

## **Brand strategy and positioning platform for Norfolk Island: Strategic rationale and creative thinking**

The purpose of this note is to share the initial high level thinking on Norfolk Island's repositioning and brand strategy before it was developed into a more comprehensive 'nuts and bolts' Brand Communication Framework for presentation to the MLAs, Norfolk Tourism Board and the Branding Committee in early March 2009.

The note attempts to articulate in some detail the process of the strategy's evolution, the logic underlying it and the creative thinking that shaped its outcome. As a result, it is somewhat wordy but helps to better appreciate how the logic of strategy and the magic of creativity combined to produce a relevant, credible and differentiable positioning platform.

### **Underlying principles**

Our whole approach to this exercise is based on the principle of balance (without of course losing sight of focus) – a balance between the various elements of the island's appeal (nature, history, culture), a balance between different ways of experiencing the destination (seeing, doing and feeling), a balance between existing and emerging market segments (Australia, NZ, other, city vs. regional, seniors vs. middle aged, experience seekers versus passive travellers) and a balance between traditional and new forms of marketing and distribution (travel trade vs. consumer focus). You will observe evidence of this principle as we unfold the strategy and several opportunities to apply it during the brand's implementation.

Most importantly, the approach you see here will emotionally connect with all travellers who will be attracted to Norfolk Island irrespective of where they live or how old they are. We believe mindsets are more important than market segments in marketing a destination like Norfolk Island provided its positioning reflects and reinforces the essence of what it has to offer.

### **The brand definition**

There may be other destinations that are bigger, even better in some respects - ecologically more diverse, more picturesque or more exotic (in terms of their culture, language and customs) - for travellers from both Australia and New Zealand, your key source markets. But Norfolk Island is undoubtedly unique in that it offers an experience that is both diverse and engaging in an easily accessible, compact environment. Its appeal stems *not* from any one dominant feature but a combination of three core attributes – The *Place*, its *Past* and *People*.

In creative terms, we would *describe* the destination as: *No ordinary island. No ordinary history. No ordinary folk. Norfolk Island.*

The choice of words "No ordinary" (beginning with the negative *No*) is quite deliberate. It starts with the premise that the destination may be seen to be ordinary but is actually not. The words effectively convey the characteristics of the island (see below for a more detailed explanation). They clearly differentiate Norfolk Island from other islands and comparable offerings (e.g. Tasmania, Lord Howe etc). More importantly, *No ordinary* does not include any superlatives (a la *the best place on earth*) that could be perceived as being less than credible by those who are widely travelled, know little about the destination and view it merely as a small speck in the ocean until they actually get to experience it.

The expression *No ordinary* also alliterates well with the name *Norfolk*. Alliterations are a powerful means of establishing word connections and help in easy recall of

branding messages. It must be emphasised that these words in themselves do *not* make a brand or spell a strategy as they are descriptive statements not experiential triggers. However, they can be useful in communicating the destination's core attributes in marketing literature and media stories.

### **The rationale for the descriptor**

#### *No ordinary island*

Norfolk is not just any ordinary island. Its topography, size, solus position (i.e. *not* being a group of islands), sub tropical climate, diverse terrain, quality of natural environment and above all its level of development and the personality of its people make it quite unique.

When we first researched the destination, we discovered that its size/shape (3 miles by 5 miles or 5 kilometres by 8 kilometres) follows the golden ratio of the Fibonacci numbers, a divine proportion that is widely obtained in nature (including in the way a *pine cone* is formed). Designed to be perfect, Norfolk Island was destined to be discovered. Unfortunately, some were not very fortunate as history has graphically witnessed.

We also stumbled upon the fact that an alternative meaning of the word pine (as in *pine for something* or *someone*) comes from the Latin poena (related to sub poena) and the Greek poine´ which mean punishment or penalty. It is also the origin of the word pain that we commonly use today. Perhaps, the Second Settlement was pre-ordained in some way. Paradoxically, the island is now a veritable haven.

Other islands in the South Pacific might stake their claim to be paradise on earth (and many do) but Norfolk has the unique distinction of being the only one that was described as paradise by its acknowledged discoverer, Captain James Cook (apparently inspired by its natural beauty *and* visible signs of fertility). Cook named it after his benefactor, the Ninth Duchess of Norfolk, not realising that she had already passed on by the time he discovered Norfolk (making this connection somewhat ethereal if not eerie).

Unlike many other islands in the South Pacific, Norfolk is virtually an isolated volcanic outcrop despite the presence of the satellite Nepean and Phillip Islands which continue to remain uninhabited. Its undulating terrain, web of rustic roads (longer than six times the perimeter of the land) and diversity of experiences are in stark contrast with its relaxed, homogenous lifestyle.

A developed economy and a relatively balanced income distribution mean the absence of typical tourist traps of poverty and filth alongside oases of affluence, dogged street hawking, crowded market centres etc. The adoption of English as the common language and the Australian dollar as official currency makes it particularly appealing to visitors from neighbouring Australia and New Zealand.

#### *No ordinary history*

The history of Norfolk Island has several layers. The distinct chapters of the First Settlement and the resettlement of Pitcairn Islanders interspersed with the horrific era of the Second Settlement make it an absorbing saga while the discovery of Polynesian occupation prior to James Cook's arrival (which many are unaware of) adds a new dimension. American whalers who played a pivotal part in moving people across the Pacific waters for generations are another interesting connection.

What makes the history unique though is its *live* experience through a 150+ year old continuing civilization of Norfolk Islanders. The story of the Mutiny on the Bounty, the

re-enactment of the arrival of the Pitcairners and recent attempts to revive the Norfolk language and traditional Tahitian arts and crafts are vivid expressions of the island's rich history and heritage.

The *past* seems to be receiving greater prominence than *place* and *people* in the island's promotion so far. The principle of balance requires that Norfolk Island's natural attributes and the personality of its inhabitants are elevated to greater prominence when profiling the destination. Yet there is ample potential to broaden the base of its historical appeal through increased animation and better interpretation of the visitor experience, greater exploration of Norfolk's Polynesian antecedents and a growing emphasis on the role of the Tahitian mothers who over generations have silently passed down their culture, language, arts and values to their progeny.

#### *No ordinary people*

The people of Norfolk Island are an inextricable extension of its history. They are a proud race with a strong nationalistic fervour, talented, resourceful and hardworking; most display a warm, hospitable attitude and a great sense of humour. They are possessive about their land, lineage and lifestyle but are spontaneously generous when it comes to sharing with visitors whatever they have. Many are ready and willing to invite tourists to their homes for a meal after only a casual encounter. They multitask in the true sense of the word, performing two or three jobs in a day; some do it out of economic necessity others because they enjoy the variety or just like to volunteer. Marriage, migration and mobility have altered the mix of the population with the original Pitcairn descendants accounting for 40% of the populace while people of Australian and New Zealander origin are equally represented among the rest.

#### **The essence of the destination**

The key to repositioning Norfolk Island lies in encapsulating the essence of the destination in a word or expression or more correctly, a concept that captures the imagination of target visitors.

First time visitors generally do not seem to have any idea as to what to expect. Many think they can *do* the place in a matter of days given that it is so small. Most visitors though are pleasantly surprised when they realise even a week is not long enough to experience all of Norfolk. They invariably enjoy their stay and some come back for more.

On the map, Norfolk Island is a tiny speck in the ocean. The actual experience however belies its size - a rabbit warren of roads (more than 170 kms. long), an ever changing landscape, an amazing beach, stunning views, volumes of history, excellent eating venues, a range of accommodation places and a choice of activities - fishing, swimming, snorkelling, walking, diving, cruising, bird watching, reliving history, attending shows/theme nights, participating in events, meeting locals, driving around, casual dining, horse riding, golfing, taking part in community sports (where the locals readily invite you to join), cycling, browsing, shopping, etc etc some of which are limited only by the vagaries of weather. Naturally, the visitor reaction is one of instant bewilderment.

The experience of coming to Norfolk Island is somewhat akin to travelling in outer space and discovering planet Earth. From a distance, it is a mere speck in the galaxy, but as you approach it, you begin to see its interesting topography, recognise the presence of water and life, appreciate its varied beauty and once you have landed, you are blown away by the diversity of its geography, history, people, language, culture and customs.

In a similar way, Norfolk Island transforms from being a mere dot on the map, to a mass of rock suddenly emerging from an unending sea of water that boldly confronts you as you land on a short runway with stretches of grass on either side (that seem more like a fairway).

What's more, Norfolk Island immediately transports the visitor to an entirely different world. Not only because of the density or diversity of experience (outlined above) or the relaxing, slow paced environment it offers, but also because of the quaint nature of the place itself. It is important to emphasise that this quaintness is very much a part of Norfolk Island's appeal and is not a turnoff for visitors who see this as a welcome change from their 'usual environment'.

Where else do you find drivers waving to each other on the road, not a single traffic light in sight, no pedestrian crossings, where parking is free (whether you are at the shops, in a café or on the beach side), where there's one street light in the entire land, the speed limit is 50 kms./hour, shops close after noon even midweek, seat belts are never worn, where cows have the right of way, people go out of their way to be helpful, cars are left unlocked and children move around freely and fearlessly.

That's not all; there are many other aspects of the place that might seem odd to an outsider but fall into place when you recognise Norfolk Island's unique status as an external territory administered by Australia. Left to themselves, the locals often lapse into a tongue that is a strange mix of Old English and Tahitian while modern day English is widely spoken. The Aussie dollar is the official currency but the place has its own postage stamps. The Territory carries a New South Wales post code but fields its own team at the Commonwealth Games and so on and so forth. Also, while the pace of life might take you back half a century, there is the comfort of a local mobile network and presence of broadband connectivity if you need it. From a tourist perspective, Norfolk Island is truly a world in itself. Travelling there is not the same as visiting anywhere in Australia or New Zealand or for that matter elsewhere in the South Pacific.

### **Rebranding as a means to repositioning**

Our recommendation therefore is to rebrand Norfolk Island the destination as *The World of Norfolk*. The use of the placeholder South Pacific will continue to establish its location and island status while *The World* sets it apart from all other competing destinations.

The word island is two dimensional and usually suggests a finite space. In the case of Norfolk Island, its small size further reinforces this perception. An island also evokes strong and predictable associations of imagery, climate, culture and people (sun, sand, palm trees, island skirts, a colourful cocktail etc).

*The World* on the other hand is three dimensional and conveys a sense of depth and breadth of experience that is far superior to what any other island can provide. The implication being that this out of the world experience is *different from* and *superior to* what you get on any other destination in the South Pacific or within Australia/New Zealand.

Suddenly, from an inconspicuous speck in the ocean, Norfolk Island begins to assume an identity of its own that is at once both differentiable and compelling. It is a platform that is also credible from a visitor point of view. *Previous* visitors have often been impressed with their stay and have been the destination's most powerful advocates.

The reality of its small size (evidenced by a tiny marker on the Pacific map) together with the new label of *The World of Norfolk* can work to create a sense of intrigue and anticipation among *potential* visitors. The little or no knowledge of what the destination has to offer thus becomes a lever of opportunity rather than a point of weakness. Over time, the value perception of the destination will change as the product, pricing and promotion are all finetuned to be in sync with the new positioning.

Norfolk Island/South Pacific	The World of Norfolk/South Pacific
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two dimensional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three dimensional; implies an added dimension of time</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competes directly against other islands that are bigger and more exotic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates its own playing field by redefining its category; stands apart from competition</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforces stereotype images of an island: sunny, tropical, crowded beaches etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breaks the mould; establishes a unique personality for itself as an out of the world experience</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small size is a weakness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size becomes a potential strength</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Struggles to establish diversity and uniqueness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity and uniqueness are built into the brand</li> </ul>

The concept of *The World* is the cornerstone of this new positioning. It is important however that the theme is carried across in everything you do either in word or in spirit. For instance, when you land, you are welcomed to *The World of Norfolk*. Tourists are no longer visitors but explorers. They do not drive around the island but navigate their way. They don't refer to maps but consult the Norfolk atlas. Keeping the theme alive without overdoing it and incorporating an appropriate visual and verbal language, tone and style and look and feel will help reinforce this new positioning.

### The Brand Promise

If there is still any semblance of doubt about the credibility of the new positioning among *potential* visitors, we believe that would be dispelled with the new brand promise that we are suggesting: *Small world. No small wonder.*

The words *Small world* work at two different levels - literally and figuratively. Literally, they suggest that the *World of Norfolk* is indeed small. It lends credibility to the positioning without destroying the core properties of diversity and uniqueness. The juxtaposition of the opposites *Small* and *world* also creates a sense of intrigue.

Figuratively, the expression *Small world* is generally used when you accidentally meet someone who you do not expect to see again in the real, big world. In the case of Norfolk Island, visitors not only run into each other all the time - on tours, at restaurants, in the shops, at the Visitor Centre, around attractions etc - but they also encounter the locals time and again but in different roles – serving at the supermarket during the day, guiding a tour in the afternoon or performing in a play at night. The concept of *Small world* takes an entirely different meaning in the Norfolk environment.

Even more importantly, the words *Small world* represent another profound, emotive dimension of the destination - the sense of *connectedness* that visitors experience not only with the people of Norfolk but also the place (i.e. environment), its past (i.e.

the lessons from history) and, above all, themselves and their loved ones. This is what makes the Norfolk holiday experience both moving and memorable.

The words *No small wonder* refer to the amazing nature of the destination, an experience that is described as magical by some. Notice how the word *No* links back to the brand descriptor (see page 2) and alliterates with the name Norfolk. Also, the words *small wonder* alliterate with *Small world*.

A brand is a continuum and must build on the equity that it has already established with its target audience. The current tagline “Be surprised” succinctly captures the emotion that visitors experience once they are here. The promise *No small wonder* takes it to a new level. And, in combination with *Small world*, it makes for a compelling brand promise. The line *Small world. No small wonder* is an excellent example of how “point-counter point” statements can add new dimensions and sharp edges to an otherwise neutral brand.

The power of a brand lies in its ability to reveal a new meaning or allow a different interpretation each time a consumer is exposed to it without in any way diluting its core essence. The new Norfolk brand is unique, diverse and competitively superior. For it to become a living lovemark, the brand must continually reinforce the properties of uniqueness and diversity (i.e. the concept of the world) in every possible encounter and orchestrate experiences so there is an element of surprise at critical brand touchpoints - from the time a visitor boards the aircraft bound for the destination until they leave their newfound world of connectedness.

However, whatever we do, the brand must never let go of the values of simplicity, authenticity, trust and spontaneity that has made it what it is today.

### **The need for unity**

For the new brand to be successful, it requires the wholehearted support and involvement of everyone on the island. In a close knit community such as Norfolk, there are as many brand touchpoints as there are people.

Given the importance of tourism to the island’s economy, the destination needs to develop a unique identity for itself. More importantly, this identity must weave together the different strands of indigenous Pitcairner culture, Australian influence and New Zealand ties into a richer, more colourful and evocative pattern that makes this *world* a better place to explore for all visitors.

We recommend the *mantra* “*Wun World. One Norf’k*” as the guiding principle for one and all - accommodation houses, food and beverage establishments, operators of tours, owners of attractions, retail traders, service providers, politicians and members of the community. It is important for each one of them to recognise that as One World and One Norfolk, the brand will be more powerful than ever before.

(The mix of English and Norf’k words in the bilingual mantra is intentional. It demonstrates the concept of weaving different strands into a unified, new pattern that is both richer and stronger).

### **Value proposition for the travel trade**

The success of the brand is also dependent on the support of off shore partners. With the new positioning and brand strategy in place, travel agents, wholesalers, airlines, hotels and tour operators will begin to see greater value in selling the destination. We recommend the theme *Small is bountiful* as the value proposition for the travel trade.

Apart from any hidden connections with the history of the Bounty, we believe the proposition illustrates that with a greater focus on a higher yielding market, a stronger brand and a smarter marketing operation, selling the *World of Norfolk* will deliver better yield to all travel partners. A small destination that was once a weak link in the Pacific can soon become a profitable investment for the future.

Also with greater confidence in the destination brand, we would hope operators within Norfolk Island as well as offshore stakeholders will be encouraged to make tangible investments in product upgradation and new product development that can only further strengthen the brand.

*Finally, Branding should become a bridging link not a dividing wedge for the industry. Also, repositioning is as much an opportunity for introspection as it is to look at oneself through a visitor's lens. It is critical that this combined vision is shared by all businesses, irrespective of their primary target market and all of the Community, whatever their personal point of view. We see the mantra "Wun World. One Norfolk" encapsulating this transformation.*