



THE ROMANCE OF THE BRAND

DATE : FEBRUARY 2010

THE PROMISE OF ROMANCE'

'Romantic' - a gentle, enticing, inviting, oh-so-promising word which has become a staple descriptor in the destination marketing vocabulary of global Travel & Tourism (T&T). Romantic sunsets. Romantic locations. Romantic experiences. Romantic moments. Romance is, and will undoubtedly remain (if not grow), one of the most compelling promises of leisure travel.

At the heart of the promise of a romantic experience lies the essence of the motivation for escape for many travellers: the need for reconnection. As daily life becomes busier, nosier and more demanding in all directions and at each and every moment, the opportunity for romance is more and more squeezed out of thought and action. Those loved slip further and further away in availability and accessibility, both mentally and physically.

For many people across the globe the absence of romance becomes sadly justified – there is just not enough time and energy left at the end of the day. When challenged the desire for romance becomes defended – time will be made to reconnect.

But as days, weeks and months pass with romance increasingly fading in one's life, ultimately its absence is accepted. It is even resigned to. As a result special occasions such as Valentine's Day, Birthdays and Anniversaries become opportunities for making up for lost time, lost moments, lost emotions. These rare flickers of a flame can become relied on to rekindle fading fires. For florists and other heart-hugging products providers they can be relied on to create a surge in profits. Still, their purpose is very real.

Despite all the technology we have to keep people connected, ironically life seems to have many moving further and further apart.

Time for a holiday!

THE ROMANCE OF THE PLACE

Taking into account the growing pressures of daily life, especially in a year defined by global economic crisis, the marketing of romantic holidays becomes the marketing of a tonic. What better way to bring the romance back into your life than to take a holiday with the person you care for?

Destinations, hotels and resorts offering romantic getaways continue to find new, creative ways to depict couples enjoying a romantic time together. Images and words dance together to create scenes seductively calling the heart-starved to become a part of the moments they so want and need to be a part of. At key moments in the calendar year the volume is turned up on the invitation.

The travel industry has for many years been creating packages leveraging the 'romance' in offerings. From holiday get-aways to couples massages to special occasion exclusive meals for two, the range of romantic options is endless. Scheduled romance is expected and appreciated. Bookings are essential, literally and figuratively.

THE ROMANCE OF THE BRAND

Yet, when romance is encountered, real spontaneous romance, it is magnetic, hypnotic and purely beautiful. Romance generously extended to travellers, as a surprise dimension of the experience of a place is a gift.

There is one dimension of the traveler experience which can offer the delight of true romance in unexpected, undeniable, unquestionably generous ways. It exists innately within a handful of tourism offerings across the globe. To experience it is to experience something far greater and often more touching than the execution of the romance formula. It is authentic and pure, omnipresent and completely embracing. It warms the air and softens the step of the property. It inspires travellers to pause, to look more closely and more deeply at all of the detail of the

experience, to soak up all that the experience has to offer. It causes lingering, reflection and unexpected delight. And it holds at its heart the essence of romance.

It is the BRAND.

There are a few such establishments around the world which are magnificent examples of the powerful delivery of the romance of the Brand. They are as precious to the Travel & Tourism industry as the rare flash of a diamond in the sands of Namibia. Of those gracing the Tourism globe one shining example whose name alone inspires a feeling of romance and time-standing-still beauty: RAFFLES in Singapore.

Another: the TAJ LAKE PALACE HOTEL in India.

Yet another: the OYSTER BOX HOTEL in South Africa.

And then, of course, there is the grandest of them all: the WALDORF=ASTORIA HOTEL in NYC.

Each is rich in unique, legendary beauty. Each is living the richness of its Brand. Each is generous in its appreciation and sharing of divine little Brand-kissed details which touch the heart and all of the senses. Each, as a result, offers a guest experience more deeply penetrating in feeling, memory and joy than expected.

GOING BEYOND SEEING AND DOING TO *FEELING*

The romance of the Brand is often a hidden jewel within the traveller experience. More and more we see what T&T communication invites travellers to come see and do. Experience the attractions. Experience the spa. Experience the sport. Experience the cuisine. Experience the service and the hospitality. Experience the difference. The invitation is becoming more and more active, more and more outward.

What is so often overlooked is inviting travellers to experience, *inwardly*, all that lies behind the Brand itself – come feel its history, its personality, its character, its manner of being brought to life through the way in which the people of the property *'live the brand'*.

To simply say the name RAFFLES is to unlock an array of polished, perfectly detailed adjectives and images seeking to capture the legendary beauty, character and luxury of this historical, tropical oasis-like property nestled peacefully within a rising, shining Singapore cityscape. Similarly, when the grand WALDORF=ASTORIA in NYC opens its polished doors and pats down its red carpet, it is an invitation to be a part of an exceptional place where world leaders, leading personalities, true romantics and the most magnificent floral bouquets and fabulous chandeliers converge.

These properties are not merely magnificent reflections of architecture, nor collections of chapters of history of guests of time past. They are, rather living storybooks – places where people go to see and *feel* the stories of celebrated lives and times gone by, as well as create new moments which will be preserved as some of the finest moments of one's life. They are centres of *living history*.

Importantly, they need not be 'old' properties. A fine example of this fact is the OYSTER BOX HOTEL which reopened its grand doors in October of 2009. The hotel is a showcase of how peacefully and perfectly history and modernity can live side by side. With its iconic lighthouse calling weary travellers in from across the Indian Ocean, the original 1950s property underwent a dramatic renovation over three years to polish its past yet bring it into the present. The result: an international hotelier masterpiece which stands tall on the South African shores as a perfect fusion of white gloves and wifi, elegant moments and environmental management, offering high tea, high luxury and high speed internet. Somehow it all comes together, elegantly and naturally. How? Because of the innate understanding of the history, the importance, and the romance, of the Brand by

all of those who work there – and celebrate all that the property represents to its location, its staff and its guests.

THE EQUITY IN THE ROMANCE OF THE BRAND

As seen by many of the world's finest 'red carpet' Brands, immense equity (and competitiveness) exists not only in inviting travellers to come experience the destination, but also the importance of inviting travellers to come, stand still, and simply feel....

- Feel the character.
- Feel the presence of history.
- Feel the romance of the legend
- Feel the richness of knowing.
- Feel the comfort of being a part of it.

Each of these great properties has as a natural prefix the word 'legendary'.

Each of these legendary properties has within it a long-cherished story.

Each of these story-filled properties is a recognition of the importance of the stories of the property to the guest experience;

Each of these properties knows that the strength of the guest experience rests in its attention to, and celebration of, detail.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING THE ROMANCE OF THE BRAND

To lose the romance of the Brand in travel and traveler experiences would be to replace the world's rose gardens with plastic flowers. The promise of a travel experience goes deeply beyond the tangible.

Even before exploring what a hotel can offer, look closely at what the Brand stands for, find the romance and the stories tucked away within the name and unlock the experience within the promise.

Despite our ability to often see it, Brands are treasure chests of stories, emotion and traveller connection. And very importantly, despite their inability to say it, there is no question it is that emotion – *the romance of the Brand* - that travellers across the world search for... and are in need of.

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