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Positioning a Place: Developing a Compelling Destination Brand

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Positioning a Place: Developing a Compelling Destination Brand

Abstract

The process of building a brand begins with a clear understanding of what consumers desire from a particular product or service. This understanding is then translated into a promise, which is the basis of the brand and tells consumers what they will receive. This report details a methodical six-step process for brand building, the "Process Framework for Strategic Brand Development," using the case of Zambia. That nation's tourism officials engaged a team of graduate students from the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration to develop a new destination brand. Using data from potential visitors to the country, the team first identified the motivational factors for Zambia tourism. They next evaluated the nation's value proposition and assessed its competitive brand position, as compared to the nearby African nations that constitute its competitive set. The next step was to develop core brand elements, based on the traveler motivations. With the brand elements in place, the group created possible brand promises and tested them with key suppliers and sponsors in Zambia. A refined set of potential brand concepts was tested with potential customers. Finally, a set of symbolic brand touch points was developed to become part of brand messages and images. The method used by the Cornell "Brand Zambia" team is applicable to any tourism destination—and to hospitality products that aim to create an emotion-inducing, memorable guest experience.

Keywords

hospitality, tourism, branding

Disciplines

Business | Hospitality Administration and Management

Comments

Required Publisher Statement

The Center for Hospitality Research

Hospitality Leadership Through Learning

Positioning a Place
Developing a Compelling Destination Brand

by Robert J. Kwortnik, Ph.D., and Ethan Hawkes, M.B.A.

Cornell University
School of Hotel Administration

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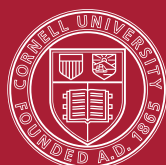
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Robert J. Kwortnik, Ph.D., M.B.A., is an associate professor of services marketing at the Cornell School of Hotel Administration. His research focuses on consumer behavior in service contexts, with special attention to service experience management. He has published in the *Journal of Marketing Research, Journal of Service Research, International Journal of Research in Marketing,* and the *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, among others. He has been honored seven times as a Teacher of the Year by students at the School of Hotel Administration. Prior to his career in academics, Kwortnik held several professional positions in marketing and was a travel industry consultant.

Ethan Hawkes, a graduate of the Cornell School of Hotel Administration and holder of an M.B.A. from the Johnson Graduate School of Management, is a consultant with McKinsey & Company. Prior to McKinsey, Hawkes advised on USAID tourism development and marketing projects in Lebanon and Zambia. He is co-author of *Connecting with the Culture: A Case Study in Sustainable Tourism.*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

T he process of building a brand begins with a clear understanding of what consumers desire from a particular product or service. This understanding is then translated into a promise, which is the basis of the brand and tells consumers what they will receive. This report details a methodical six-step process for brand building, the "Process Framework for Strategic Brand Development," using the case of Zambia. That nation's tourism officials engaged a team of graduate students from the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration to develop a new destination brand. Using data from potential visitors to the country, the team first identified the motivational factors for Zambia tourism. They next evaluated the nation's value proposition and assessed its competitive brand position, as compared to the nearby African nations that constitute its competitive set. The next step was to develop core brand elements, based on the traveler motivations. With the brand elements in place, the group created possible brand promises and tested them with key suppliers and sponsors in Zambia. A refined set of potential brand concepts was tested with potential customers. Finally, a set of symbolic brand touch points was developed to become part of brand messages and images. The method used by the Cornell "Brand Zambia" team is applicable to any tourism destination—and to hospitality products that aim to create an emotion-inducing, memorable guest experience.

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Destinations that rely on tourism to drive economic progress—especially those destinations that are relatively unknown to the traveling public—need an efficient means to create a sense of place on travelers' mental maps. Travelers (and travel distributors) encounter a growing number of messages from established and emerging destinations, all competing for limited mind space and discretionary spending on scarce vacation time.

Destination marketers are becoming increasingly sophisticated in their approach to targeting markets, building emotional appeal, and applying best practices refined in the private sector for disseminating marketing messages. We argue that to compete in the cluttered travel environment, destination marketers need to borrow from the consumer-goods playbook and develop a destination brand.

The use of slogans to market destinations to travelers is hardly new. New York launched the phenomenally successful "I Love New York" campaign in 1977, the same year that "It's Better in the Bahamas" appeared. However, sustainable destination marketing requires more than just a catchy slogan. It demands a strategic approach to building a destination brand. A strategic brand is one that aligns key
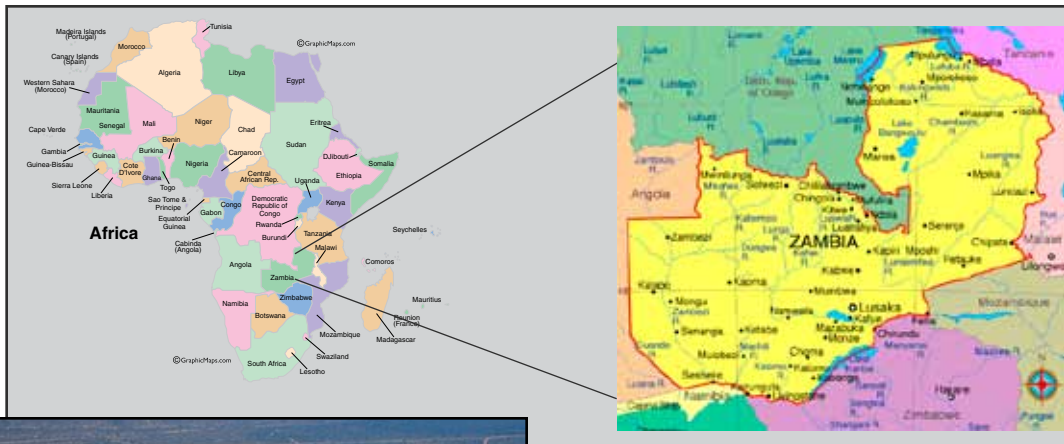
Occupying an area slightly larger than that of Texas, landlocked Zambia shares Victoria Falls with Zimbabwe.

stakeholders—government tourism agencies, non-governmental organizations, private sector tourism suppliers, the media, and travel consumers. The brand must communicate the travel assets of a destination in a way that connects with the needs and wants of the traveling public. A destination brand is essentially the promise of an experience, one that the traveler desires and that the destination can deliver.

A successful destination branding effort can drive real results. After consecutive years of decline in tourism arrivals, India's launch of "Incredible India" in 2002 yielded a near doubling of international arrivals from 2.4 million to 4.6 million in the four years immediately following its rollout.[1] Similarly, after years of sluggish growth, South Africa launched a campaign titled, "It's possible," and increased visi-

tors from 6.8 million to 9.7 million in the following four years.[2] Other destinations have achieved similar success with their branding campaigns, including Hong Kong, Las Vegas, Malaysia, and Singapore.

This report explains how to develop a successful destination brand. We refined the framework and methods during a Cornell University project to help rebrand Zambia; several of the examples reference insights from this work. Our team of Cornell students and faculty combined an academic approach to problem identification with a consulting process for problem solving to create a conceptually robust, data-driven model applicable to almost any destination brand—or, indeed, any experiential product.

The Point of Departure: Understand Your Brand

In conceptualizing what a brand is, we've found it helpful to use the following metaphor that translates well across cultures: a destination brand is like offering a gift. This gift comprises the best experiences and products that a destination has to offer guests when they visit. The brand image is how this gift is packaged and wrapped. While guests cannot experience the gift until they arrive, effective packaging should create appeal, provide insight into the contents, and ultimately be harmonious with the gift without over or under promising.

What Is a Brand?

Recent theory and research have established that effective brand marketing connects consumers' self-identity to their motivational desires and, further, to experiential elements of a product.[3] Marketers can achieve this effect by creating a clear promise about what the experience will deliver

[1] *India Overnight International Arrivals* (2002-2006). World Travel and Tourism Council. 2010; www.wttc.org.

[2] *South Africa Overnight International Arrivals* (2004-2008). World Travel and Tourism Council. 2010; www.wttc.org.

[3] Robert J. Kwortnik and William T. Ross, "The Role of Positive Emotions in Experiential Decisions," *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, Vol. 24, December 2007, pp. 324-335.

(what the consumer will take away from the experience) and eliciting self-relevant imagery around that experience. More precisely, creating a strong brand requires the connection of three components of what we call the brand hierarchy: the brand promise, brand elements, and touch points.

A notable example comes from Las Vegas and the "What happens here, stays here" brand campaign introduced in 2003.[4] Following the opening of family-friendly hotels in the 1990s, Las Vegas took a mass-market-brand tack with the plain vanilla "It's anything and everything" campaign. This campaign failed to resonate with the city's core customers and was criticized for not being true to the Las Vegas experience. The "What happens here" brand refocused Las Vegas's adult-oriented entertainment, "Sin City" image, and the promise of adult freedom through escape, fantasy, and decadent fun (the brand elements). The self-relevant hook involved promoting Las Vegas as the destination where visitors can explore their wild side and let loose with impunity. Clever, edgy advertisements showed guests enjoying the city's bright lights, dancing, and gambling (the brand touch points). For example, one ad showed a sexy woman in the back seat of a limo, breathily enjoying the smell of the seat leather, and flirting with the driver, but then emerging from the car at the airport conservatively dressed as a businesswoman.

Identify the Brand Elements

The foundation of a brand is tourist motivations. These are the "whys for buys" that most influence traveler choice.[5] In the strategic destination-brand framework, these motivations are translated into core brand elements—the supporting sub-themes that provide meaning and connect the tourist motivations to the travel product. Brand elements should represent the top motivational factors that speak to why a guest selects a destination, what they seek from the experience, and what a destination promises to deliver. As we discuss later, solid and compelling brand elements are derived from consumer research, and not just based on the travel marketer's impression of what makes a destination distinctive.

Build a Brand Promise

At the highest level, a brand promise is a distillation of the brand elements that conveys the experience a traveler desires and a destination promises to deliver. This should prime a positive reaction and be formulated as a succinct and compelling promise about what the guest will experi-

ence. The promise provides an encompassing and memorable idea and is often explicitly stated in a slogan. Examples include the following:

- Costa Rica's "No artificial ingredients" promises an environmentally friendly beach-and-nature vacation experience;

- Egypt's "Where it all begins" presents a dual proposition, that the country is the origin of civilization for visitors who want to experience antiquity, and also that it provides modern vacation experiences;

- Malaysia's "Truly Asia" promises an authentic Asian experience; and

- South Africa's "It's possible" suggests that travelers can find any experience they seek (e.g., safaris, sports, beaches, shopping, wineries).

A brand promise works for destinations offering a broad range of activities to different segments as well as those destinations with a highly focused offering. The State of New York, for instance, offers the experience of its eponymous world-class city, but also a remarkably unexpected wilderness experience in the Adirondack Mountains, not to mention the tourist favorite of Niagara Falls. Taking all this into account, New York's slogan "I Love New York" promises that visitors will love New York, though the reason why may differ for each person. Some visitors love New York for Broadway performances, while others love it for the city's restaurants or shopping, and still others enjoy a natural experience in its state parks, or on Long Island's beaches. Travelers can interpret this brand by projecting their own desires onto New York; across all experiences, the promise remains that visitors will find something to love about New York.

Develop the Brand Touch Points

Brand touch points are the physical elements by which a guest can experience—or touch—the brand. Ultimately, touch points make the brand elements and brand promise real for the traveller. For example, the "With Love, Philadelphia XOXO" campaign that extends Philadelphia's identity as the "City of Brotherly Love" features such touch points as the Liberty Bell Center, images of the city's burgeoning restaurant scene, and the "Rocky Steps" at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. (Many people have run up those steps since Sylvester Stallone did it.) An inventory of touch points will help determine how well a destination can deliver on brand elements and a particular brand promise.

How to Build a Strategic Destination Brand

Building a compelling destination brand requires creativity, but also the systematic analysis of numerous factors, both internal (e.g., destination strengths and weaknesses) and

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[4] Interestingly, the Las Vegas brand slogan is often misstated as "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas," which illustrates the power of the actual slogan to connect with meanings people associate with Las Vegas.

[5] Sidney J. Levy, "Symbols for Sale," *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 74, No. 4 (1959), pp. 117–124.

Exhibit 1

Process framework for strategic brand development

Brand Audit
Identifying brand value:
How the brand experience addresses
customer needs and wants

Brand Development
Create a promise and translate into a concept:
How the brand will be communicated and delivered

① Identify Customers and Motivational Factors

② Evaluate Provider Value Proposition

③ Assess Competitive Brand Position

④ Determine Core Brand Elements

⑤ Create the Brand Promise

⑥ Symbolize Brand Touch Points

external (e.g., traveler types and motivations). To guide the endeavor, we created a comprehensive and transferable process framework for strategic-brand development (see Exhibit 1), which we applied in our efforts to rebrand Zambia. The framework is particularly useful in setting a course for the rebranding process and ensuring that critical factors are considered.

Step 1:
Identify Customers and Motivational Factors

Branding efforts need to apply a customer-centric listening approach or risk missing the mark. Listening to the voice of the customer through surveys, focus groups, online forums, and feedback is the foundation of brand development and needs to be built into early stages of an audit of current branding as well as later testing of potential new brand concepts. For years Zambia has used the slogan "The Real Africa." The intent of the brand was to convey authenticity in an African experience; however, when we surveyed potential tourists, more than half said this message raised negative imagery including conflict, disease, poverty, and an arrogant attitude towards other African countries who were, by implication, "faking it" and not delivering a real African experience.

The brand-marketing message is a vital strategic tool to help proactively shape the future of a tourism destination by encouraging target customers to self-select into the experience. As such, the first step for developing that message is to identify the target market, and this requires strategic thought about desired tourism volume, segment mix, financial impact, and community impact. Studying only current visitors, though a logical place to start, can also be misleading, as the current market may not be the desired market. That said, it is also usually unrealistic to target groups with little history of coming to a destination. Thus, immediate marketing efforts, both in terms of research and destination promotion, should target the most likely visitors from under-penetrated main source markets, with later efforts targeting the potential markets, assuming that resources are available for such outreach. For example, information culled from a variety of secondary sources, including Zambian Ministry of Tourism findings and World Tourism Organization reports, showed that fewer than one million people visited Zambia in 2009. Of those visitors, only one out of four came for leisure—and 50 percent of these tourists came from just three countries: South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States, with Germany and Australia as smaller potential markets.

Target market identification demands more than just assessment of geographic feeder markets. It's also important to identify key factors of target markets, including demographic (e.g., income and education), psychographic (e.g., activities and interests), and behavioral (e.g., travel purpose and occasion) bases. While this may require primary research to ask questions of current or prospective visitors to determine market-segment profiles, useful insights about the market are often available from published reports

produced by government tourism agencies and destination marketing organizations of nearby regions. For example, the Cornell research team explored market analyses from a wide range of sources and arrived at a set of characteristics that define target visitors to sub-Saharan Africa and to Zambia specifically. These characteristics included relative affluence and higher education, global travel and interest in cultural experiences, and leisure tourism that features novel and adventurous activities.

Following identification of target markets, the next step is to understand the customers' underlying motivational factors for their travel purchases, as these motivations should be intimately linked to the destination brand. Developing this understanding requires going beyond the more obvious statements of reasons for travel (e.g., to go on a safari or to meet new people) to assess key motivational factors. These can be derived from multiple sources, including online user-generated content, interviews, and surveys with open-ended questions. Questions may include, "What was the best vacation you took in recent years? What motivated this vacation choice?"; and "Why would you travel to [this destination]?" Although the answers to such questions can produce a wide range of detailed responses, by grouping these responses into common, higher-level categories, clues about travel motivation emerge. For instance, using data from a survey of target travelers to Zambia, as well as

comments made on online travel discussion forums about Zambia, we arrived at such travel-motivation factors as connecting with the culture, experiencing wildlife and nature, pursuing novelty and escape, feeling excitement and other positive emotions, and enhancing knowledge about different sites and people.

Taking a data-driven approach to identifying and understanding the travel market helps to ensure that decision makers hear the voice of the customer and don't simply impose personal beliefs and assumptions from the most convincing or vocal participant. This can be particularly problematic for destination marketing, where the preferences of long-time residents may differ significantly from first-time visitors who wish to see and do things they have repeatedly seen in the travel media.

Step 2: Evaluate the Provider's Value Proposition

A promise is only good if it can be delivered. Thus, it is important to candidly assess how well tourism suppliers can actually provide desired experiences. By evaluating the supply side, this step serves as a filtering process to identify what market segments to focus on and also helps ensure that the brand messaging is consistent with the actual experience. For example, a large market of potential travelers seeks relaxation at a sea, sand, and sun location. Zambia, a land-locked country, would be unable to deliver on the promise to provide such an experience to these fun-and-sun seekers. Meanwhile, other travelers, such as those seeking adventure along with cultural and natural contact, will be pleased with the assorted safaris and adventure activities available throughout the country.

To evaluate value propositions, it is useful and efficient to tap secondary research from published reports and travel guides, interview travel suppliers and intermediaries, and analyze reviews from visitors. Online sites such as Trip Advisor provide a wealth of candid evaluations about likes and dislikes that can be content analyzed to provide insight into a destination's capabilities in delivering promised experiences.

Step 3: Assess the Competitive Brand Position

To differentiate the brand promise, marketers need to identify and evaluate a destination's competitive set and unique selling proposition. Points of differentiation may include specific features (e.g., physical landmarks) or even a focus on different experiences (e.g., adventure vs. retreat). Writing out the brand hierarchy—the brand promise, elements, and touch points—for each competing destination helps provide insight into positioning. Some similarity in themes in the competitive set may indicate that a concept speaks well to the experience. However, areas where a given destination has an advantage or is truly different should be actively promoted.

In the case of Zambia, a handful of nearby countries are part of the competitive set, including Botswana, Mo-

The six-step branding process required first-hand research. Team members toured Zambia with the assistance of Mark O'Donnell of Protea Hotels Zambia (at right).

The team became immersed in its work at misty Victoria Falls (below), one of Zambia's major touch points.
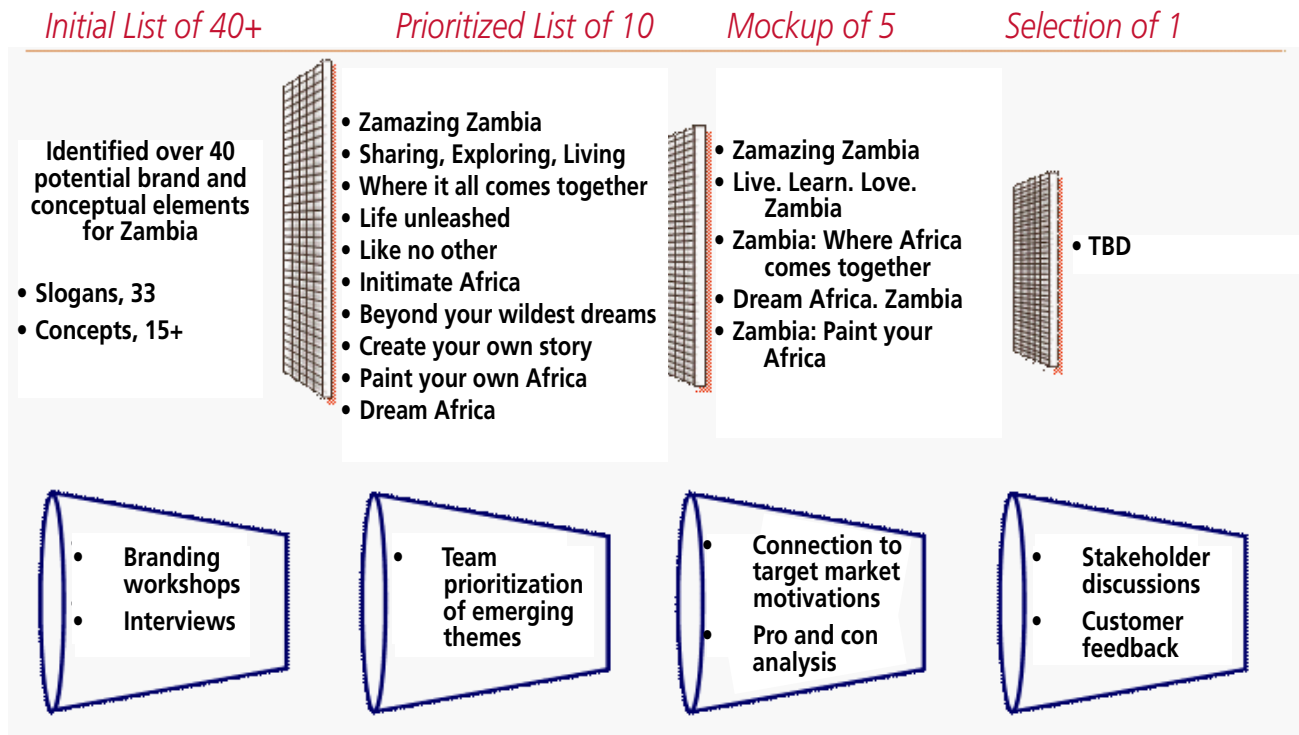

Step 4: Determine Core Brand Elements

Brand elements are the fundamental themes that reflect traveler motivations for visiting a place. In the case of Zambia, our customer-listening research revealed dozens of reasons why people travel to Africa. An analysis highlighted a few main experiential themes involving nature, adventure, and culture that captured most travelers' motivations for visiting—their "whys for buys." These themes can be translated into brand elements, assuming the destination is well positioned to deliver an experience that meets the identified travel motives. Linking motivations to brand elements in this manner is important for brand marketing for two primary reasons. First, brand elements form the main story lines for messages and imagery. A PR campaign for Zambia might, for example, focus on the nature and adventure themes that research shows will resonate with target travelers. Second, clarity in brand elements helps ensure congruence between a brand's touch points and its brand promise. For instance, a promise that Zambia will provide visitors with an extraordinary escape though nature and adventure focuses imagery selection on such touch points as encountering wildlife during a walking safari or the thrills of rafting the Zambezi River at Victoria Falls—experiences that offer the means toward the desired ends of the brand promise.

Brand elements derived from traveler motivations need to be communicated at the right level: encompassing enough to cover a range of related reasons for travel to a destination

zambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. Analysis of their web sites, destination-promotion materials, online reviews by visitors, and evaluations by travel writers, provides the inputs to their competitive brand hierarchies—and how Zambia can stake a differentiable position. For example, Zambia shares Victoria Falls, a UNESCO World Heritage site, with the troubled nation of Zimbabwe. The falls offers not only remarkable vistas, but also a range of adventure activities (e.g., bungee jumping). Both countries also possess huge national parks that permit unspoiled and uncrowded game viewing. However, Zambia, unlike Zimbabwe, is politically and financially stable, and Zambia is known for friendly people and little crime—attributes that facilitate a close interaction between visitors and the local culture. These points of competitive differentiation, if aligned with traveler motivations, can become symbols for a customer-based brand strategy.

EXHIBIT 2

Filtering process to generate destination brand concepts for Zambia

Initial List of 40+   *Prioritized List of 10*   *Mockup of 5*   *Selection of 1*

Identified over 40 potential brand and conceptual elements for Zambia

• Slogans, 33
• Concepts, 15+

• **Zamazing Zambia**
• **Sharing, Exploring, Living**
• **Where it all comes together**
• **Life unleashed**
• **Like no other**
• **Initimate Africa**
• **Beyond your wildest dreams**
• **Create your own story**
• **Paint your own Africa**
• **Dream Africa**

• **Zamazing Zambia**
• **Live. Learn. Love. Zambia**
• **Zambia: Where Africa comes together**
• **Dream Africa. Zambia**
• **Zambia: Paint your Africa**

• **TBD**

• **Branding workshops**
• **Interviews**

• **Team prioritization of emerging themes**

• **Connection to target market motivations**
• **Pro and con analysis**

• **Stakeholder discussions**
• **Customer feedback**

yet not so broad as to lose meaning. Individual motivations for travel are remarkably diverse and nuanced. History buffs, nature enthusiasts, and families each have differing motivational needs, yet the brand element of learning through travel may resonate with all groups. Similarly, motivational desires to experience something new, create memories with friends and family, explore, relax, and so on all have a spectrum of sub-motivations but are clear enough to form brand elements.

Step 5: Create the Brand Promise

Selecting a compelling and executable brand promise requires consideration of findings from earlier stages, a filtering process, and alignment of stakeholders. For example, the Cornell University team started the Zambia brand development with a grounded analysis of customer research (markets and motivations), destination asset analysis and comparison with the competitive set, and a mapping of these demand–supply areas to derive potential brand elements.

With this base, the team brainstormed brand promises and slogans, yielding more than 40 potential concepts (see Exhibit 2). Applying a series of filters that involved focus group responses, supplier feedback, and team analysis

brought this down to the following five viable concepts: **(1)** "Zamazing Zambia": intended to reflect that proposition Zambia offers amazing and extraordinary travel experiences through nature, adventure, and culture; **(2)** "Dream Africa. Zambia": intended to reflect that Zambia offers the experiences that travelers envision when they imagine Africa; **(3)** "Live, Learn, Love Zambia": intended to reflect that Zambia can enrich travelers' personal perspectives through experience, exploration, and emotion; **(4)** "Zambia: Where Africa Comes Together": intended to reflect that Zambia's location offers a geographic hub for visiting nearby countries and also that Zambia brings together the experiences that travelers seek from Africa; and **(5)** "Zambia: Paint Your Africa": intended to reflect that visitors to Zambia can create their own experience in a vibrant, unspoiled context.

These five concepts were presented along with their supporting research to the key public- and private-sector stakeholders. Using a feedback exercise, the sponsors critiqued the concepts. The team applied this information to another round of brand-concept refinement and discussion. A further ranking exercise with brand sponsors brought the number of concepts to three: "Zamazing Zambia," Dream Africa. Zambia," and "Live, Learn, Love Zambia." These

brand concepts and mock-up logos (see Exhibit 3) were then road-tested using presentations with key suppliers to ensure alignment of vision and buy-in between the public tourism organizations (brand promotion) and private tourism firms (brand execution). Involving stakeholders in the brand-development process in this manner helps to achieve buy-in for the strategic brand vision. A brand that lacks commitment internally is doomed before launch externally.

Finally, the team returned brand development to its source—the customer. This involved an online survey of more than 500 past and future visitors to Zambia to solicit their impressions of the candidate brands. Using a variety of perceptual, attitudinal, and preference measures, as well as comment data, this analysis converged on a rank order for the brand concepts, with "Dream Africa. Zambia" ranked first, "Live, Learn, Love Zambia" ranked second, and "Zamazing Zambia" ranked third. An important finding that emerged from the comment data was that none of the brand concepts evoked negative perceptions or imagery of Zambia, unlike the current "The Real Africa" brand. Additionally, one theme associated with the "Zamazing Zambia" concept was a concern about its seeming too slick, and even silly. However, a second study using a different sample population showed that "Zamazing Zambia" was more than three times better recalled than the other brand concepts.

Step 6: Symbolize Brand Touch Points

Brand touch points are the physical manifestation of how a destination delivers a certain experience. Those touch points that best symbolize the brand elements and promise should be incorporated into messaging and imagery. Touch points can become instantly recognizable and attached with considerable meaning. The Eiffel Tower, Route 66, the Matterhorn, and the Pyramids are just a few noteworthy examples of touch points that universally conjure a strong sense of place and have been heavily symbolized in pictures, replicas, and art. These touch points become must-see activities and places for visitors.

For Zambia, we identified such touch points as Victoria Falls, where visitors hear the thundering water and get drenched by rising mist; safaris, with lions and leopards on the prowl; and village tours, which are led by tribal members and provide visitors with grounded insight into the life of community members. Salient touch points such as these not only thrill visitors, but can also help convey the experience to those who haven't been to the destination when incorporated in marketing imagery, writing, and brand symbolism—thereby bringing the brand to life. Presenting these brand touch points as part of a conceptual brand hierarchy helps destination-marketing stakeholders to visualize the brand and how it can be messaged to target markets (see Exhibit 4, on the next page).

Logo mockups of proposed brand concepts for Zambia

EXHIBIT 4

Brand hierarchy for Zamazing Zambia concept

Brand Promise		**Zamazing Zambia**	

Brand Elements	**Nature**	**Adventure**	**Culture**

| Brand Touch Points | • Victoria Falls
• National Parks
• Game reserves
• "Big five" wildlife
• Stunning vistas | • Safaris
• Rafting
• Air tours
• Bungee jumping | • Guesthouses
• Markets
• Cuisine
• Dances and events
• Shopping
• Museums |
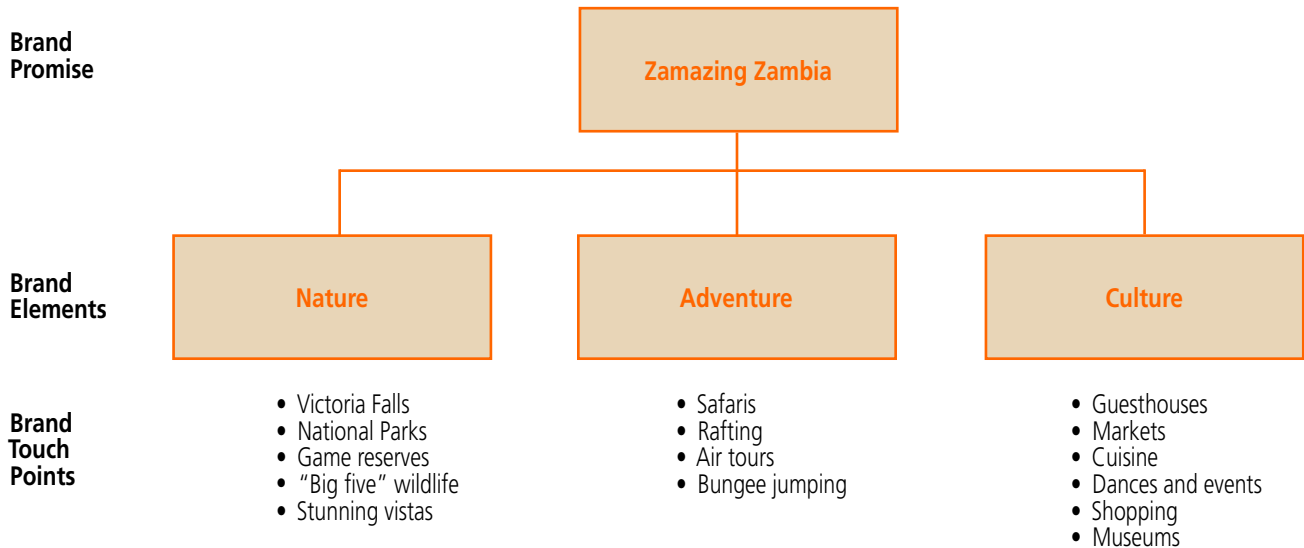
Notes
- The recommended brand needs to be designed in three parts:
  1. Encompassing and memorable idea (e.g., Zamazing Zambia) that primes a positive reaction;
  2. Supporting brand elements that provide meaning and connect to tourist motivation (e.g., nature); and
  3. Brand touchpoints that make the theme tangible for the traveler (e.g., national parks).
- The brand promise should be explicitly stated: brand elements can be written or expressed visually.

Epilogue

The process framework for strategic-brand development presented in this report can help destinations build a clear and compelling brand—one that resonates with both target markets and internal stakeholders. Destinations need to translate a deep understanding of how their offering addresses customer motivations into a compelling promise. Brand elements and brand touch points that effectively communicate and package the experience support this promise and provide images and ideas for brand messaging.

Applying the process framework can also help facilitate alignment among stakeholders, by establishing a transparent, data-driven filtering process for selecting the final brand. Upon recommending a destination brand, the branding effort is largely dependent upon identifying brand champions who will promote the brand and take ownership over it to pave the path for a successful launch. With deep knowledge of the brand and process, a brand champion helps ensure continued alignment of stakeholders by addressing questions and advocating a path forward. Building an exceptional brand requires both a robust process and committed people. The brand champion is vital to ensuring this commitment.

Nevertheless, launching a new brand or adapting an existing brand is fraught with risk—both real and perceived.

Resistance to change and to taking bold steps can be expected, especially in those contexts where consensus-based decision making and conservative strategy is the norm. In the case of Zambia, where a primary goal was to put Zambia on the map as a tourism destination and to triple visitation numbers in just three years, analysis of the market situation and the brand-study data argued for an aggressive, creative approach. Therefore, the Cornell team recommended the "Zamazing Zambia" brand concept for immediate implementation because it is memorable, novel, and potentially viral as a catchphrase for travelers and travel writers. As a second option or one for future brand consideration, the Cornell team recommended a brand that combined the two remaining concepts: "Dream Africa—Live Zambia." This brand concept was viewed as more sophisticated, though less likely to cut through competitive clutter. As of this writing, government tourism leaders have not yet selected a brand, despite the call by private-sector tourism organizations and suppliers to adopt or adapt one of the Cornell-developed brands. Consequently, a year after the rebranding initiative commenced, "Zambia: the Real Africa" remains the destination brand for the country—and Zambia remains a hidden jewel of the African continent. ■

Cornell Center for Hospitality Research
Index
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2011 Reports

Vol. 11 No. 1 The Impact of Health Insurance on Employee Job Anxiety, Withdrawal Behaviors, and Task Performance, by Sean Way, Ph.D., Bill Carroll, Ph.D., Alex Susskind, Ph.D., and Joe C.Y. Leng

2010 Reports

Vol. 10 No. 18 How Travelers Use Online and Social Media Channels to Make Hotel-choice Decisions, by Laura McCarthy, Debra Stock, and Rohit Verma, Ph.D.

Vol. 10 No. 17 Public or Private? The Hospitality Investment Decision, by Qingzhong Ma, Ph.D. and Athena Wei Zhang, Ph.D.

Vol. 10 No. 16 Best Practices in Search Engine Marketing and Optimization: The Case of the St. James Hotel, by Greg Bodenlos, Victor Bogert, Dan Gordon, Carter Hearne, and Chris K. Anderson, Ph.D.

Vol. 10 No. 15 The Impact of *Prix Fixe* Menu Price Formats on Guests' Deal Perception, by Shuo Wang and Michael Lynn, Ph.D.

Vol. 10 No. 14 The Future of Hotel Revenue Management, by Sheryl Kimes, Ph.D.

Vol. 10 No. 13 Making the Most of Priceline's Name-Your-Own-Price Channel, by Chris Anderson, Ph.D., and Shijie Radium Yan

Vol. 10, No. 12 Cases in Innovative Practices in Hospitality and Related Services, Set 4, by Cathy A. Enz, Ph.D., Rohit Verma, Ph.D., Kate Walsh, Ph.D. Sheryl E. Kimes, Ph.D., and Judy A. Siguaw, D.B.A

Vol. 10, No. 11 Who's Next? An Analysis of Lodging Industry Acquisitions, by Qingzhong Ma, Ph.D., and Peng Liu, Ph.D.

Vol. 10, No. 10 Cases in Innovative Practices in Hospitality and Related Services, Set 3: Cayuga Sustainable Hospitality, Chic & Basic, JetBlue Airlines Jumeirah Essex House, The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, Runtriz, The Seaport Hotel, Thayer Lodging, TripTelevision, and Xsense Experiential Design Consulting, by Cathy A. Enz, Ph.D., Rohit Verma, Ph.D., Kate Walsh, Ph.D. Sheryl E. Kimes, Ph.D., and Judy A. Siguaw, D.B.A.

Vol. 10, No. 9 Building Customer Loyalty: Ten Principles for Designing an Effective Customer Reward Program, by Michael McCall, Ph.D., Clay Voorhees, Ph.D., and Roger Calantone, Ph.D.

Vol. 10, No. 8 Developing Measures for Environmental Sustainability in Hotels: An Exploratory Study, by Jie J. Zhang, Nitin Joglekar, Ph.D., and Rohit Verma, Ph.D.

Vol. 10, No. 7 Successful Tactics for Surviving an Economic Downturn: Results of an International Study, by Sheryl E. Kimes, Ph.D.

Vol. 10, No. 6 Integrating Self-service Kiosks in a Customer-service System, byTsz-Wai (Iris) Lui, Ph.D., and Gabriele Piccoli, Ph.D.

Vol. 10, No. 5 Strategic Pricing in European Hotels, 2006–2009, by Cathy A. Enz, Ph.D., Linda Canina, Ph.D., and Mark Lomanno

Vol. 10, No. 4 Cases in Innovative Practices in Hospitality and Related Services, Set 2: Brewerkz, ComfortDelgro Taxi, DinnerBroker.com, Iggy's, Jumbo Seafood, OpenTable.com, PriceYourMeal.com, Sakae Sushi, Shangri-La Singapore, and Stevens Pass, by Sheryl E. Kimes, Ph.D., Cathy A. Enz, Ph.D., Judy A. Siguaw, D.B.A., Rohit Verma, Ph.D., and Kate Walsh, Ph.D.

Vol. 10, No. 3 Customer Preferences for Restaurant Brands, Cuisine, and Food Court Configurations in Shopping Centers, by Wayne J. Taylor and Rohit Verma, Ph.D.

Vol. 10, No. 2 How Hotel Guests Perceive the Fairness of Differential Room Pricing, by Wayne J. Taylor and Sheryl E. Kimes, Ph.D.

Vol. 10, No. 1 Compendium 2010

2010 Roundtable Retrospectives

Vol. 2, No. 1 Sustainability Roundtable 2009: The Hotel Industry Seeks the Elusive "Green Bullet."

2010 Industry Perspectives

No. 6 The Future of Meetings: The Case for Face to Face, by Christine Duffy and Mary Beth McEuen

No. 5 Making Customer Satisfaction Pay: Connecting Survey Data to Financial Outcomes in the Hotel Industry by Gina Pingitore, Ph.D., Dan Seldin, Ph.D., and Arianne Walker, Ph.D.

No. 4 Hospitality Business Models Confront the Future of Meetings, by Howard Lock and James Macaulay

Cornell Center for Hospitality Research
Index
www.chr.cornell.edu