



Yaciting at Edinburgh's Waterfront

Heinz Beans & Sparkling Water

Creating a destination brand for Edinburgh Waterfront

In *Heinz Beans & Sparkling Water*, Doug McKenzie, of Forth Ports PLC highlights the importance of brand-led thinking in destination development and shows how it has been applied to the development of Edinburgh's waterfront at Leith Docks.

A man goes into a supermarket to buy a can of baked beans. He doesn't find any Heinz beans, so he leaves the store empty-handed. Apocryphal perhaps, but it illustrates the idea that Heinz have defined the baked beans market in much the same way that Velux have defined the market for roof windows and Apple the MP3 player market. Just like product brands, places and destinations need to be competitive and can reap real rewards if they are able to build a strong brand image. Edinburgh's 450 acre mixed-use waterfront development is hoping to realize these rewards by taking a brand-led approach to its development.

As a business discipline, the essentials of branding are the same whether practised by BMW, Persil, RBS or Cape Town. Clarity about the target audience, combined with genuine insights that help define the brand attributes, benefits, values and essence will help inform the brand's positioning, proposition and personality. With this direction and a consistent and integrated approach, destination marketers are now creating competitive advantage by identifying their assets and building them into compelling brand propositions. Success at this stage gives a destination brand the potential to be more economically significant and socially important.

Leith Docks area



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The difference between place and product brands

There are, however, key differences between product and destination branding. Creating a destination brand is not an easy task given the number of stakeholders and ways in which the brand interacts with them.

Place-branding is rarely controlled by a central authority which can dictate policy and there will always be constraints for places and destinations over which marketeers have little or no control. You visit a tourist attraction and find it closes an hour before advertised. The street lighting is poor and you feel unsafe. The attractions that are featured in the posters are too far away. There is no signage to help you find your way around. Encounters such as these can immediately damage a destination brand, as the consumer welcomes any reason to reject a brand almost as eagerly as a reason to embrace it.

The changing landscape

Responding to the city's growing demand for housing, Edinburgh's waterfront at Leith Docks is now undergoing an exciting period of growth and change. Extending to 450 acres, it is the largest, private sector-led, waterfront regeneration project in the UK with over 185,000 sqm of commercial and retail space and more than 20,000 residential units. The regeneration of the waterfront at Leith Docks is forecast to add £248 million to the Scottish economy each year and generate more than 11,000 permanent jobs. At the heart of the development is a 24.2 ha site that will form a retail, leisure and commercial 'hub' for this new quarter of Edinburgh.

Already home to the Royal Yacht Britannia, this major extension of the city will create an active waterfront that will leverage the location's assets and attributes. Realising that physical ambition alone is no longer

enough, the fundamentals of branding have been applied to create a new development framework for this retail, leisure and commercial 'hub'.

The Edinburgh experience

There have been three distinct phases in the development of the Brand Mastervision for the 'hub'. Through research, analysis and evaluation, the Mastervision identifies the target audience, the sense of place and the core brand experience. At the heart of this is the brand essence or the single guiding thought that runs through everything you do or say.

Contrary to received wisdom that the 'hub' should be created for the tourist market, the process clarified our primary audience as selected groups of Edinburgh residents – their prospective frequency of visit and economic value being key determinants. Of course, with Edinburgh attracting 3.8 million tourists annually and an ambition to increase this by 50% by 2015, the waterfront can support and benefit from this seasonal growth too. For each audience, a number of future positioning scenarios were then explored with each designed to investigate a different aspect of the future character of the area.

It was Edinburgh's artistic and cultural credentials that won through and they are now integral to the development of the brand. Contributing over £184 million to the Scottish economy, Edinburgh's complement of twelve festivals helps to secure its position as a leading festival city. Acknowledging both the physical and emotional assets at a city and local neighbourhood level helped inform the destination brand at the waterfront. Edinburgh's attributes include a strong identity, culture, festivals, its reputation and architecture. At a local level, Leith enjoys the benefits of its heritage and its creative, gritty, dynamic and community feel. Together, they can influence the brand development at the heart of the waterfront – with 'sparkle' as the single guiding thought, the 'hub' will become a stunning and creative epicentre where people can work, shop and play. At the same time it can help to reaffirm Edinburgh City's position as a truly world cultural capital.

Keeping an eye on your competitors

But there is a cautionary note. A brand is defined in our minds at least as much by its competitors as it is by its own behaviour. A new competitor may bring a new challenge, but the real danger comes from the small changes that accumulate over time until they've created significant advantage .





Fuerzabruta at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2007

The report 'Thundering Hooves – Maintaining The Global Competitive Edge of Edinburgh's Festivals', identified the growing competition from UK cities such as Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle that have been encouraged by initiatives such as the EU-sponsored European Capitals of Culture programme. On the world stage, large-scale events, festivals and fairs are also being used as a catalyst for regeneration and economic growth, with many benefiting from longer term planning, investment in quality, innovative programming, strategic promotion and intelligence and excellent facilities.

Destination branding in practice

Everything created in and around the 'hub' at Edinburgh's waterfront must be able to reinforce the brand and to fulfil the brand promise. This runs from the design of the buildings to the types of attractors, retail tenants, naming, events and marketing activity. It extends to the signage, communication materials, the tone of voice and visual language used, sponsorship partners and the service experienced by a resident or visitor to the site. A set of brand guidelines outlining the principles and usage can help secure consistency and avoid misrepresentation.

In practice, the various brand values identified for the 'hub' will be present in all

of the elements of the development with the option to 'turn up the volume' on different values for each district. Each district can express different values but always remain supportive of the overall brand proposition. Throughout, the Brand Mastervision can act as a filter and a benchmark to guide the design and standards of delivery across the development.

With these insights in mind, the process of building a brand at the heart of Edinburgh's new waterfront is underway. Comparing where the brand is today with where it needs to be helps to identify the gaps and create a route map for developing the brand. Initially, the focus will be on hotels and commercial occupiers and as the place becomes more established, the focus will shift to attracting visitors and residents. Either way, there are some critical success factors that are common throughout; infrastructure, built form, communications and events. Events and festivals not only expand the festival offer but help to animate the area and build awareness. Most recently, the Edinburgh Mela – one of Edinburgh Festivals' signature events – agreed to relocate its multi-cultural event to the Edinburgh Waterfront. This early success is important as it starts to build associations between Edinburgh's festivals and the waterfront as well as driving footfall.

Brands are made and owned by people and are therefore dynamic, constantly evolving

and changing. Although most places already have a de facto brand, skilful marketeers can provide many of the raw materials from which the brand can be developed. Compared to product brands, a destination brand interacts in many more ways with the customer. With more stakeholders and informal brand agents at work such as politicians, community and special interest groups, a destination brand cannot be controlled completely. However, this should not deter marketeers from tackling the brief – the principles of branding a product or a place are the same though their implementation may be different. In addition to valuable economic and social benefits, destination branding also comes with the added opportunity for the brand to enjoy genuine fame far beyond its target market, just like Heinz beans.

Douglas McKenzie

Director, Marketing & Business Development, Forth Ports Plc