

How to Develop a Dynamic Regional Brand

To Restore Health & Wealth to Rural Economies

A regional brand, if successful, leaves an indelible mark in what some have called 'the most valuable real estate in the world: the corner of a consumers mind'

A report for



by LESTER MARSHALL

2007 Nuffield Scholar



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Contents

PREFACE.....	IV
FOREWORD.....	VI
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	VII
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	VIII
Background.....	viii
Objectives	viii
Key findings.....	ix
Recommendations	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
MY LIFE JOURNEY	2
THE GLOBAL JOURNEY.....	8
Overview.....	8
China	9
South Africa	10
Spain.....	10
France	11
England.....	11
Scotland	12
America.....	12
Japan.....	13
Singapore	14
ECONOMIC DRIVERS FOR REGIONAL BRANDING.....	16
FOOD FOR THOUGHT.....	17
REGIONAL BRANDING MODEL.....	20
Step 1 - Create a strong vision for the region	20
Step 2 - Identify regional point of difference	21
Step 3 - Identify your target market.....	21
Step 4 - Get local government, business and community buy in	22
Step 5 - Start building fame for the region	23
Step 6 - Develop supply chains to your target market.....	24
PRODUCT ASSOCIATIONS.....	26
Product Lines	26
Ultra premium	26
Premium.....	26
Basic	27
Poor quality.....	27
CONCLUSION.....	28
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	28
PLAIN ENGLISH COMPENDIUM SUMMARY	29

Preface

By Mark Cant

As Chief Executive Office of the Eyre Regional Development, one of the board's goals was to develop a regional food brand, not just another brand but a dynamic brand that positioned the Eyre Peninsula as a world re-known premium seafood destination.

The Eyre Peninsula seafood industry is unique worldwide, boasting the largest range of quality seafood produced in an untouched and pristine environment. The industry's passion for success is exemplified by its sustainable management practices, innovation, collaboration and commitment to be recognised as a world leader in premium food production.

The regions seafood industry has always operated in a competitive business environment, with limited connection to consumers and food service industry, with the products being marketed predominately in a premium commodity category to wholesalers.

The challenge for the seafood industry was to form an alliance with a common marketing goal, to increase the reputation and consumer awareness of the regions quality and diversity of seafood that is unmatched in the world.

The brand Eyre Peninsula "Australia Seafood Frontier" positions the region seafood industry as a leader in the Australia domestic market, and will continue to gain a reputation worldwide.

Consumers and the food media have only recently become aware of the regions qualities, pioneering spirit, innovation, sustainable management practices and the unexplored rawness of the region.

Individual seafood sector and enterprises have recognised the marketing benefits of branding and have invested in developing supporting brands in line with the regional seafood brand. The power of these combined brands will be the consumer connection and future purchase preferences as consumers will have both an emotional connection and positive experience with the Eyre Peninsula region.

The Eyre Peninsula Brand reflects the regions abundant natural seafood bounty, and the entrepreneurial spirit of the people.

Lester Marshall is one of the regions passionate and committed seafood producers, whose dedication to the industry is exemplified through his Nuffield Scholarship, in researching successful regional brands worldwide.

The future of the regions reputation is that it can only grow, with the dedicated willingness to search for new possibilities under the passionate leadership and characters like Lester Marshall.

Prepared by

Mark D Cant
Chief Executive Officer
Eyre Regional Development Board

Foreword

My passion for promoting EYRE PENINSULA started with my involvement in South Australian Rural Youth some 25 years ago. Since those early days I have been putting my hand up for different community organisations to try and help our region prosper. It has since joining the EYRE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD 5years ago in an attempt to build a regional brand that I have finally seen light at the end of the tunnel. Our region was well on the way to building its regional brand when I applied for my scholarship. It has been great timing to go and study this topic looking for world's best practice having seen a lot of the pitfalls that come with regional branding. I have traversed the globe looking for the holy grail of regional branding; I have eaten and drunk my way around the world. I have eaten some of the most exclusive and indulgent regional foods, one of my meals cost me \$ A 360. I mainly was searching for what gave regions their identity, what they are truly famous for and how did they communicate that to the world. Having travelled to 14 different countries and numerous regions I have developed a regional branding model that will work across all regions and help rural communities prosper.

Life is a journey through which we all travel, how we travel the journey of life is what sets us apart as individuals. Some prefer a comfortable journey through life and some do not. The initiation of a Nuffield scholar through the global focus tour and then 10 week study trip is far from comfortable. This incredible journey is a once in a lifetime event that forces you out of your comfort zone and into the real world of life itself. The opinions, perceptions and prejudices that we all started out with have all been shaken to the inner core of our belief system. This remarkable experience allows us to see the world through new eyes, and gives us the confidence and conviction to help lead our community's into the future.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Nuffield Australia and the Fishing Research and Development Cooperation for allowing me the opportunity to participate in this once in a lifetime adventure. This experience will have long lasting effects on me, I hope in time I will be able to repay some of this back to the seafood industry and my regional community.

I would like to thank my wife Julianne for supporting me through this scholarship and to my children Kelly and Price for their understanding, it is very much appreciated. To my parents Klay and Christine for helping out where ever they were needed, filling in the gaps so to speak and for their support in giving me the confidence to give anything ago!

Thank you to my brother Kit for editing and helping with this report. He has helped put the polish on this document, his time and effort will not be forgotten.

To my fellow travelling scholars a big thank you for what was an incredible journey. It would not have been the same without the diverse mix that we had in our group.

And to all the people who helped out along the way (too numerous to mention), their help and hospitality was first rate.

A special mention should go to Angus Christian for guiding us safely through China, it was a most memorable trip.

Also to the policeman who let me off on a speeding fine while travelling through South Africa, thankyou!

And thank you to Mark Cant, Philip Arnfield and Peter Singline for showing me the way. Their guidance and professionalism is unparalleled.

Last but not least to my staff left behind to hold the fort. They all did a fantastic job, particularly my management team Brenton Dutschke, Andrew Pietsch, Jenny Scott, Karen Leurs, Simon King, and David Sampson. Each and every one of you took on more responsibility through those testing times I could not have done this scholarship without you.

Executive Summary

Background

This report will be beneficial to any region trying to become more profitable, in particular the seafood sector. Whilst on a marketing trip to Singapore back in 2001 I found myself extremely frustrated trying to explain to my customers which region in Australia I came from. The Eyre Peninsula is largely unknown and the closest they could relate to it was the Barossa Valley some 600 km away. It was then I realised we needed to develop a powerful regional brand.

The aim of this research has been to develop a regional branding model that will work across all regions of Australia, but in particular, the seafood sector. The information gathered along the way has been compiled into a working model, they are the things you have to get right in order to achieve the most profitable outcome for your region. The model shows you why you need a regional brand and how to achieve it.

The opportunity arising from this model is to develop clear and simple messages that we can communicate all the way from the producer to the consumers.

The economic flowchart for regional branding for the Eyre Peninsula demonstrates how much extra you can leverage from a powerful regional brand. Not only does it create extra profit for the regional economy, but also the property values in the region can be upgraded by at least 10% - this can amount to a lot of extra investment in the region.

Objectives

The aim of this study was to develop a working model for regional branding that will work across all regions of Australia. Although this has been developed mainly for the seafood industry, the principles will apply to the full variety of primary sectors. I have kept it as simple as possible and highlighted the things that must be done right to achieve success.

I have developed two models, one to show why a regional brand is needed, and the second on how to do it. What started out as a straight forward project has turned into a complex array of issues, the main one being the human mind! I have pursued this regional branding concept with a view to cut away the layers of complexity and develop a model of simplicity. A model that everybody can easily understand and interpret correctly, to coin a phrase, to make sure we are all on the same page!

When developing a regional brand, collaboration on all levels of production is by far and away the hardest thing to achieve. What one person in the community sees as a great opportunity to gain extra wealth another will see as a threat to their current way of life, e.g. tourism. A point I make is that we can't eat the view! We need industry to bring cash flow into the region so that we can maintain a high standard of living. By that I mean schools, hospitals, roads, communications, sporting facilities etc..... .When you market a regional brand you are not only marketing your products, you are marketing your region as a whole. You want your community to feel pride when referring to the place that they live work and play.

Key findings

The following are the key findings of the report:

- You need to build fame for your region
- You need to brand yourselves
- It's all about leverage
- The most valuable real estate in the world is in the consumers mind
- You need to own part of the consumers mind
- A brand is a collection of perceptions in the mind of a consumer
- Perceptions = feelings
- Feelings drive decision making
- Make a emotional connection with your target market
- There is no substitute for authenticity
- A niche market is all about quality
- A commodity market is all about price
- The Australian seafood industry can't communicate its point of difference
- Our point of difference is the aroma, texture and flavour that are produced from our seafood products from within the different regions of Australia.

Recommendations

- That the EYRE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD and FISHERIES RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION work together on developing tasting notes for the members of AUSTRALIA'S SEAFOOD FRONTIER

- The tasting notes should be written in a way that has a clear and easy to understand language
- The language will describe the AROMA, TEXTURE and FLAVOUR of the regions branded seafood products
- A team of people with trained palates will be required to help facilitate this process
- A seafood story book will need to be published to communicate these findings
- When this process is completed and proves to be successful then other seafood regions across Australia can adopt this strategy piggy backing in on ground breaking work.

This comes at a time when global culinary tourism is on the rise and the new television series masterchef is taking the world by storm. The power of this new information that consumer's desperately want will become more evident as primary producers who adopt these principles will achieve a higher level of profitability. With the combined effort of all the seafood regions across Australia pulling together we have the ability to build fame for Australia. With this fame we can create a perception that **'Australia is the premier seafood producer of the world'**.

Introduction

What has started out as a fairly straight forward project has turned into an incredibly complex array of issues, the main one being the human mind! I have pursued this regional branding concept in order to cut away the layers of complexity and come up with a model of simplicity. A model that everybody can easily understand and interpret correctly, to make sure we are ‘all on the same page’.

When developing a regional brand collaboration on all levels of production is by far and away the hardest thing to achieve. What one person in the community sees as a great opportunity to gain extra wealth another will see it as a threat to their current way of life, tourism for instance.

A point made quite often is that we can’t eat the view. We need industry to bring cash flow into the region so that we can maintain a high standard of living. By that I mean schools, hospitals, roads, communications, sporting facilities etc. When you market a regional brand you are not only marketing your products, you are also marketing your region as a whole. You need your community to feel pride when referring to the place in which they live work and play.

There are two perspectives to consider. One is the perspective of the producers in the region looking out at their target market in the world. The other is the target market looking back at the region trying to perceive what the region is offering. Herein lies the problem, or opportunity; perception!

So with this in mind, as I travelled the world, I began looking for common linkages that all successful regions use to underpin their success. I found common themes that they have all used and have compiled them into a working template. This information will help other regions to shortcut their way to building famous regional brands.

My life journey

I was born in Darwin back in 1964 and started my schooling at Alice Springs, completing years 1, 2, and 3. My father was a school teacher and we moved back to South Australia to Nuriootpa in the Barossa valley and bought 64 acres of farm land - it was here that I had my first experiences of farming.

We had a mixed farm: a dairy of some 10 cows, a vineyard, fruit trees and plethora of animal's including sheep, ducks, chooks and pigeons. All the while my father was still teaching. I still remember staying home from school to go harrowing on the old Fergie tractor to kill some weeds while dad went to school to work. I was in grade 5.

We sold up after 2 years and bought 420 acres at Eudunda in South Australia's mid north. We started a dairy of some 24 cows and moved into sheep and cropping. All the while my father was still teaching. It was here that I started to learn my skills as a businessman and entrepreneur. I started growing chooks and bucket rearing calves to grow out and sell for my pocket money. I used the school bus to sell and trade roosters and hens to other farm boys but was banned after a while because it was causing an issue of logistics. It was at this stage of my life that we used to spend family holidays at Fisherman's Bay and my love of the sea became evident.

After 5 years here we sold up again and moved lock stock and barrel to the Eyre Peninsula to a 1600 acre farm 15 km from Coffin Bay. We built from scratch a 9 aside herringbone dairy, and I had just started year 11 in Port Lincoln.

The main reason for coming to the Eyre Peninsula was to give me the opportunity to get a job in the fishing industry which I so loved. After completing year 11 and turning 16 I left school to come back on the farm to work. At this stage I joined the family business and we built our herd of some 30 cows to 120 milkers over the course of 5 years. We cleared land, built new fences and rebuilt machinery - life was lived to its fullest.

At the age of 20 we sold the farm and had a clearing sale. Mum and Dad bought a tourism business in Coffin Bay – a block of units and a shop. I helped out for a year but dealing with people instead of cows was a whole different ball game.

At the age of 21 the partnership helped me buy a small farm of 420 acres of prime land at Big Swamp with a vision of growing prime lambs for our local market. At this stage interest rates were 10% and wool and sheep prices were stable. I had borrowed a lot of money and built up my flock to 1000 breeding ewes and crossed them to horned Dorset rams. I learnt very quickly the issues facing a business trying to sell a consistent product of 20-30 lambs a week to our local butchers. If the product was not of enough quality they would crucify you.

My mentors Dave and Bill Woods, the previous owners of this farm, had a fantastic reputation for selling top quality lambs off this property. They had achieved 16 weeks in a row of the highest priced lambs, a record still to this day. I had a lot to learn and learn I did, I went on to lease another 1300 acres with interest rates starting to climb. It was around this time I married Julianne and was heavily involved with rural youth and playing football, basketball, and tennis.

My involvement with rural youth was a huge step in my personal growth and has a lot to do with where I am today. I was fortunate to win the state ambassador competition for rural youth and was invited to attend other regional functions around the state. This is where my public speaking skills evolved. It was an amazing time of my life where I managed to meet so many new people from around Australia and abroad, particularly through the exchange program. I am indebted to this association for so much; it was a formative period of my life.

After 6 years of farming at Big Swamp the wheels started falling off the economy. Interest rates went to 22%, wool and grain prices dropped dramatically and you couldn't sell sheep at all. I had to terminate my lease of 1300 acres and sell my farm to clear my debts. I dug pits and shot and buried some 1500 fat healthy sheep. These were not good times; it had a profound effect on me.

The rural community was in turmoil with family farms being lost through no fault of their own. Suicide was rife and young people had to move away from the region to find work and opportunity. Schools and sporting clubs were closing down and funding for our regions to keep open hospitals and other government run institutions was under threat. The local people were disillusioned with little or no opportunity to create wealth for themselves.

So after selling our farm my wife and I set about planning for the future. We took 3 months off and headed to Cape York in our trusty Land Rover. When we returned we would see how we felt as to what we would do.

As it happened a friend of the family had been granted a 4 hectare oyster lease in Coffin Bay and he was too ill to manage it. It was offered to us to lease, and so began my involvement in the aquaculture industry in 1992. The oyster lease was a virgin site with no infrastructure at all. We set about trialling the site and was working on farms and shearing to get by. My brother in law had been farming oysters in Coffin Bay for some time so I was able to learn from him. I also learnt from the Tasmanians who had been farming down south for approximately 12 years already. These were testing times as there was no handbook on how to grow oysters commercially, a lot was trial and error.

We were not overly confident to start with so we adopted a conservative approach. As we got more experienced we invested further into the business. Aquaculture began to take off around the Eyre Peninsula, oysters particularly, but also abalone, mussels, tuna and kingfish. Farmers from the local community that started oyster growing adapted exceptionally well to the marine environment. They came up with an incredible array of new systems and machines to make the job more efficient. These were great times where money was starting to return to the regional community's and there was a feeling of excitement towards the opportunities that presented themselves.

I had applied for our own oyster farm in Coffin Bay in a new area that was regarded as being too rough and exposed. We had no idea of the impact this area would have on the oyster farming in Australia; it has become the best oyster growing region in Australia and possibly the world. Not so much for its productivity but more for its unparalleled flavour which it derives from the close proximity to the continental shelf.

This was the turning point in my business career that we could invest with confidence in this industry and grow the oyster business exponentially. It was through this time that I was involved in the first oyster marketing cooperative with 90 odd shareholders. I was on the very first committee of 6 people to come up with a strategic plan to formalise this marketing company and find a name - it was exciting times.

The formation of the new company was agreed upon and the name OYSA was adopted. Directors were called for from each bay and so it was born. I had not thrown my hat in the ring to become a director as I was stretched enough already and a more suitable candidate was available. To get 90 business owners to commit and agree on this new era of oyster marketing was like herding cats, everybody had a different agenda. The idea to market collectively was sound but the business model was flawed and cracks appeared very early on. It was actually doomed from the start.

We were the second oyster company to withdraw from the coop and form a closer relationship with our customers. This has stood us in good stead to this day, but in saying that, I believe we have been working within a commodity market that has been incredibly difficult to increase our farm gate price.

In the early days the oysters that were sold from the Eyre Peninsula were called South Australian oysters and the different bays were not so important. As time evolved the different regional bays became more important and consumers started to identify with the different regions. But even as the popularity of Coffin Bay oysters became evident and grew, as did the demand, we still couldn't achieve a price differentiation from the other bays. It was quite remarkable. Here we were with oyster leases in Cowell and other bays worth about 60-80 thousand dollars a hectare and Coffin Bay was worth a staggering 400-500 thousand dollars a hectare but with no difference in price for the oysters at the retail level.

My passion to get export money back into the Eyre Peninsula economy was burning within me so I went on a trade mission to Singapore for 5 days in 2000 with Angelakis Brothers and the then premier of South Australia Mr Rob Kerin. This was to start the next stage of my business and start exporting. How hard could that be? As it turns out it was very difficult. Not so much the logistics, we found that part easy. It was the marketing that we were not ready for.

Without doubt the biggest problem after speaking to thousands of people over 5 days was not the price, nor the product. It was the lack of a regional brand that they could clearly identify with – this was a big problem. In trying to describe to our prospective customers where the product came from, i.e. Coffin Bay, Port Lincoln, Eyre Peninsula and even Adelaide; they had never heard of these places, yet one place did register and that place was the Barossa Valley.

Time and time again I used the Barossa valley as a way of describing where our products are grown and are of similar high quality, something my customers could identify with. The only problem was the Barossa is some 600 km from my region. So the scene was set. I went home with my tail between my legs knowing full well I, I mean we the people of Eyre Peninsula, had to create a regional brand that we could use as a tool to connect with our prospective customers anywhere on the planet!

As demand for our product was domestically strong and growing the need to export was not a priority, I didn't push too hard for the regional brand. But I knew full well that one day it would have to come. As chance happens if you keep asking the right questions, eventually doors will open and the path will become clear. Strangely enough, I met this guy playing basketball on the opposing team. He was a competitive chap called Mark Cant, the CEO of the Eyre Regional Development Board (ERDB). We hit it off straight away and found ourselves in deep conversation about regional issues, particularly in regional branding. Within months he had me on the fishing and aquaculture target team and after a year had me on the ERDB as a director.

Mark was already heading down the path of developing a regional brand and had already secured funding for a food development officer. He had sought the services of a regional branding consultant; enter Peter Singline of Brand DNA and David Ansett of Storm Design. Peter was one of the main drivers in developing the now famous King Island Dairy regional brand so he came well qualified. These two gentlemen scoured the region and talked with numerous groups to establish an understanding of what our brand story was within our region. This took considerable time and effort.

To be part of this process has been an invaluable experience for me and now I know what's involved, the difficulties that are in front of us but also the opportunities. I have been continually reviewing how our business can support the regional brand so we have rebranded our company from Mar-Shell Aquaculture to the Coffin Bay Oyster Farm and have set about creating new product lines in Cupid Oysters, Valentine Oysters, Casanove Oysters, King Oysters and the absolutely exclusive 315 Oysters. All this is to support our regional brand Eyre Peninsula tag line Australia's Seafood Frontier.

It was while trade marking all these brands that I was invited to apply for a Nuffield Scholarship which at the time I felt I didn't have time for. But as things have worked out, I won the scholarship and it has been an invaluable experience for me, and I hope for my community. As I traversed the globe seeking out new information and business models that supported regional branding, I have been on a quest searching for the Holy Grail of regional branding and to simplify all the information that is out there. In the end, I feel like I need to create a regional branding model – a guide to things that must be done right to capitalise on the opportunities and reap the rewards from a truly successful regional brand.

The global journey

Overview

The global focus tour took us on a journey of 24 air flights in 42 days travelling through 6 different countries. There were 11 people that went on this trip representing the following primary sectors.

- Western Australia, fruit
- Western Australia, beef
- Western Australia, grain
- South Australia, seafood
- South Australia, wine
- Queensland, vegetables
- New South Wales, livestock
- Tasmania, cheese
- New Zealand, grain and dairy
- New Zealand, farm lobbyist
- Canada, dairy

We first met in Sydney and flew to the South Island of New Zealand. We worked our way up to the North Island, looking at the wool, lamb, beef and dairy industries. We observed their parliamentary system and their quarantine controls for importing different products.

We left New Zealand and flew to Ireland for extensive tours of their agriculture sectors.

Next port of call was France where we looked at the largest markets in the world, the Rungis Markets just out of Paris.

We then headed for America and went to Washington DC. We visited the congress building and heard from a senator about their farm bill. From there we visited Maryland and headed for Oklahoma, to the pan handle and looked at the food bowl of America.

We left America at this point and headed to China for an incredible journey that took us through 5 different provinces. We covered a lot of areas including banking, food supply chains, cultural changes and how modern technology is changing their landscape.

Our last country was the Philippines and went to IRRI a rice research centre looking at the impact of rice on third world countries and the use of genetically modified rice.

This is just a snap shot of our experience, but I hope it provides a better understanding of how much information we crammed in a very short time.

My solo trip took me to 9 different countries starting with China then South Africa, Spain, France, England, Scotland, America, Japan and Singapore. I met so many people, and to utilise the networks and relationships that the Nuffield network has established over the last 61 years was a very humbling experience. The calibre of scholars I met on my travels is of the highest order and they are all very proud and passionate people. You can't help but get swept up in the positive attitude that emanates from these people, it gives you great confidence to try new things that you would never had attempted before. To be given the responsibility to go forth and find the world's best practice in your given interest and bring that back to your community certainly adds another dimension to your life. The friends that you make along the way is something that is impossible to describe, all of a sudden the world doesn't seem so big anymore.

I have likened it to being James Bond, a secret service agent, slipping quietly into countries gathering information emailing it back home and moving onto the next country. I hope I have captured as best I can the information and events that have led to this report.

China

While journeying through China I tried as many local food dishes as I could and always asked of their origin. I was continually amazed as to the lengths our guide Annie Li went to, to describe the history of these regional dishes. Her passion was powerful, her pride in these dishes was evident and the story of these dishes went back hundreds of years.

We have all heard of Chinese whispers and how the story must be the same at the end of the line. I can now see how this is so true. The story's are simple and clear, bold and strong, and will stand the test of time.

One of the most famous regional dishes is the Beijing roast duck. Its origin can be traced back to the Yuan Dynasty [1206-1368]. Once you have ordered your roast duck meal a chef will bring out and show you the whole duck. He will then slice it into 120 pieces with a bit of skin and meat on each piece. To eat it you pick up a piece of duck and dip it into the soy paste provided and place it onto the pancake wrap that is with the meal. Then place some cut bars of cucumber and shallots on top of the duck and wrap it all together. You then nibble away at this wrap and taste the flavours that are very compatible to each other.



Figure 1 – Beijing Roast Duck

In the Xuyi County in China [Jiangsu], they are using crayfish to make their region famous and to increase external investment into their region. They use a 20 day crayfish festival where 15,000 people sit down in a purpose built arena to celebrate this delicacy. They have developed a special flavoured recipe with 13 different ingredients which makes this product unique. There is no doubt they have a carefully structured plan and are working towards an end goal.

South Africa

I travelled to South Africa to specifically investigate the region of Franschhoek, meaning French Corner. Franschhoek is seen to be the poor cousin to Stellenbosch, its next door neighbour, but they have created their own regional brand over the past 20 years or so. The way they have done this is through fine dining, attracting 8 out of the top 100 restaurants in South Africa to their beautiful valley. They are now known as the gourmet capital of South Africa and are attracting high end culinary tourists from all over the world to their region. Between their magnificent wines, world class restaurants and scenic valley they have a match made in heaven and are reaping the benefits from a strong clear vision set in motion some 20 years ago.

Spain

Paella is Spain's national dish consisting of calasparra rice or bomba rice. Other key ingredients are saffron, olive oil, green vegetables, meat, snails, beans and seasoning. Seafood paella replaces meat and snails and omits beans and green vegetables. I thought this dish was fantastic; it is served in big flat pans with handles on both ends.



Figure 2 – Paella

France

When you think of France and you think of food, typically escargot is in the forefront of your mind. This was something I just had to try. Typically the snails are removed from their shells, gutted and cooked with garlic butter and then poured back into the shells together with butter and sauce for serving. They are often on a plate with depressions for serving. Additional ingredients may be added such as garlic, thyme, parsley and pine nuts. Special tongs to hold the snails and snail forks are normally provided. I quite enjoyed this delicacy and can see why they are so popular.



Figure 3 - Escargot

England

While in Devon [England] I tried the traditional Devonshire tea, this is a combination of a cup of tea, a fresh hot scone, strawberry jam and the main ingredient, clotted cream. To the uneducated, clotted cream is the most indulgent product I have ever tasted, and guess what, Devon and Cornwall (its bordering neighbour) bicker about who invented it. There is clotted cream running through their veins in that region, they are passionate about it and rightfully so. It is their point of difference. Clotted cream is a thick yellow cream made by heating unpasteurized cows milk and leaving in a shallow pan for several hours. During this time the cream content rises to the surface and clots.



Figure 4 – Clotted Cream

Scotland

The traditional dish of Scotland is haggis, it's a dish containing sheep's 'pluck' [heart, liver and lungs] minced with onion, oatmeal, suet spices and salt. It is mixed with stock and boiled in the animal's stomach for 3 hours.



Figure 5 - Haggis

America

While travelling through America I was fortunate enough to try chicken fried steak. You might be surprised to learn that there is no chicken in chicken fried steak, it is tenderised round steak made like fried chicken with milk gravy. The traditional way to cook chicken fried steak is in a large cast iron skillet with very little oil. Served with the works means accompanied with mashed potatoes, gravy, greens, blacked eyed peas and corn bread. It is considered the state dish of Texas and is certainly a most indulgent experience.



Figure 6 – Chicken Fried Steak

Japan

The reason I travelled to Japan was to investigate the internationally renowned wagyu beef. What I found was truly remarkable, without doubt the most premium beef in the world. Interestingly, the word wagyu translates into English as Japanese beef, wa- means Japanese and gyu means beef.

Matsusaka is a small area in the mie prefecture, or region. It is renowned for the highest quality beef in Japan. Matsusaka beef only uses virgin female cows, they are taken for daily walks and brushed after being sprayed with shochu [alcohol beverage]. When they have no appetite they are provided high quality beer to stimulate eating and soothing music is played to promote better quality beef. As you can see in the picture below 5000 yen per 100 grams amounts to \$731.42 Australian dollars per kilogram - an incredible amount. To guarantee authenticity they take a hair from the tail of the cow and DNA check it with a swab test on the meat in the store to make sure it has not been substituted.



Figure 7 – Wagyu Beef

Since my return I have also found another regional brand of beef called mishima beef. Mishima beef is very rare with only 20 cows a year produced on the tiny island in the Sea of Japan. With only 20 cows a year, the waiting list sometimes reaches 5-10 years for even the most exclusive guests across the globe. Mishima beef is currently reserved for royalty and ultra VIP's in Japan. I have not been able to find a price for this product but one can only imagine.

Singapore

On a stop over in Singapore I decided to find out what is Singapore's most famous product. Lo and behold, without doubt, it is one of the world's most famous cocktails The Singapore Sling. So when in Rome I went in search of one of these famous drinks and I found the home of where it was born at the long bar in the Raffles hotel. The cocktail was the creation of Ngiam tong boon, a barman working there in 1910. The original recipe used is gin, cherry brandy and Benedictine most often in equal parts. The drink is shaken and strained into a glass and filled to individual taste with club soda.

The hotel has kept its authenticity, you can still eat free peanuts at the long bar and toss the shells on the floor as it has always been. The cocktail or product itself is bold and unique, the environment that it is consumed is fun and inspiring, and the message of when the barman made it and what is in it is clear and strong. The cocktail is clearly linked to the Long Bar and the Long Bar to the Raffles Hotel, and Raffles Hotel to the regional identity Singapore. This is a strong and powerful connection that is clearly defined.



Figure 8 – Singapore Sling

The Ripple Effect

The Singapore sling cocktail is a very good example of the ripple effect. Having an amazing product experience, sitting at the Longbar, the word of mouth stories have rippled their way across the globe.

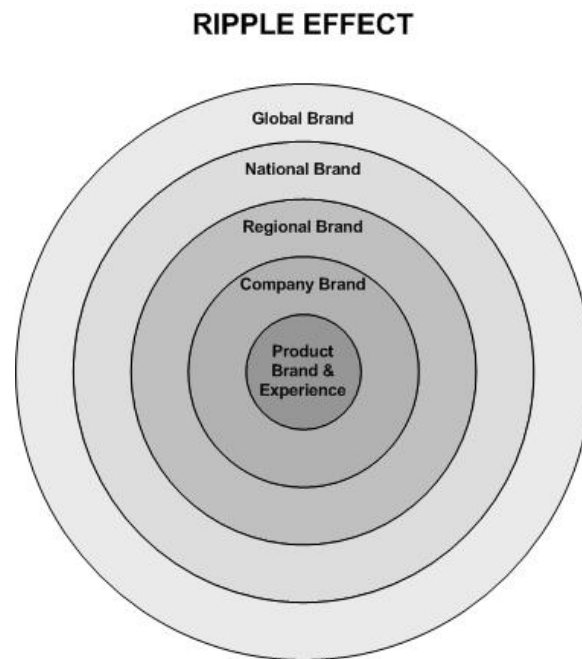


Figure 9 – The Ripple Effect

Economic drivers for regional branding

I have developed an economic flow chart for my region to explain our key economic drivers. The chart shows where most of our economic activity comes from and from where we can draw the most leverage in building a famous regional brand.

What is interesting is the collective land value of the region; \$77 billion worth!! Other regions across the world that have successfully created regional brands have all commented that their regional brand influences positive outside investment by at least 10%-30%. If we can achieve half of that, it amounts to an extra \$11 billion.

There is clear evidence that this is well worth doing, but there is also the extra benefit of being able to command a higher price in the market place due to perception of higher quality products. A region runs just the same as a normal business in that it has the same issues of income and expenses; it's just a lot bigger. The main area I am interested in is capital expenditure on infrastructure investment for the future and this is typically government investment. Governments will rarely invest much into a region that has a bleak outlook, but on the other hand if you can prove to them that you have a positive outlook, this will greatly enhance the chances of government investment.

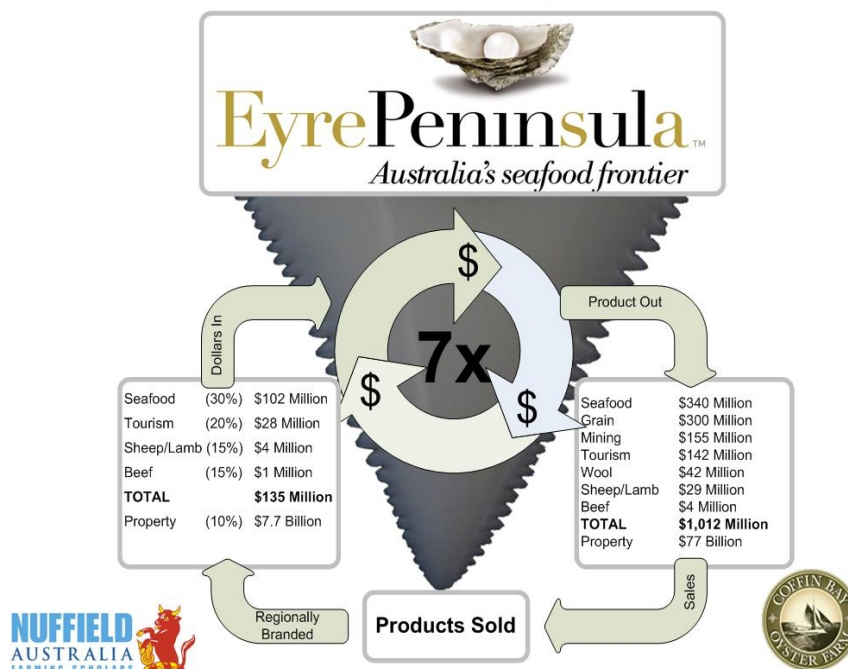


Figure 10 – Economic Flowchart for Regional Branding

Food for thought

Every region produces numerous products; it's necessary to find the best one to use as a marketing leader, one to 'hang your hat on'. It is then possible to use this marketing strategy to create a vacuum to drag along the rest of your products that you produce from within the region. It really is as simple as that, it will never work the other way around. What you are looking for is the essence of your region, what makes it tick what the community is passionate about.

There are two trains of thought. One is the thoughts of the producers in the region looking out at the world of their target market. And then there is the target market looking back at the region trying to perceive what the region is offering. Here lies the problem, or opportunity, perception!!!! Perception from both parties is the problem, because perception determines decision making and decision making is based on feelings, whether they be good or bad. So decision making is the key. How does one get a producer to produce a quality product day in day out and then get the consumers to (1) make the decision to buy the product, and (2) pay a premium for it

This is easier said than done but this is all about having a vision of what the region will look and act like when all is said and done. What we are really trying to do is live the dream, capture the passion from the region and show the world what we stand for. This is probably the most complex part of the whole project, getting people to collaborate and become part of a movement. There must be an air of excitement about the region, a purpose, full of expectation, a reason to get out of bed.

On one of my flights between continents I was able to watch the new movie Australia and couldn't believe the message I got from the movie. Here was another amazing culture that has stood the test of time, aboriginal culture and their story telling. Their storytelling through dance, rituals and ceremonies is another powerful medium to inspire and capture the imagination of their youth with what they call the Dream Time. I couldn't help but see the similarities in what we are trying to do in building story's and perceptions in our customers.

I heard along my travels another name for brand builders is dream merchants. I am convinced the mechanism of aboriginal dreamtime stories is relevant to what we are trying to achieve through regional product branding. The aboriginal story's tell of what products to eat, at what time of the year, and where to find it sound just like what we primary producers and marketers are trying to communicate to our customers. We are always attempting to create a belief system in our products and our region; it is the emotional connection that you make between the consumer and your product.

While touring China in the Xice province I was privileged to see the traditional New Zealand Maori Haka, performed by 3 esteemed Nuffield scholars for the vice mayor Yao. The three scholars in question had been consuming large amounts of 42% rice wine for some time so the shirts came off and the performance began. Now, notwithstanding that one of the performers was Scottish and really didn't know what he was doing, and one of the kiwis had done a hamstring and put in a valiant display, it was James Parsons that got up close and personal and gave it his all much to the enjoyment of his audience. On the completion of this very passionate Haka, Vice Mayor Yao literally jumped to his feet, put his arm around James and stated very proudly to the crowd 'we are friends for life'. This was as strong an emotional connection you could get within the limited time frame that we had known Mr. Yao.

The Haka was passionate, it carried conviction, it had a belief system, it was bold and was fun. All the attributes that is required to bring a brand alive in the world today. On the bus trip later I sat with James and went over this amazing event that had just taken place, and we both felt that this could be a valuable marketing tool in bringing brands alive from a New Zealand perspective - watch this space.

When the working group of Australia's Seafood Frontier set about defining the brand and the story behind it, I quickly realised that if we were to put Eyre Peninsula's seafood on a premium pedestal then we needed to prove it. For a long time we had used the clean and green story, and also the cold water concept, that the great southern oceans cold water contributed to the incredible flavour of our seafood. But what flavour was this? We had no way of describing it apart from it being a premium taste – this is not good enough, not in this day and age.

So with this issue rattling around in my head it was with great relief that I happened to meet and hear the UK's celebrity seafood chef Mitch Tonks who gave a presentation on what was happening back home in the UK. The main point I picked up was that he had, with a group of people, developed a booklet on seafood flavours and textures of the seafood species in the UK, the 'Youngs Lexicon of Fish'. They had developed a language very similar to that of the wine industry, commonsense really, but overlooked by the rest of the world.

Armed with this information, and travelling on my scholarship, I tracked down Mitch. All the way down to Dartmouth in Cornwall and I explained the situation we were faced with back at the seafood frontier. I can't emphasize strongly enough the importance of being able to control the information that will help define our products to the discerning consumer. Food and lifestyle TV shows are growing in popularity, as are magazines. The need to provide this new language is vitally important. At present we describe seafood as having a fishy flavour or not such a strong fishy flavour. That's like saying this red meat has a beefy flavour or not such a strong beefy flavour!

Regional branding model

I have created the following six-point model which may, in time, become a blueprint for regional branding across Australia.

Step 1 - Create a strong vision for the region

Form a small focused group – only 2 to 5 people are needed to get the ball rolling. They must be passionate and committed with a strong community focus. I cannot stress how important it is to have and maintain a positive attitude which can overcome all obstacles.

Create a dream – this is where it all starts and finishes, this is what is so important, how you can create enthusiasm from within your region, and can appeal to people outside your region.

Develop a mission that is clear in its objectives – the next step is vital in gaining an understanding in how you are going to achieve your dream, this is where your small group must be all on the ‘same page’.

Regional development board’s role – the development board will be the one to facilitate the next step in this process. They must gather industry and appropriate government leaders to sell the vision and inform them of the mission, and also to request for assistance both financially and emotionally. It is important that they feel a part of this journey and part of the team, this is a delicate process so spend a lot of time here, it will make the whole process a lot easier in the future.

Developing a funding system – now that you have industry and government agencies on board you will need government to invest in your mission, this will be in the order of \$50,000 to \$80,000. It is a substantial amount, but it is only a small investment when you see what can be achieved in the future. Industry will need to donate time freely at this time as an in-kind gesture.

Engage a regional brand company – start by investigating other regions that have good regional brands and see who they have used to help them get started. Be careful who you select as this will make or break it from the outset. Not only will they help design your image, but will also convince people with a negative attitude that this is a correct course of action. Confidence is everything.

Step 2 - Identify regional point of difference

What's special about your region – with the help from your branding company they will go about finding what the underlying essence of your region is. This will take some time but is all part of the journey. This could take some months and lots of consultation, but in the end you will find what makes your region special and unique.

Product hero – this is what you intuitively know is special about your region but you take it for granted. You must be able to build fame for your region and the easiest way to do this is with an exclusive product. If you want your region to stand out from the crowd you need to find a product that is second to none and you can leverage its uniqueness

Environmentally sustainable – this is a no brainer, you have to be able prove your commitment to sustainability if you want to have people feel good about buying your regional product and/or visiting it. It is a key point in this era, if you are going to 'hang your hat' on a certain product you must be able to keep producing it in the long term.

Use the 80/20 rule at all times – this is a valuable tool to help achieve as much as possible with the minimal amount of effort. You need to understand that 80% of your outcomes will come from 20% of your producers in your region. So the trick here is to pick champions from your region, don't waste your efforts on people or business who will cause you 80% of your headaches. So think 80/20 at all times.

These should all together create an X factor - the X factor is your most defining thing, it's almost an intangible, you can sense it but can't see it or measure it. It really is the core of your region, its geographical location, its people, its culture, its flora and fauna, and most of all, the pride and passion displayed by locals in its traditions and customs.

Step 3 - Identify your target market

Market intelligence – this is something that can be overlooked, make sure you have a market that wants your product and is prepared to pay for it. A good way of doing this is using farmers markets to meet your prospective customers. Get up close and personal, listen to what they want, get them to try your product and get their honest feedback. It's a cheap way of testing the market without a large financial investment.

Create a brand or promise – here is the tricky bit, you must select a name and a logo which will best communicate what your region stands for. It is easier said than done. This is where your branding company will excel, they will provide you with at least 3 examples you can run with. This is an exciting time but still a long way to go.

Check intellectual property available – once you have settled on a name and or logo you need to find out if it is available in 3 forms. The first is a business name, check it out with ASIC. The second, can you get it trademarked? This offers you the greatest protection. And third, is the website domain name available? All three of these are crucial to the future of your region.

Maintain momentum – once you have ticked all these boxes don't slow down and think that all the hard work is done. Keep up the enthusiasm and push on; a lot of people will be watching silently, waiting to see if this is going to work. Don't let your champions down, keep them informed and have some fun. Celebrate your achievements thus far.

Step 4 - Get local government, business and community buy in

Start communicating the benefits to the local community – at this point you will need to get the local community onside and gain their support. This won't happen overnight but it is a very important matter. Remember the 80/20 rule, you won't please everyone.

Skills training centre for employees – depending on what industries operate in your region it is mandatory to support those business with well trained employees.

Training workshops for business managers – as business grows in your region many owner operated business lack the expertise in managing people. This can be a huge stumbling block for many up and coming business.

Research centre – this area is crucial, particularly in helping understand the production of your products from your region. It can be an invaluable benefit to the industry's, especially when faced with unknown issues that may only be found in your region.

Innovation on all levels of production – this is an ever evolving issue as time goes by, we are constantly facing a changing world. With the development of new technologies, regions must be always on the front foot trying to maintain their competitive advantage, whatever that may be. It could be packaging, processing or even a new variety of product, the list goes on. As the world struggles to keep up with energy, water, pollution, and skills shortages we will need to change the way we do things. It is best to be proactive rather than reactive.

Step 5 - Start building fame for the region

Have fun – this is a recurring theme that I found is the most important aspect in bringing people together. You want people to want to be involved, not feel like they have to be. Keep it social, make people feel like they belong to a movement, that they can change the world. Regional branding is a powerful tool but you must be passionate and enthusiastic to get its full effect; support your champions, unleash them and it will spread like a bushfire.

Five bold gestures to bring your brand alive – here you have the chance to be creative. When bringing the brand alive in the mind of consumers you need to be almost audacious in your approach. The gestures should be appropriate for your region, like the Stockman's Hall of Fame at Longreach. There are numerous things that are possible, like the seafood and aquaculture trail on the seafood frontier, or a wine guide booklet. Sir Richard Branson would do something outlandish to get media attention, be it in a hot air balloon or fastest boat race.

Simple and clear brand story – probably the most underrated part of brand building is how and what is told to the consumer. All too often people try to cut corners and hope that a well designed image, name or logo will be enough to capture the imagination of their target customers - they are dreaming! This is an important step in building fame for your product and the region; it is probably the single most important part in the evolution of your business. The story must be told with passion and conviction; the message must be simple, clear and most of all, bold. A soft promise is just that, a bold promise captures the imagination of your intended customers. You need to refine your story so that it resonates within the minds of future investors, these investors are actually your target market. They will invest in your product and eat it, drink it, wear it, drive it, or just use it. They will be inspired enough by your product and story to convince other people to invest in your product and dream. This is done by the most powerful medium of all, word of mouth. This is by far the most valuable marketing tool available today and has not changed for thousands of years.

Target food writers – invite food writers from prominent magazines to your region free of charge and show them what you are producing. Get them involved so they feel like they are onto something new. They are always on the lookout for something new so don't let them down. Create an air of expectation around this and provide an unforgettable experience. What you are trying to do is make an emotional connection with them and hope that they convey your message to the world.

Celebrities – since time began we have been using superstars to promote our products. We call this leverage by association, we trust these supposedly respectable people that if they are going to put their name to it then it must be a good product. This happens with all manner of things; cars, sporting equipment, clothes and of course, ever increasingly, food. The rise of the celebrity chef is growing rapidly and is being prompted by consumers who want to know more about what they are eating and drinking. There is a huge opportunity for primary producers to promote through this medium.

Start a festival – this can also be seen as a bold gesture, this is a great way to get emotional connections with your prospective customers. It is a lot of work but is highly rewarding. Be aware that it's not about how many people you get to a festival, it's who you get there. If your target market is in the 40 to 60 year old bracket that has a high level of income then you shouldn't be putting on cheap side shows. If you are offering a premium product then you must offer a premium experience. It's all about exclusivity, the more the consumer feels like they are having an exclusive experience the more they will brag about it to their mates when they get home.

Step 6 - Develop supply chains to your target market

Form collaborative systems between producers - probably the hardest thing to achieve is getting producers from the region to work together in a united front. Most producers feel like their fellow producers are competitors, and in a small way they are, but on the world stage they are not. Collectively they have a major role to play in bringing the regional brand alive: they can be all powerful and all conquering.

Quality control checkpoint – to have a membership based organisation with annual fees, and a certification points system to ensure that all business have the necessary requirements to participate at high standard. You need to control and maintain the integrity of the product and experience. You can also use new web based review sites such as trip advisor, where people can place a personal account of their experiences, it can act as a third party audit system. This is an area of great responsibility for there needs to be vigilance; anyone not adhering to these standards must be dealt with accordingly.

Build relationships – another area that is often overlooked. This is what almost single handed holds everything together, it's a trust factor. You need to gain trust along the whole supply chain, everyone has a role to play in providing a safe, quality product. Every now and then problems will arise along the supply chain, and if your customers are kept informed they will stick with you, even when times are tough.

Market feedback – keep your finger on the pulse, it's important you know what's happening in and around the market place. Don't leave things to chance, always listen to complaints with an open mind and trace any problem to the source. Be proactive, not reactive. It's easy to sit back and watch the world go by but you need to get out there and walk the walk, talk to your customers and try to meet their requirements.

Deliver the promise – this is the moment of truth, can you deliver the goods. Ensure you under promise and over deliver, it's not about the money so much, it's about a fair deal and value. Consumers are happy to pay a higher price as long as their expectations are met or exceeded.

Protect your brand – once you have built brand loyalty to your customers you will start to see a real value in the brand. Other people will try and leverage off your hard earned work and will try and muscle in with similar branding and/or products. This is where your trademarking will come into its own, it offers you legal protection and you will be able to prosecute those who cross the line

Product associations

Product Lines	Market Type	Brand Linkages	Profit
Ultra Premium	Niche	Strong association between product brand and company brand and regional brand.	Poor
Premium	Niche	Strong association between product brand and company brand and regional brand.	Greatest
Basic	Commodity	No product brand, no support to regional brand.	Average
Poor Quality	Commodity	No product brand, no support to regional brand.	Poor

Product Lines

I believe that the secret to profitability is being able to have the flexibility to grade your product for its quality and put them into the branded lines accordingly. When dealing with primary products that are at the mercy of seasonal variations it is important to sell all of your product for the highest possible price. From what I have found out, I believe you need 4 product lines to achieve maximum profitability and flexibility in your own business.

Ultra premium

This brand should represent absolute exclusivity and indulgence; it should be incredibly high priced and limited in availability. This brand will drive huge recognition and consumer awareness for your company and the region, but will have little or no profit for your cash flow. It will add real value to your company

Premium

The second product line should also be a premium line but not as high in quality as the first one. This product line is the cash cow of your business if done correctly, the integrity of this product line should never be compromised. You have the ability to be a price maker with this product. The brand will also add huge recognition to your company brand and regional brand. It should be where you make most of your profit depending on the seasonal variation.

Basic

The third product line should be treated as a commodity line with little or no brand association with your company. The quality of this product should still be quite good but you will compete in a marketplace on price first and foremost.

Poor quality

The fourth product line should be classed as rubbish and treated accordingly; if you can afford to dump it, do so. This product line should be in no way associated with your company and or region at all; it will be extremely price sensitive and could help your cash flow in lean times but will add no value to your company value at all.

Conclusion

The road ahead of us is an exciting one, with global culinary tourism on the rise. There is a huge opportunity to take control of our future and shape it to our advantage. At a time when the global economic downturn has impacted heavily on our decision making we can still see light at the end of the tunnel. One of the bright lights has been the huge interest shown by consumers in the Masterchef television series. It has left me in no doubt that the time is right to develop a seafood flavour language.

I feel a tidal wave of interest is coming and we, the seafood sector, should be preparing to capitalise on this opportunity. People across the globe are becoming more conscious of what they are eating and with the advent of the internet as an information tool they are making more informed decisions.

Recommendations

- In a joint initiative between the EYRE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD and FISHERIES RESEARCH and DEVELOPMENT CORPERATION tasting notes should be developed for the members of AUSTRALIA'S SEAFOOD FRONTIER.
- The tasting notes should be written in a way that has a clear and easy to understand language that consumers can relate to.
- The language will describe the AROMA, TEXTURE and FLAVOUR of the regions branded products.
- A team of people with trained palates will be required to facilitate this process
- A seafood story book will need to be published to communicate these findings.
- When this process is completed and proves to be successful then other seafood regions across Australia can adopt this strategy piggy backing in on ground breaking work.

With the combined effort of all the seafood regions across Australia pulling together we then have the ability to build international fame for Australia. With this fame we can create a world class perception that 'Australia is the premier seafood producer of the world'.

Plain English Compendium Summary

Project Title: : How To Develop A Dynamic Regional Brand	
Nuffield Australia Project No.:0813 Scholar: Organisation: Phone: Fax: Email:	Lester Marshall Coffin bay oyster farm 08-86855021 08-86855007 lester@coffinbayoysterfarm.com.au
Objectives	To develop a model for building regional brands across Australia that will help rural communities restore health and wealth to their region
Background	While on a marketing trip in Singapore back in 2001 I found myself becoming increasingly frustrated that my prospective customers loved my product but couldn't identify from which region they came from. For my customers to buy my product they needed a regional identity to be able to communicate to their customers with confidence its authenticity. The only region they could relate to in close proximity was the Barossa valley some 600 km away, it was then that I realised that we needed to develop a powerful regional brand
Research	I have spent the last 7 years researching this subject. By doing a Nuffield scholarship on this subject over the last 2 years has fast tracked the research exponentially. I travelled to 12 different countries over a 10 month period and this has shown me the world's best practice in regional branding.
Outcomes	I have developed two models: one for why you need to build a powerful regional brand and two, how you build a powerful regional brand. Armed with this information I believe any region can use these easy set of steps to help build fame for their region.
Implications	I believe the way forward in creating tasting notes for the seafood industry has major ramifications in the way consumers will perceive our products. This will obviously create different supply chains and the opportunity for a higher price point. The seafood sector has a real opportunity to capitalise on the international fame that the new Masterchef series has created and it's all about flavour. The seafood sector has not identified the regional flavours of its seafood, the opportunity exists to create a new, easy to understand language that discerning consumers are crying out for.
Publications	.