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La Trobe needs a brand strategy because as a university it operates nowadays in a very competitive sector so the imperative of being seen and operate differently from other universities is more important than ever. Also La Trobe requires a brand strategy because it’s a complex organisation, it’s a very diverse organisation and as such a brand strategy allows almost to establish a sense of glue, a unifying purpose, allowing the organisation to be richer because of the diversity, the plurality of people, departments and ideas but also allowing them to work together for a common purpose.

A brand strategy can be described in many different ways, think of it as a way to answer the question, what do we stand for? Why are we different from other organisations? So a brand strategy defines a purpose, a meaning, around an organisation and also set up the foundations on how to get there in terms of behaviour, symptoms of culture and also in terms of the way we communicate. A brand matters because first of all it’s a set of ideas, it’s a set of meanings that we are associating to La Trobe and we wonder when people see that external manifestation, that tangible manifestation of the organisation, even through just the brand mark they are able to associate those meanings to La Trobe and those are positive meanings and the brand also matters because it gives clarity, gives a clarity of purpose, and that is especially for the people who work for La Trobe, knowing better themselves what they are expected to do to bring this brand, this organisation, all those great things to life and a brand automatically matters because it suggest an experience, what is it to work, to study, at La Trobe, all these things come together into an idea, all these things come together into the brand of La Trobe.

The brand strategy of La Trobe is centred around an idea of what is the mindset of the people we want to engage with and remember, being a university we have a multiplicity of audiences that we need to attract and engage with and they can be very different, however there is a fundamental mindset, that is the mindset of the people of La Trobe and this is a mindset that we described as the aspiring world citizens. Think of them, especially as the students, these are students that may come from all walks of life, these are students who often don’t come from a privileged family background and as such they may approach university with a mix of insecurity as well as enthusiasm.

They are pioneers in their peer group and these are people who are gregarious, generous, spontaneous, these are people who value collaboration more so than competition and they are balanced, they want to be balanced, they want to be well rounded, they want to achieve a successful career but at the same time they are very engaged with the society, with the environment, they want to have an impact on all of that. They see themselves as citizens of the world and no matter where they live, no matter where they come from, and they want to have a say, they want to have an impact.

The brand essence together with the brand promise, the pillars, the personality traits should be read as the strategic intent, able to inform everything we do. The brand pillars with the underlining proof points as well as the personality traits they come together into a brand promise for the university and finally into a brand essence for the university. The brand promise is a promise that puts lots of emphasis on the fact that this is the learning ground for a new generation of world citizens, these are people that here learn to break free from conventions and become agents of change in their communities and we bring all these together into a very simple statement and this is the essence that automatically explains what the university stands for. We are about bold thinking with a conscience, it’s not text to use as it is in communication, so the brand essence is not a tag line.

What does La Trobe promise to the aspiring world citizens? Four important things, what we call the pillars of the brand, the things that we want to be famous for and those pillars answer four important questions. What is the La Trobe approach to creating thought leadership; what is the La Trobe approach to learning and teaching; what is the university approach to working and studying on campus and fourth, what is the La Trobe approach to engaging with the world outside? So what is the La Trobe approach to thought leadership? We need to think of it as a thought leadership that is driven by a deep rooted sense of social conscience. Our approach to learning and teaching, it’s about portraying or projecting ourself as a very welcoming organisation, always ready to go that extra mile to create well rounded individuals.

What about our campuses, the life on campuses? Well they are important, very important, and for every university a campus says a lot. We are describing our campuses as those verdant campuses that play host to an exchange of ideas, experiences, people from all over the world and finally our engagement with the world outside. Here is where we need to leverage a lot the fact that we have a network of campuses throughout Victoria, all of them engaging in mutually enriching relationship with their communities. The brand pillars represent the rational side of the university.

Equally important are the personality traits, they are the emotional side of the brand and they should inform the way we behave, our culture, the way we communicate and four personality traits have been identified for La Trobe. La Trobe as a brand want to be seen as being progressive, gregarious, inquisitiveness, active. Research has played a very important role throughout the whole brand project, starting with the quite extensive piece of exploratory research that we did at the very beginning and that involved students, existing students, prospective students, from Australia and overseas, it involved staff, academic and non-academic throughout the organisation, both in Bundoora and in the regional campuses, it involves the people from the research community, agents helping recruiting students from overseas, opinion leaders, partners from the private sector and then when we were through the brand strategy development phase those people, those stakeholders, were involved again because together with them we validated our hypothesis and fine-tuned the components of the brand strategy to automatically create something that is distinctive, relevant, credible and inspiring for all the people that we want to engage with.

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