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# TRAVELLING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

IN TRAVEL AND LEISURE, IT'S THE WELL-EXECUTED LONG-TERM STRATEGY THAT BRINGS CUSTOMERS TO YOUR BRAND AND KEEPS THEM COMING BACK FOR MORE **BY ABI GOLDFINCH**

A brand is not just a logo, a suite of stationery or a corporate colour system, it's a whole experience. People remember brands that make them feel something. Whether it's a feeling of belonging or worth, of sentiment, excitement or lust; effective brands are the ones that evoke emotion in an audience.

In the travel and leisure industry, successful brands have to develop long-term strategies to differentiate themselves. In a global online

marketplace that offers endless choice to well-informed and connected consumers, a brand has to work harder to win and keep new business.

Today's travel consumer is subject to a constantly evolving landscape. As more consumers buy via the internet, an online experience that complements every point of delivery is crucial to brand success. Translating your brand into digital form is vital, and customer experience is key to gaining repeat purchases, and brand equity.

A considered strategy must underpin the complete brand experience, aligning the brand platform with business design objectives. This should comprise everything from the way the customer perceives you, to the experience and quality of your product, to tone of messaging and the environment your brand occupies. From name, to business philosophy, to creative approach, to method of delivery, all should fall under the broad heading of 'brand experience'.

Get these right and you'll create loyal customers. Get them wrong and you'll be bottom of the pile of the holiday choice list.

Recent studies of travel consumers tell us that they don't always base their choice of

brand on price, location and schedule. Successful brand differentiators use clear strategies in every area of their business, to win themselves new customers in other ways.

Sub-branding is another possibility for brand differentiation, which relies on a thorough understanding of customer priorities, but can maximise individuality and create mindshare in a distinct space, away from the brand itself. By creating either a signature product or targeting a very specific customer group, clever originators have established a brand following that is about more than just a one-off encounter.

So, truly understanding your target audience provides key insight into how to approach creative and messaging platforms in an engaging, relevant, and consistent manner. Analysing existing customer data will add to your individuality and encourage an integrated, targeted marketing solution.

Any advertising activity will need to stand out from today's online clutter with a well-designed, relevant concept that maximises the direct path to purchase. And any online shopping brand experience should not be detached from the core message and essence of the brand. For the travel industry the practice of user-centric functionality is fundamental. Personalising the navigation experience helps users to feel understood, while the brand builds a profile that can be niche targeted to gain high response.

Ultimately, the overall creative brand architecture and execution of the brand strategy is what will win and retain your customers. It must be unique and superior to the competition; you can develop your brand strategy to fit that of the whole business, or you can find a niche for your sub-brand, or create your signature product. But if you don't execute and align it perfectly, all of this will go to waste. After all, the devil's in the detail as they say. ●

**Abi Goldfinch is the founder and creative director of Lime Creative**

**Offering the world:**  
A luxury experience is now the minimum

