

BRANDING OF KILKENNY¹

Marie O' Dwyer

Introduction

Siobhan O' Dwyer and her husband Simon run a successful full-service marketing agency called 3Sixty Marketing. Based in Kilkenny, the agency has been in existence since 1996. Kilkenny is situated in the south-east of Ireland and had long been dependent on tourism. It was seen as an attractive tourist location, both at home and abroad. In addition, there was also increasing inward investment into the city and county. Siobhan felt that Kilkenny could benefit from the development of a centralised marketing strategy for Kilkenny's tourism, economic, cultural and civic sectors, and was interested in developing this idea further.

Around this time in 1998, the Kilkenny Marketing Strategy Group was established. It was envisaged that it would cross-promote Kilkenny as a location for tourism and inward investment. The group was formed with a view to managing a more cohesive image for Kilkenny, by centralising its marketing where possible. Up to that time, marketing for Kilkenny was quite fragmented with many different agencies promoting Kilkenny in their own particular way. In 1998, 3Sixty Marketing were employed to develop a brand image for Kilkenny. It is now seven years since Siobhan's initial contact with the Kilkenny Marketing Strategy Group. Siobhan reflected on all that had occurred since her involvement in the project in 1998.

Building a New Brand Identity for Kilkenny

Marketing Audit

Once 3Sixty Marketing were employed, the first step in what was a two year process, was to conduct an audit of all the marketing that was being carried out at that time. Siobhan identified a number of different agencies that were actively involved in marketing Kilkenny: Kilkenny Tourism, Kilkenny Industrial Development Company (KIDCo), Kilkenny County Enterprise Board, Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce and Kilkenny County Council.

Kilkenny Tourism was established in 1998 as the marketing organisation for tourism in Kilkenny. Their mission was "to promote Kilkenny as an exciting and diverse premium tourism product in a positive, harmonious and co-operative way".² Kilkenny Industrial Development Company (KIDCo) was also established in 1998 by local authority, community and business interests, for the purpose of promoting inward investment and other wealth generating development in Kilkenny. KIDCo was a non-profit organisation and its aim was to promote Kilkenny as a centre for investment through liaison with the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and other bodies, supporting the development of new facilities, identification of suitable investment sites, and marketing Kilkenny as an investment location.

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- 1 This case is intended to be used as the basis for class discussion, rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a management situation. Completion of this case study would not have been possible without the valuable contribution made by Siobhan O' Dwyer of 3Sixty Marketing. Thanks is also due to Sean McKeown, Chief Executive the Kilkenny County Enterprise Board, Tony Walsh, Director of Services, Kilkenny County Council and Fergus Cronin of KIDCo.
 2. www.kilkennytourism.ie
 3. www.kceb.ie
 4. www.kilkennychamber.ie

The Kilkenny County Enterprise Board (KCEB) was established in 1993 under the provisions of national legislation. Part of its remit was to provide a range of services and supports to facilitate the establishment, growth and development of the micro-enterprise sector in both the city and county. It promoted enterprise and development in Kilkenny, specifically to micro enterprises employing less than 10 persons.³ The Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce also had a role to play in the promotion of Kilkenny at that time. The chamber had an active role in attracting inward investment to the county through their representation on the board of KIDCo.⁴ Finally, the Kilkenny County Council had a vital role to play in Kilkenny's promotion. The County Council provided much of the necessary funding for the Kilkenny Marketing Strategy Group – over €50,000 in the first year alone. It was also Tony Walsh, Director of Services with Kilkenny County Council, who played a key role in bringing Kilkenny Tourism and KIDCo together to form the Kilkenny Marketing Strategy Group.

Once this audit was completed, Siobhan recognised that there was a complete lack of consistency in the image of Kilkenny being portrayed by all of these interests and this reinforced all the more, the importance of developing a new single consistent brand identity for Kilkenny. This was particularly difficult because there were so many stakeholders involved in promoting the city and county. There was also the added difficulty of bringing all of these stakeholders together to get a common agreement and more importantly, a common understanding of what the Kilkenny brand image was. Siobhan believed that the development of a brand logo for Kilkenny was essential, but that this was only one aspect of branding. It is possible to identify three distinct stages in the development of Kilkenny's brand image.

Phase 1

Phase 1 of this project involved developing a brand identity to define what was really special and unique about Kilkenny. In addition, it involved deciding which of those qualities were important to Kilkenny's target markets. The focus was on attracting tourism and inward investment into the city and county and generally bringing people into Kilkenny to live and work. 3Sixty Marketing conducted qualitative research in the form of depth interviews with 'experts' to identify their perceptions of Kilkenny at that time. In addition, they spoke to people within Kilkenny to ascertain what they believed to be really special and unique about Kilkenny and what it had to offer.

Following much lively debate and extensive public consultation, it emerged that creativity was the cornerstone of Kilkenny's brand identity. A vibrant creative culture was evident in Kilkenny. Kilkenny had the highest proportion of craft/design businesses in the country and had always been at the forefront of art and culture through events such as the Kilkenny Arts Festival and the Cat Laughs Comedy Festival. As creativity appeared to be that factor that united all that was special about Kilkenny, this became the pivot of the brand identity.

Phase 2

Phase 2 of the project involved the application of the brand identity. It was important that the creative theme ran through the design of the logo itself and 3Sixty Marketing wanted to represent in some way the artistry and creative aspect of Kilkenny and yet retain in some way Kilkenny's sense of heritage. A slogan was chosen "Kilkenny – The Creative Heart of Ireland", and a new logo was developed using a hand-scripted logo typeface in a rich heritage green colour (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Kilkenny Logo and Slogan



A library of very high quality photographs was also developed, focusing on Kilkenny's creativity and heritage, and these were available for use by anyone producing marketing literature about Kilkenny. An example of one such piece of promotional literature may be seen in figure 2.

Figure 2: Original Promotional Material for Kilkenny



Phase 3

Phase 3 involved an assessment of the use of the brand identity. There was a great 'buy-in' to the new brand identity when it was introduced first, by all the major stakeholders. The new Kilkenny logo was incorporated into the official logos of Kilkenny Tourism and KIDCo. These and other stakeholders used the distinctive visual style of the new brand identity in their marketing literature, so that when all the different brochures were brought together, they were clearly part of a suite.

Once the brand identity was created and implemented, the Kilkenny Marketing Strategy Group disbanded and each stakeholder went about marketing Kilkenny

using the new brand identity developed. In 2000, Kilkenny local government introduced Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), around different areas of local government. Kilkenny County Council established 5 SPCs – one of which SPC5 was responsible for arts, culture, heritage, tourism and education.⁵ This SPC assumed the role of the Kilkenny Marketing Strategy Group to some extent and took ownership of Kilkenny's new brand identity.

The Current Situation

Siobhan now realised that much had changed since her initial involvement with the project. The Crafts Council of Ireland, the Heritage Council and the Patents Office had relocated to Kilkenny and in addition, it had recently been announced that the Arts Council would relocate to Kilkenny city. Centres of excellence had now developed in Kilkenny around the areas of tourism, arts, crafts and design, engineering and the new information economy. Furthermore, the agencies involved in the marketing of Kilkenny had evolved and were using the Kilkenny brand to a greater or lesser extent.

Centres of Excellence

It is possible to identify four industry sectors in particular, that are now strongly represented in county Kilkenny: tourism, arts crafts and design, engineering and the new information economy. It is reasonable to expect that the Kilkenny brand identity and the marketing of Kilkenny had some role to play in these developments.

1) Tourism

Tourism continues to be a major revenue generator for Kilkenny, estimated at €100 million annually. It is estimated that over 260,000 tourists visit the county annually.⁶ Kilkenny city is an attractive location for weekend breaks and conferences in the domestic market, due to its central location and proximity to Dublin. Kilkenny is also an attractive tourist destination for the French, Italians, Germans, British and Americans. Kilkenny Castle is one of the best known historic landmarks in Ireland, with many tourists coming to Kilkenny to visit this site.

2) Arts, Crafts and Design

Kilkenny's reputation for arts, crafts and design originated primarily from the Kilkenny Design Workshops (KDW). KDW was a state-sponsored initiative to introduce and promote concepts of modern design to the country as a whole. It is currently manifested in the form of an extensive network of renowned craft producers and designers. Kilkenny is now recognised as a national and international centre of excellence for the arts, craft and design. Some of the well-known craft producers in the county include Nicholas Mosse pottery, Keith Mosse wood working, and Chesneau Leathers. Kilkenny agencies promoting the city and county are now arguing that Kilkenny would be the perfect location for a National Design Resource Centre, due to its strong roots and excellent reputation in this area.

3) Engineering

The engineering sector is strong in Kilkenny and boasts a number of international companies such as the Duggan Steel Group, USF Bowen, Noreside Conveyors, NN Ball and Roller, Suir Engineering, EMG Control Systems and Refrigeration Engineering. It is also the location of many specialist engineering companies operating in niche markets with a smaller employment base.

5. www.kilkennycoco.ie

6. www.kilkennytourism.ie

4) New Information Economy

Kilkenny now has a number of financial services and software development companies which have established there. Deutsche Bank, Statestreet (a German financial services company) and Network 365 Banking have located in Kilkenny and a number of new technology companies have established IT centres there. All of these companies have contributed to Kilkenny's rapidly growing IT sector. A number of web design companies have made Kilkenny their base over the last number of years, which include such companies as InKKDesign, Fresco, Web Design, Deenore and Keltechwebdesign. In addition, Cartoon Saloon, which is an Irish animation studio, has established in the city.⁷

However, apart from the four areas outlined above, Kilkenny has also always had a strong agri-business / food processing industry. The service industries and the retail sector are also major employers in the city, with an estimated 46% of the workforce employed in these sectors. There are plans afoot for the development of a number of retail complexes in the city, which would attract many national and international retailers.

Facilities

The development of these four centres of excellence has been possible due to the advanced facilities available for industry and the improvement of tourist services. Inward investment in Kilkenny has been facilitated by the availability of several industrial locations in the city and county. Recently, an innovation and technology centre (The Maltings) was opened in September 2005. It is envisaged that this initiative will provide incubator space for IT start-ups. Kilkenny also has good infrastructure in terms of road, rail, airports and seaports. It is only 70 miles from Dublin and 30 miles from port facilities at Belview in south Kilkenny and an airport in Waterford. It is also served by the national routes to Dublin, Cork and Waterford.

Kilkenny is a reasonable size, with a city population of approximately 24,000, and with a total county population of 75,000. Kilkenny has an excellent and a clean environment, good housing and top class recreational facilities. It is one of the oldest and most picturesque cities in the country and combines the joys of country living with a sophisticated cosmopolitan atmosphere. Tourism facilities have also improved in Kilkenny. Some examples of investment in tourism include the revitalisation of Kilkenny Tourism a number of years ago, the establishment of several top class hotels in the city and the upgrading of existing ones. It has also involved investment in important heritage sites throughout the county.

The Stakeholders

Since the development of the Kilkenny brand identity in 1998, some of the stakeholders have evolved and have been more or less successful in marketing the Kilkenny brand. Some continue to use the brand logo and slogan prominently on their promotional literature.

Since its inception in 1998, KIDCo has undertaken a number of successful initiatives and projects in association with the local authority and state agencies. KIDCo have commissioned a Strategy for Industrial Development in 2000 and organised the successful 'Careers@Kilkenny2000' jobs fair in association with local industry and employers in the same year. KIDCO played an active role in the Strategy for the Economic, Social and Cultural Development of County Kilkenny and promote and

7. www.kilkenny.ie

support regional initiatives and co-operation. They have also developed a modern Enterprise Centre in conjunction with the County Enterprise Board in 2004 and have completed an Industrial Promotion Brochure as a marketing tool for Kilkenny. However, the Kilkenny logo is really no longer used extensively by KIDCo to promote Kilkenny as a centre for inward investment.

Kilkenny Tourism continues to be a major user of the Kilkenny brand identity. They are actively building on the new Kilkenny brand – ‘The Creative Heart of Ireland’, with ongoing investment in premium promotional literature. Examples of their promotional material may be seen in Figure 3. Siobhan has continued to work closely with Kilkenny Tourism in producing literature to market Kilkenny, and the Kilkenny brand is prominently displayed on all promotional material, including Kilkenny Tourism stands at tourism events and trade fairs.

According to Sean McKeown, Chief Executive of the County Enterprise Board, the board uses its own logo prominently on their literature, but would also use the Kilkenny logo to support this. Tony Walsh from Kilkenny County Council (who have ownership of the Kilkenny brand through SPC5), states that the Kilkenny brand logo continues to be used on some of its publications (figure 4).

Figure 3: Kilkenny Tourism Promotional Material



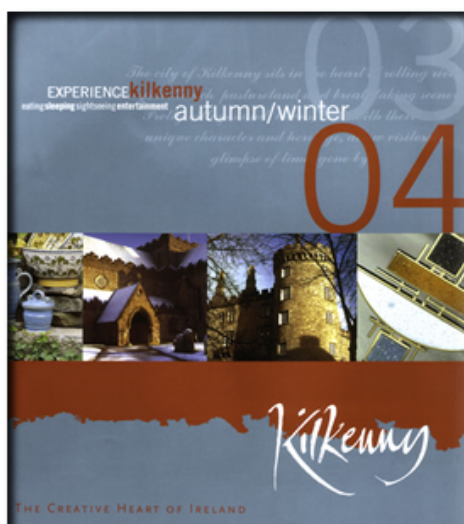


Figure 4: Kilkenny County Council Promotional Literature



Since the Kilkenny brand identity was introduced in 1998, a new stakeholders has become evident. In 2000, the Kilkenny County Development Board (CDB) was established with the aim of integrating and improving the delivery of all services to the citizens of Kilkenny. The term “services” covers industrial development, local development, physical planning, education, health, social services, agriculture, environment, tourism, fisheries and other sectors.⁸ Since its establishment in 2000, the Kilkenny County Development Board has taken the brand and displayed it prominently on its website and on all promotional material (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Kilkenny County Development Board Promotional Material



8. www.kilkennycdb.ie

Conclusion

Siobhan's ambitious plans for the use of the brand at all points of contact with target consumers never came to fruition, primarily due to financial limitations. Kilkenny County Council had ownership of the brand (through SPC5), but Siobhan was uncertain about whether or not the brand would be used in the future as comprehensively as was hoped at its inception. She felt that it was important for the agencies to invest in the brand proposition, rather than just using it as a logo or a slogan on their promotional material and pondered who would now accept responsibility for managing the use of the brand. She also wondered how the Kilkenny brand identity developed in 1998 could be capitalised upon by the four centres of excellence which were now evident in Kilkenny.

Case Study Questions

- 1. Consider how the branding of a location differs from the branding of a product or service.**
- 2. Comment on how Siobhan can estimate the success of the brand identity in marketing Kilkenny.**
- 3. Suggest possible reasons why not all agencies have “bought-into” the Kilkenny brand.**
- 4. Evaluate whether the brand identity is still relevant today, given the developments that have occurred in Kilkenny since 1998.**