everyone is on the same page. To do this, the destination must ensure that:

- all key stakeholders/influence leaders understand and adopt the Promise
- all key stakeholders/influence leaders understand how the Promise can have a positive and relevant impact on their target audience
- all key stakeholders/influence leaders are emotionally invested in the Promise and understand the benefit it can provide clients and guests
- the Regional Tourism Organisation is the champion of the Promise reinforcing the personality of the community, and
- there is a destination 'steward' to monitor the daily activities of the destination, from front desk operations to social media and brochure design, to ensure the Promise is not compromised.

'Living the destination brand is about delivering a distinctive or unique type of service or experience that enhances the guest's destination experience to the point where it is truly pleasurable and memorable.'



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## Implementation

A helpful way to embrace this principle is to develop a Destination Culturalisation Plan to ensure that everyone is aware of the beliefs and behaviours they need to have in their daily interaction with guests to communicate the Promise. This plan incorporates the destination brand with the visual and written messages to communicate the Promise.

The plan is also used to establish the right mindset, provide solutions for handling day to day situations and inspire staff to create exceptionally positive experiences for guests and the industry.

In developing this Plan, it is necessary to identify how well the destination is doing on a daily basis relative to its Promise. The destination custodians need to have their own house in order before expecting the community to come on board. This can involve reviewing the following:

- How phone calls and emails are responded to
- Culture of RTO and tourism operators— relaxed, caring or stressed and time poor
- Dress code
- Images used in promotional materials
- Social media strategy
- Website content
- Events and activities organised

A Training Guide is a useful part of the Culturalisation Plan to detail how at every touch point with the guest the Promise is delivered consistently. Ultimately it is about creating trust with your target audience, so they know that you will deliver what you promise.

Community support and involvement in delivering the Promise of memorable and distinctive experiences is critical to this step and the destination's success. Some recommended ways to bring the community onboard include:

- Connecting with community forums, groups and schools about the destination's Promise and the benefits of it being understood and implemented by everyone
- Involving civic leaders in the roll out of the destination Promise, with the aim of them using it as the basis for their development and planning for the community
- Ensuring visitor information centre staff are trained to deliver the destination's Promise and the atmosphere of the centres is welcoming and consistent with the Promise
- Ensuring airport staff are trained to deliver the Promise and provide guests with a sense of what they came to the destination to experience

- Providing training to all front line staff that are a key touch point for guests, including taxi drivers and retail stores, and understanding the elements of the G.U.E.S.T acronym:

**Greeting Understanding Efficiency  
Special treatment Thankfulness**

- Providing training that ensures sales staff are selling the Promise consistently and know how to sell the destination against the competition
- Finding ways to create magical moments for guests, through unexpected surprises. It can be as simple as providing guests with an unexpected photo opportunity or connecting with a local character.
- Encouraging local groups and organisations to develop their own identity that aligns with and reinforces the destination Promise
- Holding events that create unique moments and enrich the destination Promise.

## How are we tracking?

Tourism and Events Queensland, Regional Tourism Organisations and the tourism industry have invested considerable dollars, time and effort in developing and promoting the Queensland and destination brands. Across the length and breadth of Queensland tourism operators are regularly involved in destination branding/positioning exercises, brand health reviews and cooperative brand marketing campaigns because they are committed to supporting their destination brand and the associated Promise to prospective guests.

### Think About

- Despite wide ranging tourism industry support for their destination branding do you believe a majority of your local tourism industry fully understands the Promise that is embedded in your destination brand?
- Do you believe a majority of your local tourism industry understand the linkage between your destination brand and the Queensland brand?
- Does your local council and the wider community understand and embrace what their destination tourism brand is trying to communicate and the critical role they could play in delivering on the Promise of their destination brand?

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## Principle 5 – Extend the influence of your destination promise

### Case Study

*The BestCities Global Alliance brings together world-class cities as a group to increase their ability to reach and secure business from meeting planners and site selectors and to address the challenge of service continuity. The Alliance's distinction is a focus on high service standards. All members have their service standards regularly evaluated by an impartial third party. Meeting professionals are given an assurance of quality when they are dealing with Alliance members.*

*Destinations seeking to join the Alliance must demonstrate their profitability, success in partnering, the right fit in their corporate culture and mindset, and their commitment to the highest service standards and shared business opportunities.*

*The high service standards consistently delivered ensures destination partners benefit from the interest and confidence of meeting planners in organising their conferences, meetings or incentive groups.*

*Other benefits of the alliance include the opportunity for partners to share tips and operational advice from previous and potential clients. This allows the partners to provide customised bid targets that address the client's needs. Each partner also benefits from using the Best Cities brand in their marketing and communications which gives them a competitive advantage based on the Alliance's reputation for delivering profitable meetings.*

A best practice destination identifies and develops alliances or strategic partnerships that extend the reach of the destination brand/Promise, offer new opportunities to enhance the guest's overall experience and create competitive advantage. These can involve partnerships within the tourism industry, such as alliance partnerships between airlines or hotel properties, or alternatively, with a non-industry partner.

There are many examples of beneficial partnerships with non-industry organisations, such as the marine industry to attract super yachts, credit card companies to promote an event or destination, and wool and motor vehicle companies to promote a country or state's attributes to potential guests.

The following points are helpful to get clarity about the benefits of a partnership for a destination. These include:

- What are the best channels to leverage the destination (media, marketing, community etc.)?
- What does the destination bring to the party?
- What are the destination's strengths and weaknesses?
- Is the destination a real or perceived leader in its category (family fun, adventure, romance, wine etc.)?
- Which organisations are market leaders in the category the destination wants to optimise?
- Is there an organisation that shares or complements the destination's culture and values?
- Can the destination enter into another category with the help of an alliance partner?

- Does the destination have the financial and human resources, skills and time to capitalise on the alliance?
- What risks may be involved in working with another organisation? Will it alienate members of the RTO Board or the community?

What are the right conditions for an alliance to succeed:

- The organisations think alike, with similar business cultures, ideologies and the same level of commitment to quality and integrity
- The partnership is supported on all levels of the participating organisations and agree to meet regularly
- The partners are in it for the long haul as an investment which results in competitive advantage for each in its respective industry.

## How are we tracking?

The Queensland tourism industry has an enviable record in partnering with a wide range of organisations to sell the Queensland brand and story. Tourism and Events Queensland, Regional Tourism Organisations and tourism operators have developed valuable alliances with traditional tourism partners like airlines, cruise lines and hotel chains to maximise the power and impact of joint marketing dollars to promote destinations and experiences and the operations that enable visitors to access and enjoy these destinations and experiences. Alliances have also been established with non-tourism organisations like sports/camping stores, motoring bodies and health organisations where there is a mutual financial, promotion and image benefit.

### Think About

- Are you aware of any of the tourism alliances that your Regional Tourism Organisation is involved to maximise the impact and spread of your destination brand and story?
- Have you been involved directly in any such alliances and have you seen/experienced the advantages of such alliances?
- Do you see value in exploring more non-traditional alliances with other key Queensland industries like mining, construction and agriculture to sell the Queensland brand story to the mutual benefit of all parties?

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## IN SUMMARY

What is the first word you want to come to mind when prospective guests and the tourism industry think of your destination? As a successful destination, it should be something that distinguishes you from your competitors in a positive and meaningful way.

Megabrands Apple, Starbucks, Disney and Coca Cola owe their success not to expensive advertising campaigns. While some have large marketing budgets, their success is built on the Promise they deliver their customers. These organisations focus on providing current and potential customers with **distinctive experiences** that deliver the benefits they expect and provide **lasting and memorable impressions**. Disneyland is not just a series of rides to its customers but a magic kingdom where dreams come true. It is this distinction that provides their competitive advantage. Australia has its own iconic brands like Bundaberg Rum, Weetbix, R M Williams, Qantas and Dreamworld to name just a few.....do they have a clearly defined Promise, are they delivering on their Promise?



*“We remain dedicated to the promise that our Cast Members turn the ordinary into the extraordinary. Making dreams come true every day is central to our global growth strategy.”*

There is much in tourism we don't have control over including any number of political, social, economic, technological and environmental factors that impact a destination. We have to roll with what comes our way. The Queensland tourism industry is recognised as being resilient and flexible in its ability to respond to the unexpected and emerge stronger. Where destinations do have control is over the marketing activities to attract guests, the experiences that are offered, the memories that are created, and the competitive advantage formed.

The five principles outlined in this paper provide a framework for assisting Queensland and its destinations to make the most of those matters we do have control over to create a competitive advantage for our destinations. This framework is a systematic approach that galvanises everyone in a destination to collectively provide experiences that make the destination remarkable and unforgettable in the minds of guests. It is this collective mindset that gives a destination a competitive edge over similarly perceived destinations. As a bonus, this competitive edge combined with a renewed collective stakeholder mindset strengthens the destination to be more resilient to those external forces when they hit.

Queensland has a strong history of destination management and the new Destination Tourism Plans that have been developed by all of Queensland's destinations represent a commitment between the tourism industry, local government and the Queensland government to ensure the ongoing sustainable success of the destinations. These Plans outline what is needed to underpin the Promise of each destination. However, to make the most of these plans and realise the potential of our destinations, the tourism industry, community and other stakeholders need to understand the Promise of their destination and together help deliver this Promise to their guests.

Recognising the fundamental elements of the five principles outlined in this paper and adopting a disciplined approach to their adoption will position Queensland and its destinations to:

- be clear about their Promise and the unique benefits that the destination offers to guests,
- ‘Stand out to stand apart’ —offer something distinctive from competitors, more relevant and meaningful experiences to guests that create lasting and memorable impressions and have superior perceived value,
- capture people's imagination and produce an emotional connection,
- create preference in minds of the target audience, not just awareness,
- place as much importance on the reality of what is delivered as on the perception it is trying to create,
- think and act like the distinctive position the destination holds in the minds of guests,
- ensure everyone in the tourism industry knows first and foremost they are in the service business and they are there to add value to people's lives,
- have communities that understand and support what their destination Promise is, how it can deliver the right experience and gains a sense of pride in doing so,
- possess a destination strategy that is clear about the destination's distinctive Promise and what the destination stands for in the minds of guests, the tourism industry and community, and
- consistently delivers on its Promise and leaves guests feeling delighted and with life-long and life-lasting memories.

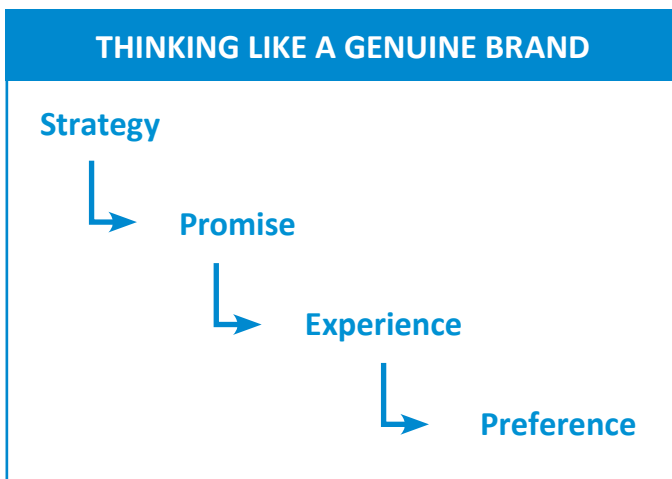
The principles outlined in the preceding pages provide a blueprint for Queensland and the destinations that deliver the Queensland tourism experience to maximise and maintain their competitive advantage and be seen as ‘destinations of choice’ in an increasingly competitive tourism marketplace. At the heart of any destination's competitive advantage and what establishes it as, what Knapp terms, a ‘genuine brand’, is the destination Promise that:

*“...expresses the spirit of (a destination's) distinctiveness. It is a destination's brand value proposition – its commitment to its guests – defined as the essence of the benefits, both functional and emotional, that current and potential guests expect to receive throughout the destination experience.”*



However, as highlighted throughout this paper one of the keys to a destination being perceived as a unique one of a kind 'genuine destination brand', is that it must develop a clear strategy for the development of its brand based on these five principles, it is not just a marketing plan.

In the end it's all about the Promise we offer and deliver and about delighting our guests with exciting, engaging and value-for-money experiences that leave them with life long memories. This is the ultimate measure of success for our destinations and what will drive increased and repeat visitation, length of stay and expenditure and deliver on our 2020 targets and beyond.



Destination 



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