

Bushmills

Report:

Development of a brand
for Bushmills

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& PARTNERS

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Development of a Brand for Bushmills Village

Background

Causeway Coast & Glens Council realise the importance of creating a brand for Bushmills which will capture the quality of the experience, the excitement and enrichment for the visitor and which will appeal to local residents, visitors, tourists and will engage stakeholders. The brand must also work cohesively with the Bushmills Distillery brand, the Causeway Coast & Glens Destination brand, the Causeway Coastal Route brand, the TNI and Tourism Ireland branding, the National Trust Giants Causeway brand, the Wild Atlantic Way brand and all partner and tourism organisations' brands and must have credibility and stand out in the company of other visitor attractions on not just a local, but a global level.

The new destination Bushmills brand will need to compete for footfall with many other visitor and cultural attractions currently in NI and ROI and it will need to be future proofed as tourism develops and the choices for visitors increase. A highly visible, impactful identity will support the aims and vision of the village and the Bushmills 2020 plan, helping sustain growth, funding and development in future years.

The brand will become the visual embodiment of:

- Bushmills Village's character, heart and soul
- Focused on the creation of memorable experiences, culture and the future

A brand is not simply a logo but is the philosophy of the entire organisation it represents. Traditionally branding has been the domain primarily of private organisations which see the direct benefits, in commercial terms, of having a strong, easily recognised brand identity. Brands such as Coca Cola, BMW, Nike, Apple and the like, have grown their brands to such an extent that not only are they household names but the mere sight or mention of the brand immediately creates an expectation of trust and value in the mind of the consumer.

In recent years the government has also come to realise the importance of strong branding for the public sector. The NHS is a great example of a public sector brand which has tremendous power and which remains consistent through the highs and lows of media debate on its efficiency and professionalism. The brand instantly evokes an emotional response from the general public, the majority of whom have very clear expectations of what service they should receive from NHS and what the brand embodies.

Technology and in particular, social media, means that tourists have an instant, 24/7 platform upon which they can broadcast their experiences and opinions. Organisations are becoming increasingly aware their customers live in a world full of branding and they have no choice but to adapt to the expectations which their consumers have and to adapt to these needs quickly and efficiently or face public criticism.

For a tourism destination it has never been more important to build a strong brand for the following reasons:

- A brand will help the village to engage with its target audience of potential visitors
- It will depict the village's visitor offering and what they can expect
- It will represent a model of the village which its residents can buy into
- It's a visual expression of the brand which can create interest and build loyalty

Building an area/village brand does present particular challenges for the following reasons –

- The brand must begin within Bushmills itself, with the residents, the business owners and employees, the community groups, schools, church organisations, the Council and the elected members.
- Due to the multiple stakeholders from both the business sector and local community it may be difficult to reach a consensus on the new brand.
- Once the brand is launched it can be difficult to monitor and control adherence to the brand guidelines.

Stakeholder Brand Meeting

A stakeholder meeting was held at Bushmills Distillery on 27th April 2017.

This was attended byValerie Ludlow, Rory Jeffers and Karen Barr of ASG & Partners.

The focus of this meeting was to:

- Review all desk research gathered to date and identify gaps.
- Probe current attitudes to the existing Bushmills village brand.
- Identify any brand discord that might exist and hinder the delivery of a unified marketing approach.
- Find areas of consensus towards the brand.
- Identify barriers to success.
- Develop consensus amongst stakeholders to enable a unified approach to marketing going forward.

These discussions were used to inform avenues of research, stakeholder interviews and input for creative thinking. As part of this process, attendees were asked to complete individual questionnaires which asked six questions relating to the Bushmills brand proposition. The questionnaires were completed without conferring and ASG then reviewed and discussed the answers that had been provided.

All questionnaires were completed anonymously.

The questions and (verbatim) responses from the attendees of the brand clinic were as follows:

Currently, what is Bushmills Most Important Strength?

Remnants of architecture could be a good framework to build on – physical village is a potential strength.

Proximity to two international attractions/brands

The food and drink offering

The Distillery

Whiskey and proximity to key tourism assets

Access to tourists/people

Its destinations – the Bushmills Distillery, the Bushmills Inn, the Pyjama Factory, the Giants Causeway

Whiskey/Distillery

Currently, what is Bushmills single biggest weakness?

Sectarian image/unwelcoming at certain times of year

Lack of collective will

The perception of a run-down, derelict and poor village

Dereliction, lack of a planned and coordinated street scape

Extended 'twelfth' celebrations flags for more than two months

Its lack of visibility and reputation, also there is no common vision

Sectarian/derelict, housing/buildings

Lack of soul/purpose

A reason to book Bushmills – decide to come and do what there is vs decision to visit an attraction and stay in Bushmills

Strongly one-sided community/hard image especially around the twelfth

In the next three years, what is Bushmills mission?

Create an open and welcoming space for residents and visitors

Agree brand proposition for Bushmills, develop and build brand, secure investment for same

To transform into a complimentary tourism destination/hub, which acts to link the visitor routes throughout the North Coast

Bushmills will not only be the gateway to the Giants Causeway, operating to world class standards but also a sought after destination in its own right

To create a common vision that can be distilled into three key phases to get community buy in and momentum

Become a destination of choice

Be a destination of choice because –

It is an exciting place to be

Full of fun things to do

Great places to hang out (stay and eat)

To have and convey a confident, clear, attractive and welcoming sense of place and identity

In the next three years, what is needed for the realisation of Bushmills mission?

Acceptance of a need to develop and progress by wider community

Some community needs to grasp opportunity

Bring them on this journey

Shared vision, collective leadership, strategically linked physical regen projects and sustained revenue investment in brand building, competency development, business development

A prioritised regeneration plan and parking infrastructure

To support entrepreneurship and private sector investment

A programme of events and activities

The priority is development and extension of the arrival hub to the Giant's Causeway. This will dramatically help solve the ever increasing high season parking problems on the North Coast

Community buy in to an inspiring vision

Mission statement – all interested parties to focus on this one vision

Tidy up place

Align communication of activities

Communicate

Business and community collaboration on a regular basis with a focused joint sense of purpose and direction. Local pride in the village and community, empowerment in the destination's tourism product and future

A second Brand Workshop was conducted by ASG & Partners on 3rd August at the Mill Rest Youth Hostel in Bushmills.

This was attended byValerie Ludlow, Rory Jeffers and Karen Barr of ASG & Partners.

Question 1. Currently, what is Bushmills single most important strength?

Access to a large number of visitors

Distillery

Distillery, proximity to Causeway, food, arts, craft, architecture, street scape

Distillery, French Rooms, N.T, Inn
Distillery, Bushmills Inn Hotel, Quality Restaurants, Conservation Area
Quality of food and drink, Bushmills Inn
Distillery, location- beautiful landscape,
Location, distillery, global recognition
The Distillery

Question 2. Currently, what is Bushmills single biggest weakness.

Lack of direction, not enough hotels
Lack of cohesion, collective ambition to realise potential, huge disparity between different areas in the town
Parking is a hindrance, a lot of effort to get to shops
Flags that create an inhospitable environment and insufficient car parking
Vacant and derelict buildings, lack of enforcement of planning policies of a conservation area
Main street is too dull, too little interest with shops and cafes between the top of the town and the bottom of the town.
Central area run down and too little street scape
Poor conditions of building and too many flags
Sectarian image

Question 3. In the next 12 months, what is Bushmills most important opportunity

Needs links with Portballintrae, 5 minutes from the beach, need to max out occupancy in the area.
The Whiskey strategy, Distillery and new places
Bushmills doesn't need to wait on an opportunity- it has one right in front of it- Bushmills Whiskey
To position itself as a destination which there is access the wider area and attractions.
Stone throw away from Portrush- big spending tourists coming our way
Hotels, Phil McCool
Park and ride, making it fit for purpose a world class standard and developing the coastal walk
Co-ordinate the synergy of the total business commodity already here and growing
To plan and secure a strategic development plan.
Tourism festivals e.g. food festivals
Growing tourist numbers and festivals

Question 4. In the next twelve months what is Bushmills greatest threat?

Failure to prepare against tourist growth and failure to address traffic and parking problems
Disjointed
Going vanilla, decaying
Its ability to reach consensus in being a welcoming village for everyone.

Having no plan to deal with the current growth opportunity that tourism presents
Other better destinations to stay and that Bushmills becomes a drive through village.
Car parking
Increasing traffic/insufficient car parking space
Missing golden opportunity through lack of united community (people and education)
No answer
Downturn in economy – will second home market be sustainable
Brexit and lack of investment

Question 5. In the next three years what is Bushmills mission?

To promote the village assets and handle the traffic problems
Drive quality offering to meet promise of its global brand
To leave the past behind and move onto a better future
To become the go to destination and welcome point from which to see the North Coast
To be top destination for people to live work and visit
To make the village appeal to all ages, races and religions. For the centre of the village to develop more businesses and that it is more appealing to the eye
Maximise businesses and attractions. Sought after destination in its own right
and to make causeway fit for purpose for a world heritage site
To be better than Hillsborough
To reposition itself as a high yield quality heritage village that fits with the wider causeway coast and gives area an award-winning destination
Platform for tourists.
Become the number one village to stay and eat in NI. A high-end base to visit the causeway coast

Question 6. In the next three years, what is needed for the realisation of the Bushmills mission?

To deal with traffic and parking to deal with anti-social issues and to improve business reputation
Focus, drive quality to meet strengths of whiskey and surrounding landscape and regeneration
Collective ambition and energy to deliver investment in infrastructure, buy in from local community An
understanding/plan for tourism to benefit all.
Investment, flexibility (council community business), buy in
Investment, co cooperation from all community groups, investment
Funding, community involvement in the branding involvement of Bushmills, having businesses as a profit, project from council
Agreed village statement, smart business perception of whole village. Villagers who always smile because they mean it
Investment and pride
Cohesive approach - agree what the village is.
Unified brand line

A third Brand Workshop Open Session was conducted by ASG & Partners on 24th October at the Community Centre in Bushmills. This was attended by Karen Barr, Stacey Rooney and Karen Weston of ASG & Partners. This was open to all stakeholders, residents, community groups, local schools and businesses to attend.

Q1. Currently, what is Bushmills single most important strength?

Strategically well placed

Sense of community

Bushmills is very welcoming and the people are very friendly. Bushmills is known for their distillery due to whiskey.

Community, clear identity, people know each other.

Employment in the distillery

Bushmills most important strength is tourism. Its heritage attracts tourists to come and it's close proximity to the Giant's Causeway and the park and ride buses also bring more tourists. The Bushmills in also gives a place for tourists to stay.

I think that Bushmills has a really interesting history and heritage. It has really unique buildings and with the Giant's Causeway it has really mythical stories to tell.

I think that Bushmills is a very popular place for tourists to come to with it being near the Giant's Causeway.

I think that Bushmills is very peaceful and it has a lot of history and that is why it's a tourist place

Money because we have lots of tourists.

The Bushmills Distillery because it brings in lots of tourists

Money because of having so many tourists that visit Bushmills most popular buildings eg Giant's Causeway, Distillery, Maghaughtons Forrest

Bushmills is very welcoming and its history is great.

Bushmills is very welcoming and is well known for liking whiskey

Bushmills is very welcoming and well known for its whiskey

It's a small place and everyone knows each other and is good for tourists because there is not a lot of walking to do.

It's small and everyone knows each other. And is also easy for tourists to get about and enjoy their stay.

It's a small place to live and everyone knows each other and its good for tourists because there is not a lot of walking to do.

Location

Tourism. The Distillery. Near the Causeway. Friendly people.

People and location.

Q2. Currently, what is Bushmills single biggest weakness?

Lack of serious development, strategic plan required to do this?

From youth work experience in the town I have observed that a group of people lack aspirations, parents influence their children. Acceptance of diversity is improving but still needs encouraged.

Parking. Should be more shops for example McDonald's, Subway.

A significant number still in relevant poverty.

Empty shops in main street.

Currently in Bushmills there isn't a lot to do. There are a few fish and chip shops but nothing to do to have fun.

I think Bushmills needs more space for car parking for coaches, and more shops for shopping.

More car parks. More shops for shopping.

Not a lot of stuff to do for kids.

Bombs and lots of stuff to do with paramilitaries which causes people to be scared to come to Bushmills and then the community won't get money to help the town.

Sometimes there are too many tourists and not enough parking spaces.

Car parking.

Not enough parking spaces on the main street.

Traffic jams in Bushmills is a weakness.

Traffic, and there aren't enough parking spaces in the town.

Holiday traffic.

Lack of car parking.

Q.3 In the next 12 months, what is Bushmills most important opportunity?"

Solving car parking issues to suit all needs.

Tourism: find creative and welcoming ways to attract people.

To capitalize on tourism in the town.

Tourism. Need more hotels and B&B's in the town.

More jobs and also more shops. There are only corner shops and some fish and chip shops. Having more stores in the area would give more things to do, more jobs and it means people would not have to go as far for things.

Tourism. Hotels. B&B's.

Pull the community together in an effort to exploit the opportunity this gateway village offers.

Having a bus service to different tourist places of interest e.g. Dunluce Castle from a specific place in the village.

Q4. In the next 12 months, what is Bushmills greatest threat?

Getting left behind.

More shops closing because the tourists don't get a chance to visit as coaches visit distillery and then take them away. Fullerton Arms (Ballintoy) has seven coaches daily, need more affordable eating places.

Paramilitaries and bombs.

Find something to do with the tourists.

Complacency.

No parking places and tourists not stopping to shop or eat.

External Investment without grass roots consultation.

Q5. In the next three years, what is Bushmills mission?

Develop a coordinated strategy with community, Business and council to regenerate a new economic cycle.

More affordable eating places. To work on attitudes of locals - could the youth be taught skills that could lead to jobs?

To capitalize on opportunities.

To improve the main street for visitors and locals.

More stuff for kids.

To build a community with lots of things to do.

Provide for the holiday opportunities associated with Causeway Distillery & Dunluce Castle

To improve the environmental impact and make the village more inviting to tourists.

Development of community village plan.

Q6. In the next three years, what is needed for the realization of Bushmills mission?

An organization that can organize, sustain momentum and encourage risk takers.

Additional businesses using unused shops/buildings in the village. Additional parking.

Car park in the middle of Bushmills where you can see entrance in the distance. More craft shops.

Proper traffic arrangement and parking.

Funding and help from different agencies especially council.

Investment- listening to the community.

The purpose of this exercise was to establish whether the stakeholders shared a common vision for the way forward or if there were competing priorities that would need to be reviewed, discussed and consensus found.

ASG explained that the greater the ability to operate within a very fixed and singular vision of a brand proposition the better equipped the Village would be to deliver its objectives. ASG also explained that it is very uncommon for this perfect harmony to exist – this exercise was simply to identify the points of difference to allow for open and constructive dialogue to begin and to build on the points of shared vision.

What was pleasing was that many of the responses from the group tended to centre on the same issues. This demonstrated that a strong working relationship has developed already and that it possessed a strong understanding of the problems the brand faced if it were to be successful going forward.

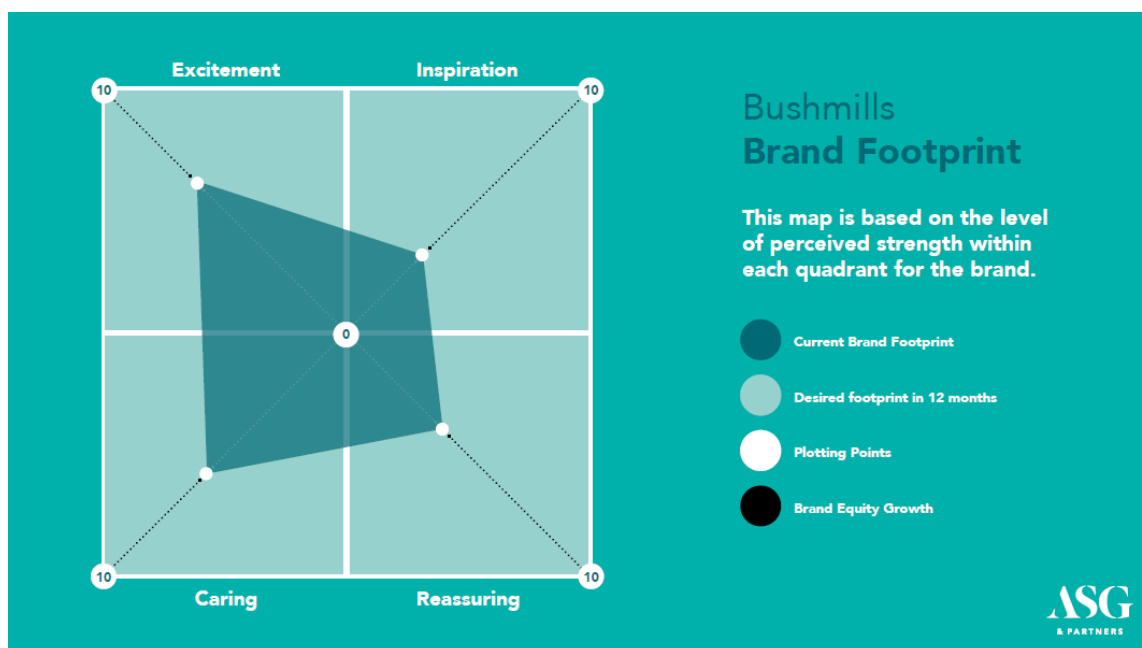
The exercise did help to inform many of the points that the collected respondents wished to have defined by the brand (and its associated values) being developed for the new council.

Consumer Needs Map

The second step within the Brand Clinic is to create a brand footprint map based on the level of importance of each quadrant for the new brand being proposed.

This brand footprint map is produced using a matrix which asks stakeholders to score their brand on a scale of 1-10 on four measures: **excitement, inspiration, caring, reassuring**.

When all four scores have been mapped on the matrix they are connected – as per the brand clinic matrix shown below:



The mapping technique is an easy way to represent highly complex brand positioning in a simple to understand illustration. This format allows all internal stakeholders to quickly get to grips with the key outputs, enabling efficient development of the marketing strategy for their current brands or new brands. Every brand has the potential to occupy the full matrix – but very few brands ever achieve this.

What we identified in the brand clinic is that the Bushmills brand currently occupies a very small proportion of the available brand footprint (section highlighted in dark green above).

The current proposition scored better within the **EXCITEMENT** and **CARING** quartiles. This is the area of the footprint most associated with ‘need’ qualities.

The scores within the **REASSURING** and **INSPIRATION** quartiles were extremely low. This may not be surprising but poses interesting challenges from a brand and marketing perspective.

A foremost aim of the new Bushmills brand will be to develop and promote the area's strong retail, economic and tourism potential and offering.

The responses reported in the previous section comprise the written up commentaries from the brand clinic dialogues but they have been presented as a combined response, with nothing of material consequence excluded.

Conclusion

ASG understands the need to create a brand which will sit cohesively with the existing brands of the destination Causeway Coast & Glens brand, the Causeway Coastal route, TNI, Tourism Ireland, Bushmills Distillery, the Wild Atlantic Way and the National Trust Giants Causeway brand.

We understand the need for balance and equality in the creation of the new brand so that it will be accepted and achieve buy in from all residents and stakeholders. The Brand Clinic exercise did help to inform many of the points which the collected respondents wished to have defined by the brand (and its associated values) being developed for Destination Bushmills Village.

Working closely with the Bushmills stakeholder team we will ensure that the proposed brand identity proposition is not only fit-for-purpose but achieves the correct tone and gives stand out for Village.

The Creative Approach phase translates the strategy into tactical communications tools.

