

**CITY
NATION
PLACE**

The Private Sector Perspective on Place Branding & Marketing

November 2024

A City Nation Place Report
produced in partnership with

FT LOCATIONS

TNW

Introduction & methodology

How places can engage the private sector in their strategic approaches to building and managing a strong and positive place brand has been a recurring theme of discussion at City Nation Place conferences over the past ten years. We have seen a growing pattern of best practice around place of origin trading and private sector ambassador programmes, and yet at the same time we have been hearing places talk about the challenges of fully engaging private sector board members.

Discussions with our Advisory Group of places suggested that it would be valuable to deliver research which provided a better understanding of the private sector perspective on place, place brands, and the work of place brand and marketing teams.

We are grateful to the team at FT Locations for seeing the value of such a study and agreeing to partner on the quantitative survey, and for introducing us to their colleagues at The Next Web – ensuring that we have been able to survey both large and medium sized businesses, and also entrepreneurs and startups. The quantitative survey which informs this report was carried out during July, August, and September 2024.

To add an extra layer of understanding, we invited our Advisory Group to introduce us to private sector leaders with whom they were collaborating – whether by including them on their Board, or in their ambassador or place of origin initiative, or through joint marketing. These interviews were carried out over the same time period of July to September 2024.

We believe that this dual approach has provided valuable insights to inform the strategic approaches of place brand teams, destination marketing organisations, investment promotion, and economic development teams around the world.

Clare Dewhirst

Director, City Nation Place

City Nation Place Champions

Thank you to our CNP Champions for their ongoing support:







Staffordshire

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Executive summary & recommendations

💡 **I think what bringing together the private sector does is really bring home the commercial value, the straight cut business value, of having a cohesive and powerful destination brand to doing good business.**

Andrew Baker, Tika Learning

The importance of place reputation to the private sector

We start this Executive Summary with this quote from Andrew Baker as it encapsulates so many of the findings of this study. In short: place reputation is important to private sector leaders. And there's a risk that place brand and marketing organisations are under-estimating or under-leveraging the support that the private sector could provide to help build and manage the reputation of their city, nation, or place.

A stand-out finding from our survey is that the number one factor impacting on location choice for multinationals and mid-sized businesses is "A place with a positive reputation that, as a business, we are happy to be associated with when marketing to investors". 85% of our survey respondents from these larger enterprises agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Whilst the traditionally promoted factors such as governance, regulations, incentives, and ease of doing business were the most frequently cited factor for our entrepreneurial leaders of startups and early-stage businesses, 62% of these still agreed that it was important for their place of location to have a positive reputation.

Whilst that "ease of doing business" factor is still a prime motivator for location choice, the survey findings support the evolution in investment promotion communications away from a time when every advertisement or article focused on tax rates and incentives, to one where progressive investment promotion agencies are focusing on quality of life and the assets that make their place attractive. A good quality of life proposition was the second highest factor influencing location choice for startups and early-stage businesses, and for larger enterprises a strong cultural sector, attractive lifestyle assets, and a good quality of life proposition came in joint third.

Why the private sector are keen to be ambassadors for place

A second stand-out finding from the survey is that there is a great deal of untapped willingness amongst private sector leaders to take on the role of ambassador for their place of location [eg: to be quoted on the place promotion website, join trade missions, present at events, advocate for the place to their personal network, participate in media coverage of the place]. When asked, most agree to take on the role – of 34% of multinationals and mid-

sized business leaders who have been asked to take on an ambassador role, 88% had accepted the invitation. Of the just 24% of startups and early-stage business leaders who had been asked, 71% agreed to do so.

More strikingly, of those 66% of business leaders from larger organisations who had not been asked to take on an ambassador role, 90% of them would like to.

So what motivates business leaders to want to take on an ambassador role for their place of location? Place brand and marketing organisations should be appealing to both the personal and the business brain. We asked our respondents how important it is that the place where their business is located has a good reputation and experiences good economic growth – firstly to their business, and secondly to them personally.

81% of our business leaders from multinationals and mid-sized businesses agreed or strongly agreed that it was important to their business, but 73% also agreed it was important to them personally. The margin between business importance and personal importance was even narrower for our leaders of startups and early-stage businesses: 73% agreeing or strongly agreeing it was important for their business and 69% saying it was important to them personally.

The personal motivation to help build a better reputation for their place was strongly evident in our interviews with Gill and Will Sherwin of the Best of British Beer [in Staffordshire, UK] and also with Karen Fanger of KD Properties [in Cleveland, USA]. Karen said, "In the past, not marketing ourselves to our true extent hurt us; it's time to change that".

The primary business motivation for all of our respondents to become ambassadors for place would be for the partnership and networking opportunities with other businesses in their location. Our interviews with private sector leaders again showed this working well in practice. We Are Staffordshire's place brand team have built an ambassador network that people want to be part of and which is building momentum for the English county. To quote the Sherwins from the Best of British Beer, "There's a lot of goodwill so everybody feels committed to making Staffordshire better".

Executive summary & recommendations

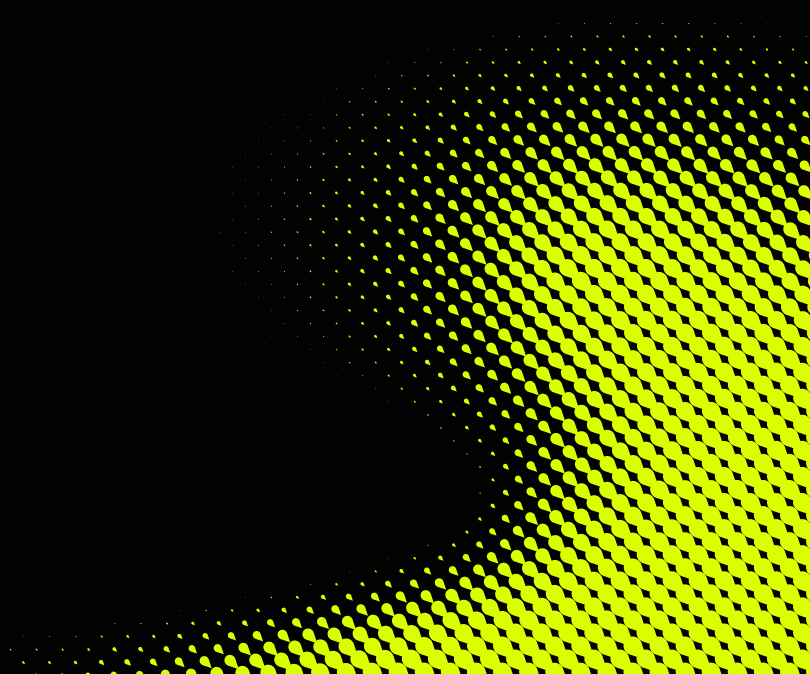
Improving engagement with entrepreneurs

We hear investment promotion agencies and economic development teams discuss the importance of their innovation culture and of developing an entrepreneurial culture. It's perhaps surprising then that 59% of our respondents leading startups or early-stage businesses say that they have had no contact with any place brand or marketing organisation, not even with their local Chambers of Commerce.

69% of them say that they are located where their founders studied or lived – which could suggest that appealing to the personal motivation to build a better reputation for their place should work well. One of our private sector leader interviews was with an entrepreneur with a small business – Jules Gray, the founder of Hop Hideout in Sheffield, one of those types of business which adds authentic cultural interest to the city's brand. She made the point that place brand and marketing organisations should put themselves in the shoes of the entrepreneur when working on initiatives involving private sector collaboration - when you have a small team it's more difficult to participate in meetings during working hours for example. And as someone who has founded a business where she lives, she clarified the personal motivation: "Generally I love living in Sheffield and I'm very proud of the city and I want other people to see that.... I've just had a daughter and it's kind of making the city a great place for her, for, you know, future generations."

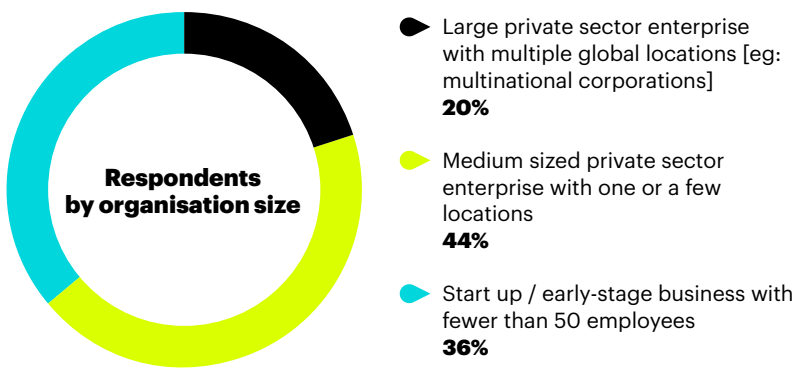
Building on shared values and providing value

Many places have established structures for connecting their place brand with private sector partners – whether ambassador schemes, or place of origin trade marketing initiatives, or place of origin trademarks. Our qualitative interviews suggest that these can deliver the best value when they are rooted in place brand values. Marina Hirst Tristram, general manager of the Koni brand owned by the Wakatū Incorporation in New Zealand, has joined the recently formed Ambassador network established by New Zealand Story, the country's nation brand team. For her, it's important to leverage the Māori culture and history behind the company and, as this has been embraced by New Zealand Story's unifying nation brand narrative, she sees the value in working with them. She also sees that by joining the network of ambassador companies, her business is benefitting from research, insights, and information, "I guess you utilise the learnings that New Zealand Story has about what makes New Zealand different from the world and then do a better job of telling that story."

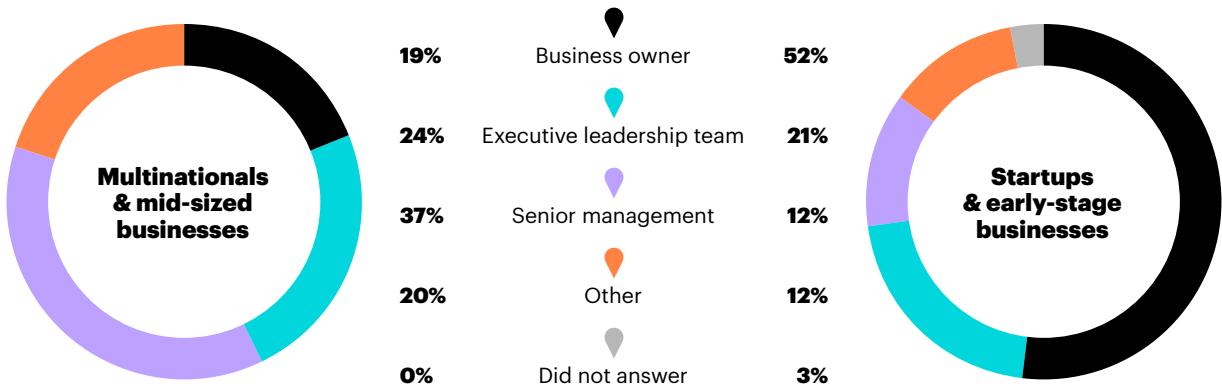


Survey Findings

Partnering with FT Locations and The Next Web to promote responses to this survey enabled us to gather responses from a broad range of businesses and geographies. We received 92 completed responses to the survey, with 36% of these coming from startup or early-stage business with fewer than 50 employees, and 64% coming from either multinationals or medium sized private sector businesses with one or a few locations.



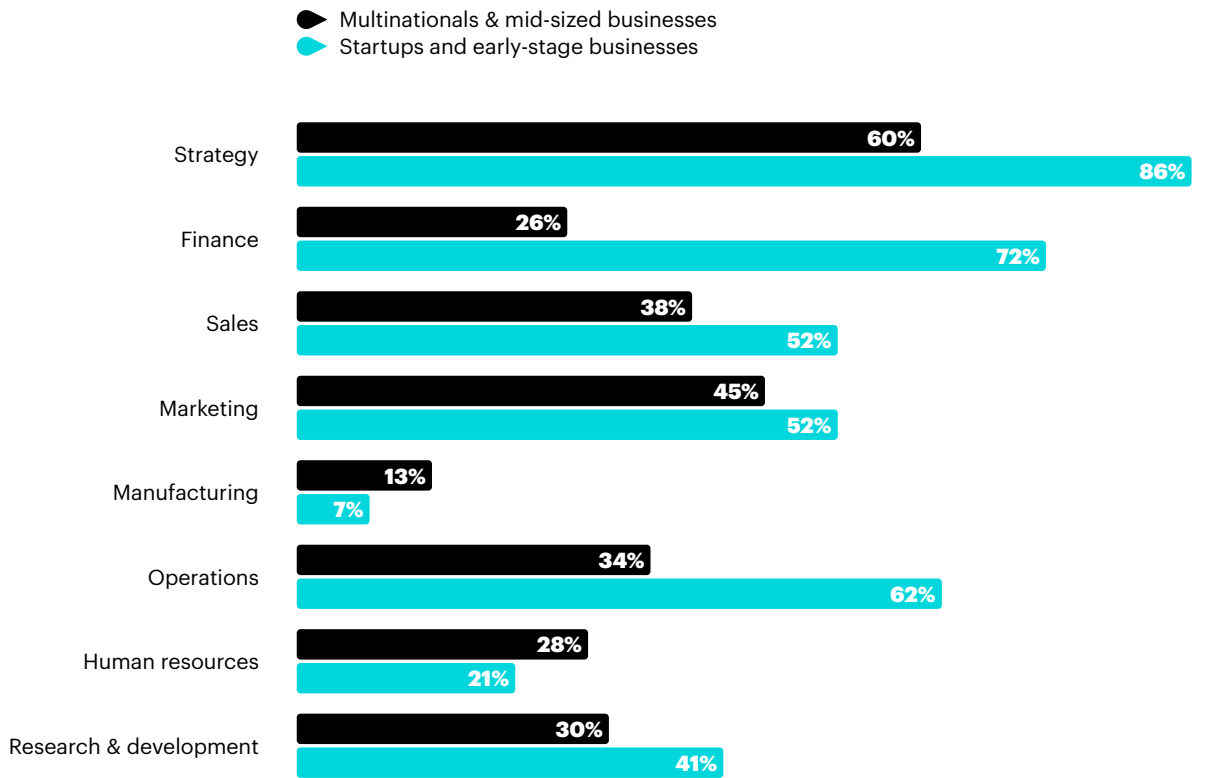
Respondents had senior leadership positions within their organisations, with 19% of multinational and mid-sized business respondents and 52% of startup respondents stating that they were the business owner.



Survey Findings

Aspects of the business you have responsibility for

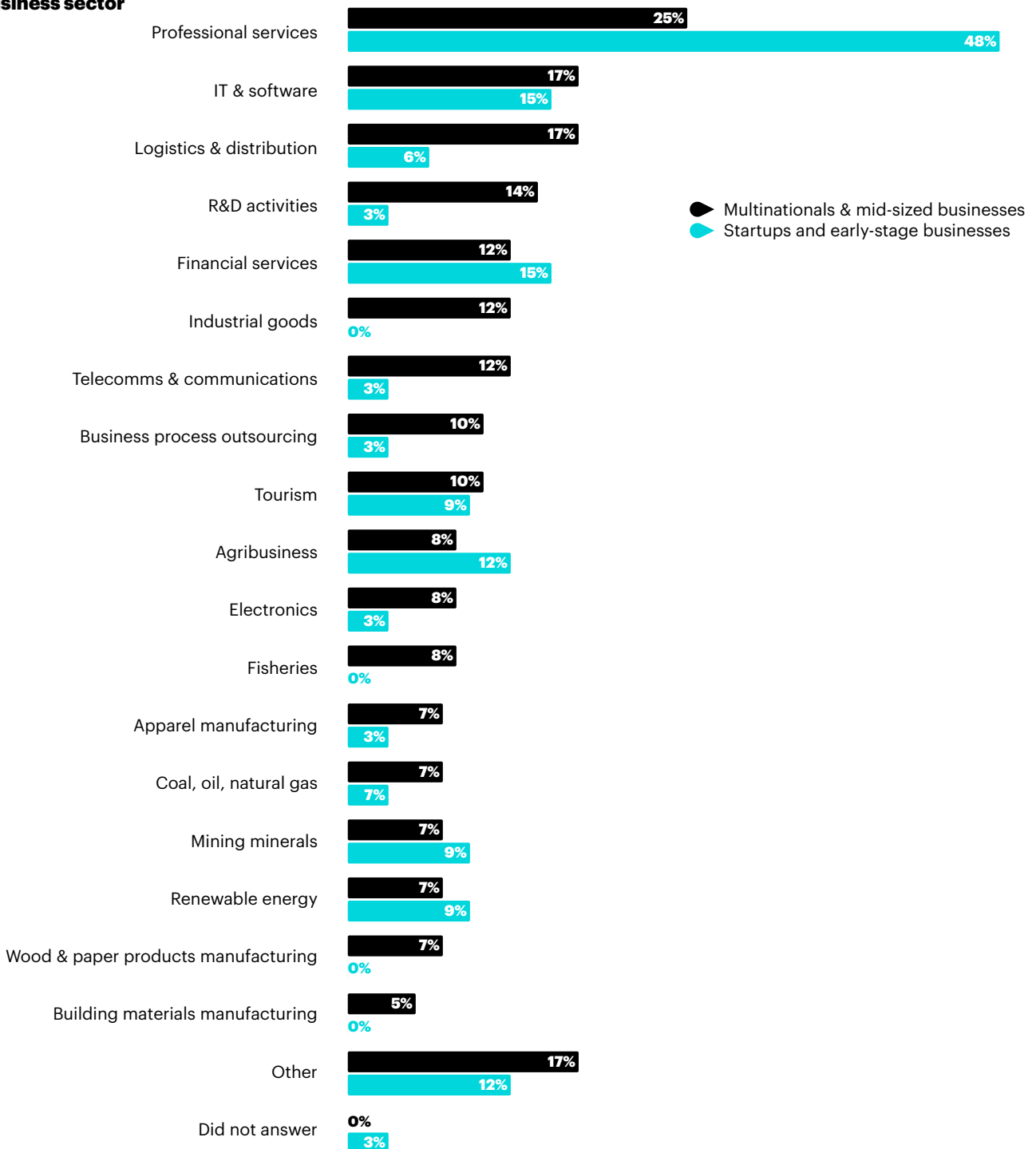
[please tick all that apply]



Survey Findings

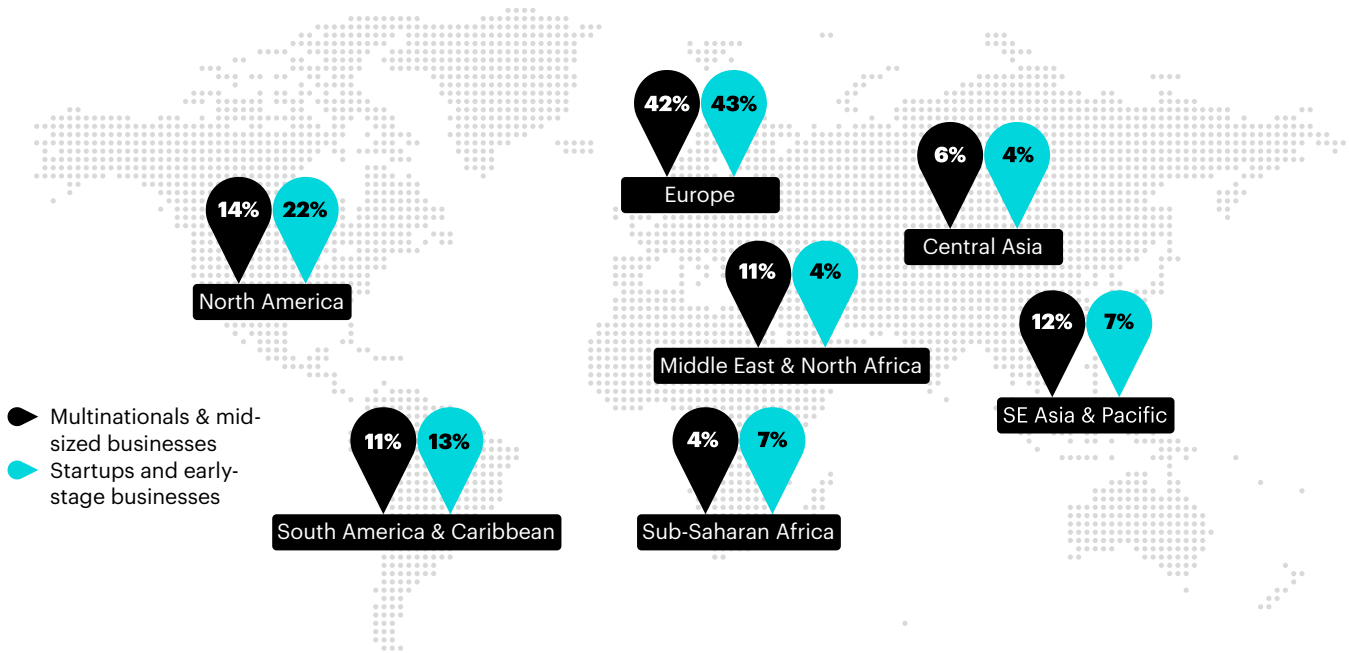
The survey gathered responses from across a broad range of business sectors and whilst there was a stronger response from Europe and North America, responses were also from across a broad range of geographies.

Business sector



Survey Findings

Thinking of your primary operation or headquarters, where are you located?



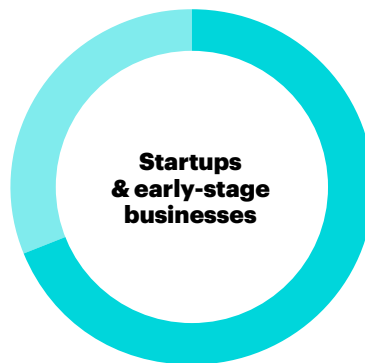
The largest number of our multinationals and mid-sized business respondents had been in their primary location for between five and ten years. 69% of our startups and early-stage businesses are located in the place where their founders had lived or studied – with 31% in a location deliberately chosen by the founders as being a place that would support the growth of their business.

Thinking of your primary operation or headquarters, how long have you been located where you are located?



- 26% Fewer than 5 years
- 45% Between 5 and 10 years
- 6% Between 10 and 20 years
- 23% More than 20 years

As a start-up or early stage business, which of these statements is the most accurate description of your business:



- 69% We are located in the place where our founders already lived/studied
- 31% We are located in a place chosen by our founders who believed this location would provide us with the best opportunities to secure investment & growth

Survey Findings

We wanted to understand what factors had the greatest influence on private sector decisions regarding location and so asked, what makes a great place to locate your business? For multinationals and mid-sized businesses, the number one factor was “A place with a positive reputation that, as a business, we are happy to be associated with when marketing to investors”, with 85% saying that they agree or strongly agree. This is a positive affirmation of the work that place brand and marketing organisations do to build and manage place reputation.

Good governance, management regulations, a low cost of doing business, viable land and sites, and an attractive incentives regime are the factors usually promoted in investment attraction campaigns and together are seen as the second most important location factor for multinationals and mid-sized businesses, and the first most important factor for startups and early-stage businesses. However, a good quality of life and a strong cultural sector with attractive lifestyle assets are in strong third and fourth position – above other practical associations such as transport infrastructure – suggesting that business success is tied closely to employees’ personal enjoyment of the location.

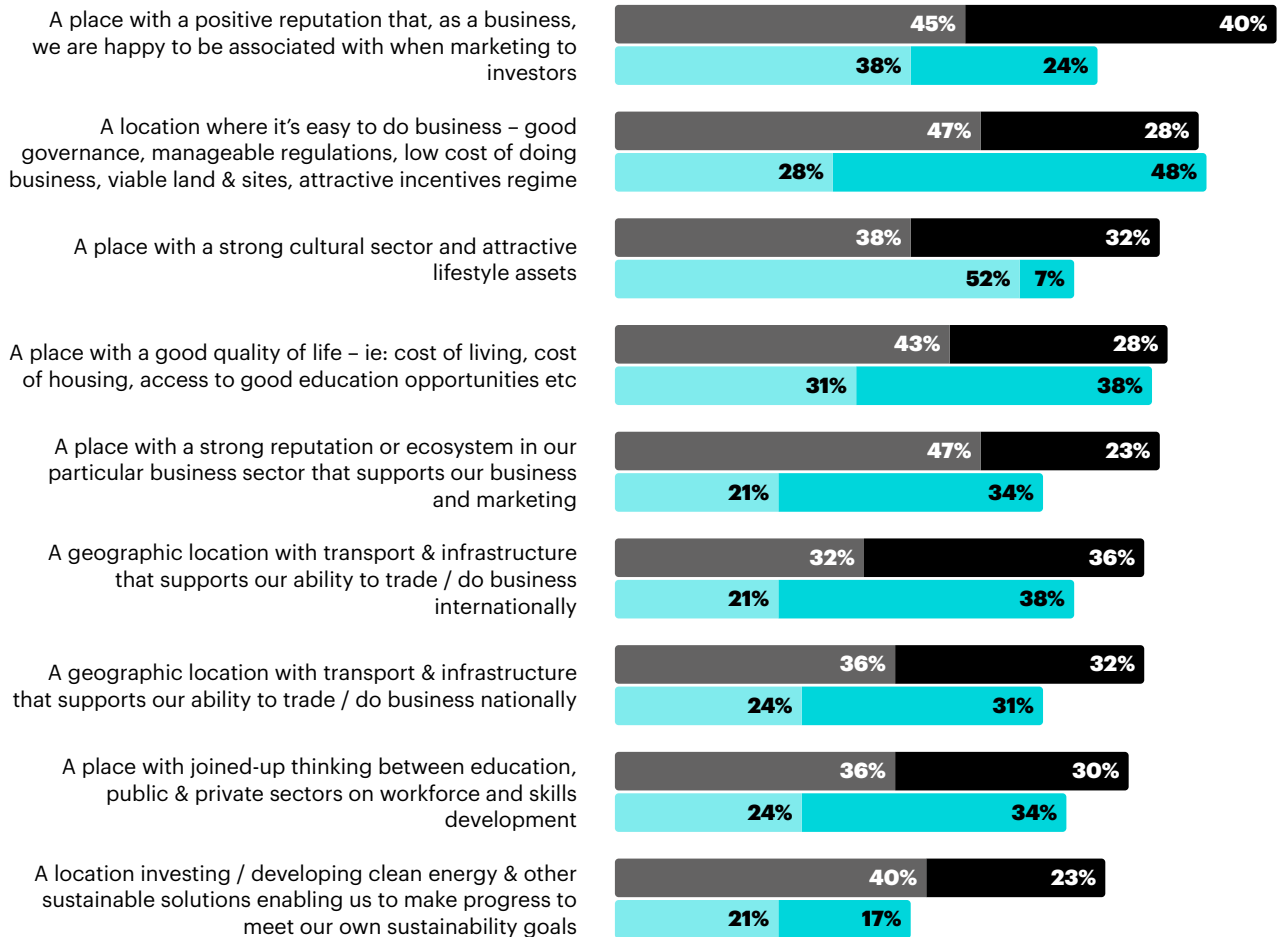
What makes a great place to locate your business?

Multinationals & mid-sized businesses

Startups & early-stage businesses

● Agree
● Strongly agree

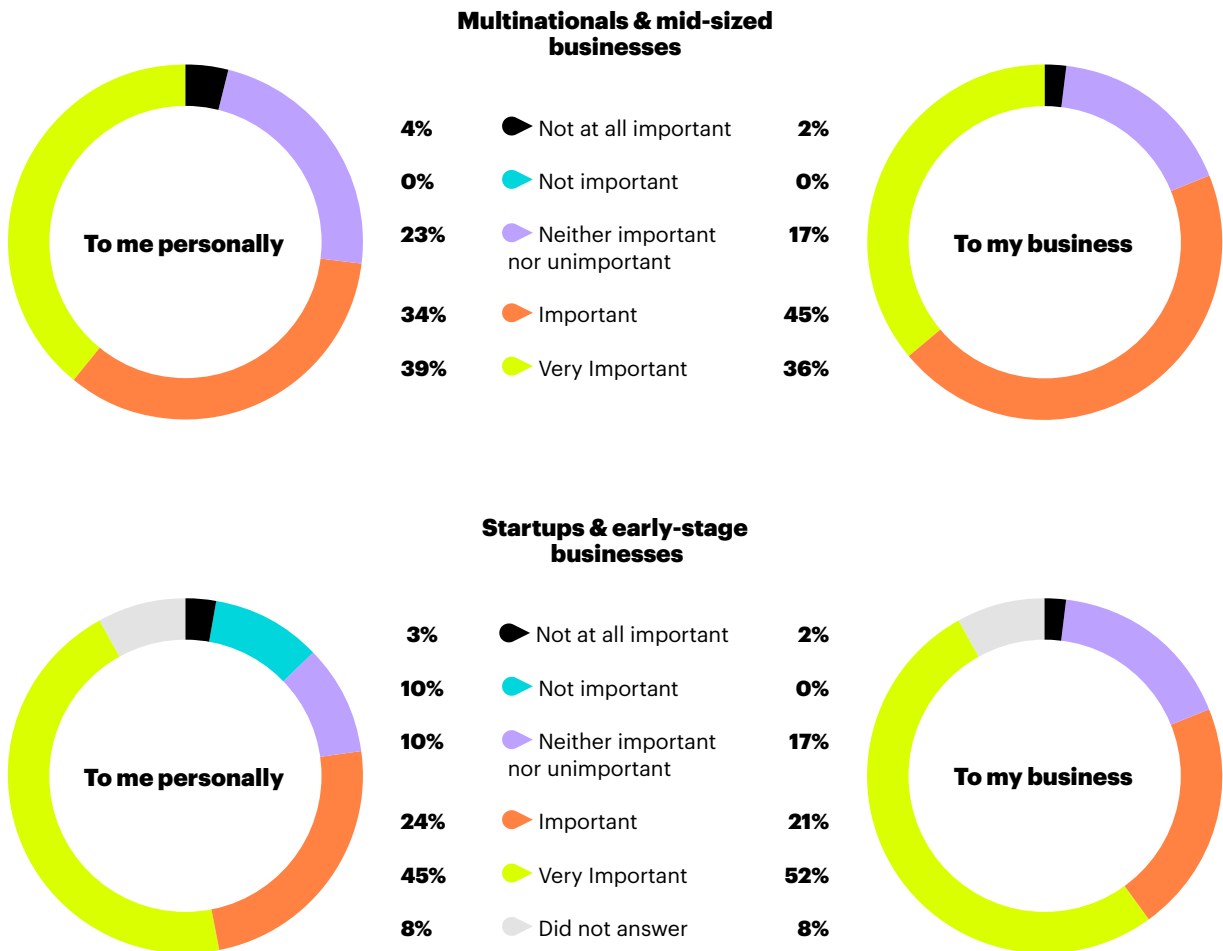
● Agree
● Strongly agree



Survey Findings

We wanted to dig deeper into the importance of place reputation on location choice and to start to understand about the personal vs business motivation for considering the importance of place. For all respondents, it was seen as more important to the business that the place of location has a good reputation and experiences good economic growth than to them personally, but the margins are narrow. For startups and early-stage businesses, the personal and business are closely linked with just 4% more respondents saying it was important or very important for the business vs them personally.

How important is it to you / your business that the place where your business is located has a good reputation and experiences good economic growth?

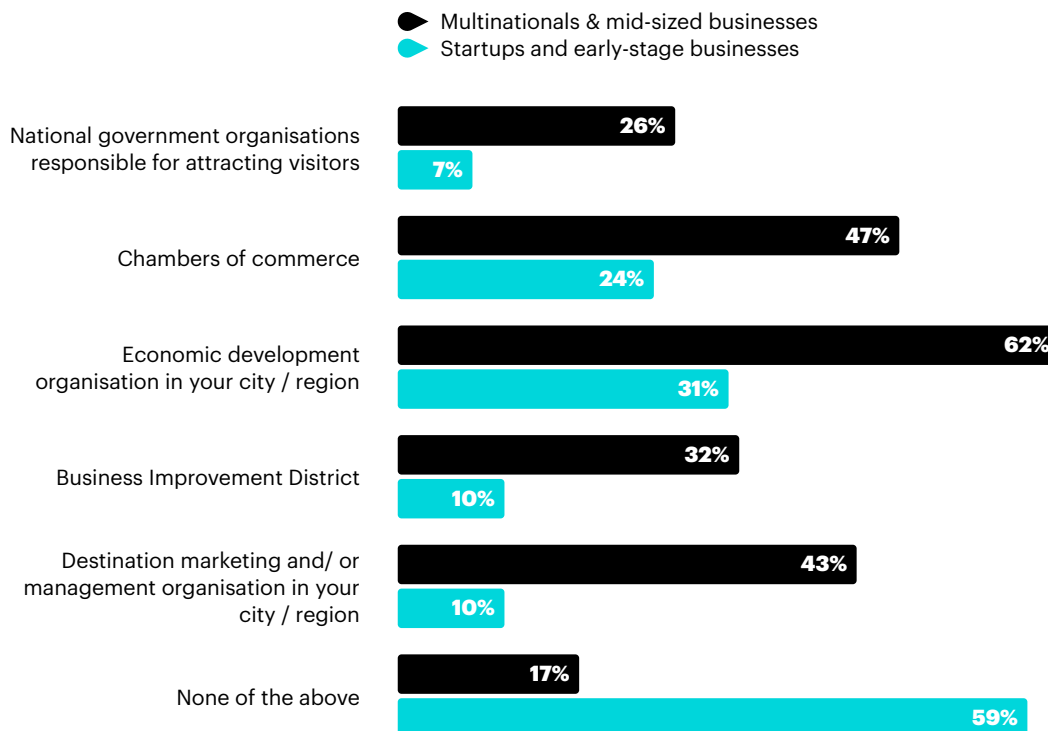


Survey Findings

So how does this strong perception of the importance of place translate into a willingness to promote place? Asked how likely they were to recommend their place of location as a place to do business, where 1 = not at all likely and 10 = very likely, multinationals and mid-sized businesses scored this at 7.78, and startups and early-stage businesses at a very similar 7.39. Whilst this is perhaps not the highest net promoter score, it does suggest a positivity about place that could be harnessed by place brand and marketing teams.

We wanted to understand how much our respondents already engaged with place-based organisations tasked with growing their location's place economy and promoting place to attract talent, investment, or visitors. It's noticeable that 59% of our startup and early-stage business respondents, the highest number, have had no contact at all with any place-based organisations. Just 31% of these entrepreneurial businesses have had contact with the economic development organisation in their city or region. The larger multinationals and mid-sized businesses are more connected in to place management and marketing organisations, with more connections at city or region level than at national level.

Please indicate whether, as an individual or organisation, you are involved through membership or collaboration with the following bodies in your place of location...



With more place brand and marketing organisations focusing on building networks of private sector ambassadors, we wanted to understand the private sector perspective on being approached to participate in such initiatives.

34% of multinationals and mid-sized businesses have been asked to take on an ambassador role to promote and recommend their place of location [eg: to be quoted on the place promotion website, join trade missions, present at events, advocate for the place to their personal network, participate in media coverage of the place]. Of these 34%, 88% had accepted the invitation and agreed to this role.

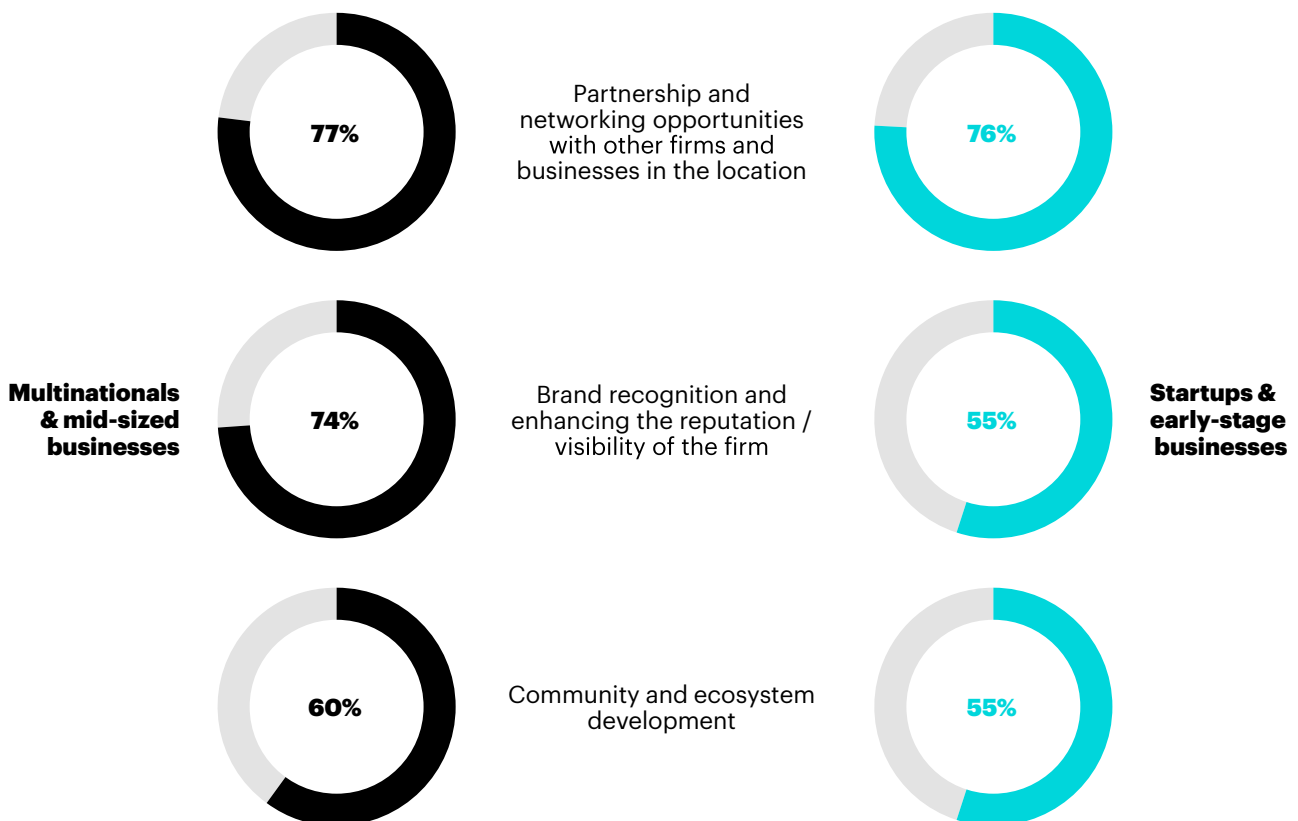
Of those multinationals and mid-sized businesses that had not been asked to take on an ambassador role, 90% of them would like to.

24% of startups and early-stage businesses have been asked to take on an ambassador role, and of these 71% agreed to do so. Of the 69% who had not been asked to take on an ambassador role, 65% would like to.

This suggests a level of untapped enthusiasm and willingness to support place brand and marketing work. We wanted to understand how destination marketing, economic development, and place brand teams could best motivate private sector leaders to promote place reputation and for all of our respondents, the primary motivation would be to benefit from the partnership and networking with other businesses in the location.

What would motivate you to engage in the promotion of place initiatives?

[please tick all that apply]



Private Sector Interviews

Creating a mutual sense of purpose between the place brand and private sector



Andrew Baker

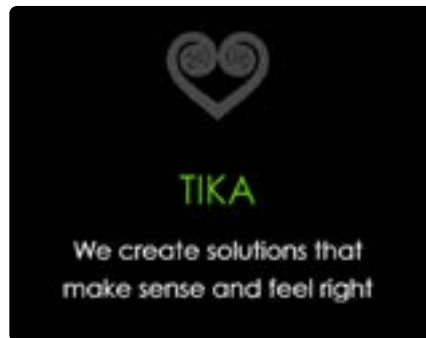
Managing Director, Tika Learning
Private Sector Board Member,
New Zealand Story Advisory Board



Tika is a Māori word which means 'correct' – there's a right way to do things, there's a right way to learn. Tika Learning, as a business, helps organisations to understand how to bring Māori culture to life within their businesses. Māori culture is not just a language – it includes a set of values and concepts which, as Andrew Baker, the Managing Director of Tika Learning, says, are relevant to many of the issues businesses face today. Take sustainability, for example: one of the foundational principles of Māori culture is the idea of sustainability and when you frame this from a cultural perspective, it adds a depth and richness that helps people to see why and how they should engage in the process rather than simply focusing on the bottom line.

Andrew referenced the Silver Fern mark, the New Zealand Story export brand, and explained that many exporters find that the Mark and the inclusion of indigenous values in how they manage and talk about their business, provides standout in a noisy and crowded global marketplace.

Andrew has been one of the three independent private sector appointees on the Board of New Zealand Story for the past two years. This follows a longer history of engagement with the work of the nation brand organisation following a career with Air New Zealand, to which he brought his experience as a Māori dancer, developing the airline's cultural strategy, and accompanying trade and tourism missions. Having worked with Tourism New Zealand



We're such a small nation, and to be able to amplify our voice by working together just makes a whole lot of sense".

and Trade & Enterprise, taking on this Advisory role felt like a natural progression.

Andrew has been supporting New Zealand Story's creation of a new ambassador network of the largest businesses in New Zealand. He can see that there is a great deal of enthusiasm from these private sector ambassadors for the opportunity this creates to network, share information, and collaborate, adding, "We're such a small nation, and to be able to amplify our voice by working together just makes a whole lot of sense".

I asked Andrew what he felt other place brand organisations could learn from New Zealand Story in terms of how to convince private sector

business leaders that the success of their nation, region, or city is tied to the success of their business and that they have a responsibility and an opportunity to become more actively involved in place promotion. Andrew feels that one of the important things that New Zealand Story has done really well is gather data – data which shows the value of having the nation brand. Government promotion budgets for trade, tourism and investment are very small compared to corporate budgets and the team have to work hard to make their voice heard: it makes sense to work together. Again, the brand team have created opportunities for the sharing of business intelligence to support collaborative trade missions. Andrew sees that the new ambassador network is adding value here by clarifying what data they want to see, what's most useful to them. New Zealand Story are creating the platform and technical framework for these businesses to understand what they need and what they can do.

Finally, Andrew reflected on my question – does having strong engagement with the private sector strengthen or protect a place brand at a time of political change. His response: "I think the brand destination story is still not 100% well understood by many, by some it can be seen as a nice to have. I think what bringing together the private sector does is really bring home the commercial value, the straight-out business value of having a cohesive and powerful destination brand to doing good business."

Harnessing the civic pride of private sector leaders



Karen Fanger

Board member, Greater Cleveland Partnership and Downtown Cleveland, Collaborative partner of Destination Cleveland
Co-Founder and President, K&D Group



Karen Fanger is the Co-Founder and President of K&D Group, a property development business that specialises in identifying and acquiring undervalued properties and then renovating, repositioning and/or redeveloping these properties into highly successful residential communities. Having started her partnership in 1984 and established the K&D business, she has been at the centre of the physical development of Cleveland for nearly forty years. Karen is the Board Chair of Downtown Cleveland Inc, is on the board of the Greater Cleveland, on the board of the Greater Cleveland Partnership, and has collaborated with Destination Cleveland on many place shaping projects. Destination Cleveland supports the Downtown Inc. association's projects with research and funding and Karen is very excited about the most recent project which will connect the lighting to the Terminal Tower, an iconic, historic landmark building to create a great experience for the community and for visitors.

Karen recognises that it might be unusual for the destination management organisation to get involved in place shaping projects to such a degree, but this is Cleveland. "Cleveland is a small, beautiful little city and I think that we all realise that if we work together, we'll get things done faster." Karen is hugely inspired and enthusiastic about the way that economic development, destination marketing, the administration, and the private sector are working together, saying that "it's a wonderful time because we can all like grab a



Cleveland is a small, beautiful little city and I think that we all realise that if we work together, we'll get things done faster."

piece of it and run instead of someone trying to do it all or trying to do the same thing somebody else is doing in a different way."

So what is the secret to this effective collaboration? Karen admits it is about the people: "We've got the right people in the right places right now who just get it". She has huge personal pride in her city and is delighted to see that people are returning from other cities to take up key positions within Cleveland, bringing back the knowledge and experience they've gained elsewhere.

Over recent years, Destination Cleveland has focused on changing the internal narrative in Cleveland – on rebuilding civic pride and encouraging proud Clevelanders to tell the positive stories and change external perceptions [for more background, please see their award entries in the [Place Brand Portfolio](#)]. Karen is someone who can see the impact of this and recognises that "in the past, not marketing ourselves to our true extent hurt us; it's time to change that".

As well as being a passionate advocate for Cleveland, Karen is an active and committed Board and committee member. She's adamant

that private sector leaders should not take on these roles unless they are committed. "There's no sense in showing up for a committee meeting and just sitting there... and I prepare for the committee meetings before I go in. I have questions. I work with a lot of good people and so I always want to be my best and be contributory...and I want to leave a meeting with a plan of what's supposed to happen before the next meeting, the goal is to get that done."

So how can other places find and harness enthusiastic and committed board and committee members? Karen advises that if you've picked the wrong people and they're disruptive or are not contributing, "you need to make a change". Apart from anything else, she wouldn't want to sit in a room of non-contributors. This is of course not always easy within the governance structures of some organisations.

Karen also advises organisations to make it easy for board and committee members to prepare for meetings. She welcomes information dashboards, organisational websites that are transparent about their activities and progress, and easily digestible board reports.

Karen believes that her business thrives because it is in Cleveland. Cleveland is poised to benefit from out-of-state migration. It's an affordable city and "we have everything you need right here. We just need to get the word out to the rest of the country".

Nurturing entrepreneurs and small businesses that add authenticity to your place brand



Jules Gray

Hop Hideout
Entrepreneur, Sheffield



Jules Gray is a living example of Sheffield's claim to having one of the highest retention rates of university graduates in their community. She came to Sheffield to study at University in the late 1990s, choosing her university based on the city's welcoming feel and after a short time away returned to the city she'd come to love to set up her business. Why Sheffield? Jules talked about affordability, accessibility to both the countryside and city culture, the strong neighbourhood identities and "Sheffield has such a sort of positive independence and support for independent retail or music or hospitality for all sorts of different sectors."

Hop Hideout is an award-winning speciality beer shop and tasting room – the kind of small, independent business that adds to the authentic character and brand of a neighbourhood or city.

In terms of support for setting up her business, Jules talked about the free courses provided by Sheffield Business – although she also mentioned that there was a very strong focus on new businesses and it might be useful to add more support for businesses on how to sustain longer-term success. She also valued the opportunity to talk to other independent business owners. There's a strong heritage of independent brewing in Sheffield and friendly collaboration - not just in the brewing sector but also in the city. Jules also commented, "What I find about Sheffield as well is there seems to be quite a few female-owned businesses, so it kind of feels like a



What I find about Sheffield as well is there seems to be quite a few female-owned businesses, so it kind of feels like a bit of a nurturing hotspot for female entrepreneurship".

bit of a nurturing hotspot for female entrepreneurship".

Jules is also the founder of the Sheffield Beer Festival, which was a purely independent initiative and one she feels the city was a little slow to get behind – whilst understanding caution around supporting and promoting an event which is essentially about alcohol. But for Jules' brand, community, ethos, and heritage are important and much of Sheffield's history and architecture is rooted in the brewing industry, so the Festival is more about this. "Sheffield Beer Week is a practical demonstration of the collaboration between independent businesses and with beers named to reflect the history of the city and its stories" to With beers named to reflect the history of the city and its stories, Sheffield Beer Week attracts thousands of visitors and over the last five or six years, Sheffield's place brand and tourism teams have supported the event and leveraged its value."

The Beer Festival predates what Jules has seen to be a step change in the way that Sheffield presents itself to the world – which reflects the timing of the launch of the Sheffield

brand strategy. With a central team creating positive communications and bringing businesses from different sectors together, Jules has seen the benefits of more cross promotion and collaboration.

Jules can see that, to a large degree, the collaboration that strengthens Sheffield's story is often the result of happy accidents rather than a city strategy. As a small business owner, she doesn't feel that the Chambers of Commerce is geared towards her needs. As cities try to encourage and foster the kind of businesses that add authenticity and flavour and individuality to their neighbourhoods, it's worth putting yourself in the shoes of the small business owner. It's important to not just think about affordability but also when events are timed – small business owners can't take time out of their working hours for example.

As a small business owner, Jules is choosy about trade or association memberships and currently any collaboration with the Brand Sheffield team is informal and with no membership fees associated. If the city council or brand team were to step up a gear in the way they foster collaboration with a formal membership or ambassador scheme, what would motivate Jules to get involved? Jules admits that her biggest motivation would be personal: "Generally I love living in Sheffield and I'm very proud of the city and I want other people to see that.... I've just had a daughter and it's kind of making the city a great place for her, for, you know, future generations."

Matching private sector and nation brand values through business networks



Marina Hirst Tristram

General Manager, Kono, Wakatū
Incorporation
Ambassador, New Zealand Story

Kono NZ is the food & beverage business of Wakatū Incorporation. Wakatū is a Māori organisation with over 4,000 owners who descend from four iwi, Ngāti Koata, Ngāti Rārua, Ngāti Tama, and Te Ātiawa, made of four iwi or Māori tribes. Wakatū owns land in the top of the South Island in New Zealand and are operating a horticultural business, growing apples, pears, kiwi fruit, hops, and grapes. Kono NZ also has a Hop Federation, a brewery business and a wine business, which exports wines around the world as the Kono Wines and Tohu brands. The USA is the biggest market, but the company exports to about multiple international markets. Marina says that they are striving to tell more stories on through branding, packaging and marketing about both sustainability and Māori culture.

Marina is involved in New Zealand Story's new ambassador programme. This involves a group of about 10 businesses and, at the time of our chat, had had three meetings. What motivated her to join the group? Marina recognises that trading internationally means being as relevant as possible – the Marlborough region and Sauvignon Blanc brand connects with customers but Marina's also seeking differentiation and this is where the cultural and Māori roots of the business are important. As Marina says, "that comes back to actually telling a better story about where we're from and the differences of what it means to be from New Zealand and the values of New Zealand, and

the values of our Māori business as well". Marina believes it's a good opportunity to be in that ambassador programme to connect with the other businesses that are also doing that, adding, "I guess you utilize the learnings that New Zealand Story has about what makes New Zealand different from the world and then do a better job together of telling that story".

Marina believes that it's hugely important that New Zealand Story, as an organisation, sits apart from the government and is independent from politics.

It's clear that Marina sees a strong benefit of being involved with the ambassador group as being able to access research and insights, and share information. But what is she prepared to do as an Ambassador to support New Zealand Story's work? It's currently early days and the group are still working out what they can do. At the moment it's all about sharing information on what the members are doing in market, what's working, and what's not working – providing New Zealand Story with useful insights as to the value of what they're doing and where they can best act. Marina added that there are a number of food businesses involved and so it would be good to focus on what they can do together to make a greater impact in specific markets.

New Zealand Story is providing the central point for collaboration, for example, they have set up a shared

calendar for all ambassadors to enter their key trade and marketing events, to see where there are opportunities.

Before being invited to join the ambassador group, Marina was familiar with the work of New Zealand Story through the Fern Mark programme, which is a place of origin brand which private sector organisations can license. The licensing process is very straightforward – there are no requirements to meet, for example in terms of sustainable business processes or adherence to New Zealand Story's core values.

We discussed the funding of New Zealand's work. Currently there's no investment expectations of ambassador organisations, other than payment for export skills training. Marina thinks it's important that participation should be accessible to all sizes of businesses, "because New Zealand will do a better job if everyone's telling the same story, right?" But Marina does think that the private sector could and should contribute, alongside the government, to the work that New Zealand Story is doing.

Marina feels that it's early days in terms of her organisation's relationship with New Zealand Story: "it's only been in the last year or so that I've really picked up on the extent of the work that they do ... but certainly the work that they've done lately with regards to values has been really, really good". Marina feels that the values that New Zealand Story has articulated can resonate with all businesses and appreciates that the organisation's purpose is not just for F&B exporters but for the whole country, which ties everything together. Marina also recognises that David Down's leadership has been an important factor in the success of the ambassador group – his commitment to getting out and about in the regions, cutting through the clutter of stories and marketing messages. Marina believes that it's been crucial to the success of the organisation that they are seen to be working for the whole country.

Collaborating on talent recruitment



Rasmus Iver Agesen

VP Human Resources, Ferrosan Medical Devices

Collaborating with Copenhagen Capacity

Ferrosan Medical Devices is a Danish company, based in the Greater Copenhagen region, around 10km from the centre of the city. Established in 1947, Ferrosan has been experiencing strong growth in international sales and through new product innovation and development projects.

As Ferrosan is an established business, we might not expect an investment promotion agency to be in contact, but Copenhagen Capacity has also taken on the branding of the region to attract students and talent. Ferrosan and Copenhagen Capacity, together with government-funded organisation Work in Denmark, collaborate around this endeavour. They work on the practical challenge of ensuring that students are well connected with the industry and that internships and graduate jobs are available and attractive.

Rasmus believes that that perceptions of the quality of life in Copenhagen are quite important factors in the success of work to attract international students and talent. When working with Work in Denmark, the feedback he's received suggests that in some other countries, graduates are expected to work in unpaid internships before succeeding in their careers. He thinks it's important that graduates see that the work culture in Denmark is more balanced and that the whole human being is prioritised. He believes this to be particularly relevant in the competitive world of green tech and life sciences and in addition, sees



It's really important to talk to the positive sides of working in Denmark".

that it's important that Copenhagen has what he calls "a huge palette of variety", in that there is a large number of start ups with graduate positions as well as the larger conglomerates such as Nova Nordisk. If you combine attractive career paths with a location where you can balance your life with decent pay and quality of life, then this creates a strong argument – and so he agrees that the attractiveness of place is important.

Discussing the award-winning campaigns produced by Copenhagen Capacity to attract international talent, Rasmus agrees that these are important to counter-balance the quality of life proposition with any possible negative associations with the higher rate of tax in Denmark. He believes that "it's really important to talk to the positive sides of working in Denmark".

Rasmus concedes that Ferrosan is newer to the process of international talent attraction. Two years ago, there were no non-Danes in the organisation and now there are perhaps 15 international employees out of 300. Language is a challenge that Ferrosan is working on, pushing to be more international in its corporate language.

Ferrosan collaborate with Copenhagen Capacity and Work in Denmark at career fairs; these are the primary touch points for the company rather than the brand work and advertising campaigns. They join collaborative international missions with other organisations in the Danish cluster to promote Denmark as an attractive place to work. He welcomes the support of Work In Denmark in particular in the hands-on work of finding the right CVs and the right candidates. There's no involvement in marketing and Ferrosan doesn't make use of any Copenhagen Capacity or Work In Denmark brand assets in their own marketing – they don't join in the development of a unified narrative about the benefits of working in Denmark.

Creating a framework for shared values with private sector partners



Karin Lachner

Strategy Director- Global Business Services, Equifax
Licensee of the Costa Rica Nation Brand

Equifax is a multinational business, founded and headquartered in the USA and operating in 25 countries. The core of the company's work is data, analytics, supported by cloud computing and of course increasingly by AI capabilities. Its growth is achieved particularly through M&As, acquiring multiple businesses each year.

Equifax Global Business Services operations was one of the first, from a multinational company standpoint, to establish in Costa Rica in 1995, when Equifax acquired an operation focused on data entry and digitalisation of information at that time. Since 1995 and developments in the internet and data technologies, the GBS has grown through five expansions in that country. The growth in the complexities of process and in headcount have been sizable and this is because Equifax has found the quality, innovation, and human capabilities it has needed in Costa Rica to develop and drive increased value. Equifax GBS now supports 11 business functions across the enterprise, with nearly 2000 employees, the vast majority of whom are home-grown and educated talent.

So why, as such a global business, is Equifax a licensee of the Essential Costa Rica nation brand marque? The GBS had been operating in the country for several years, following a much more conservative if not "quite" approach while behind those doors, innovative solutions were taking place. To attract the necessary talented workforce, Equifax GBS

felt it was important to leverage and link to the local ecosystem and to demonstrate the work the business was doing to support international frameworks and standards. It was clear that a lot had already been achieved in terms of being carbon neutral certified and the organisation had a strong framework for excellence. There was an ambition to align this work to global standards and the Essential Costa Rica brand provides a framework for gathering all of this information together to demonstrate environmental stewardship, social impact, business excellence, innovation and local origin. The Essential Costa Rica framework of evaluation is what the GBS calls "a hefty process" with 103 indicators and different pillars of assessment. Applying for and working towards a successful application for the Essential Costa Rica brand license contributes in the internal assessment and implementation of better processes.

Karin adds that the country brand has done a good job of building recognition within the country and internationally. Citizens in general, including employees of Equifax GBS in Costa Rica, are proud of intrinsic values reflected within the country brand like sustainability, excellence, and social impact. "So having the Essential CR certification is kind of



The value I think is in tying those rigorous standards with a quality of the nation, of what we can do, so we walk the walk and talk the talk".

a seal of approval that helps attest that what we are doing, with local Costa Rican talent, upholds those principles".

The GBS also finds value in the Essential Costa Rica nation brand license as it ties to the United Nations ITC Sustainability trade map – which then contributes in that alignment with international standards to drive its ESG framework. Whilst there are multiple certifications for Equifax GBS, "the value underlies in tying those rigorous standards with the quality of the nation, of what we can do, so we walk the walk and talk the talk".

A private sector-led nation brand alliance



Pablo López

Managing Director, Leading Brands of Spain Forum



2024 is the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Leading Brands of Spain Forum – an organisation created and led by the private sector, but with public sector representatives on the Board of Trustees and so described as a private-public alliance. The objective of the Forum is to promote the internationalisation of the Spanish economy and Spanish brands and, through that, to boost the international image and prestige of Spain and its companies.

As Managing Director, Pablo believes that there's a need to position Spain's companies and brands better in international markets; to support the intangible brand assets and build competitive advantage for the Spanish companies. The Forum also believes and has been working to promote the brand of Spain, the country brand, since 2003. At that time there was an alliance of four organisations, and the Leading Brands of Spain Forum was one of them – but the government support didn't come through as expected and the Forum decided to continue the work. Pablo believes place branding is important for any country, city, or region in order to attract tourism, investment, or talent – and he also believes it's a factor that influences the competitiveness of the companies from that country when they expand abroad or trade. Crucially, Pablo believes that to promote the good image and reputation of Spain abroad, the private sector needs to be involved. The Forum highlights the success of the Spanish companies who are leading corporates in



“The key to any kind of place branding initiative is to try to involve the private sector and try to get the citizens, the society, involved because otherwise it's only a public initiative, a government initiative that's not going to work”.

their sector [such as Santander or Telefonica] as it's important that they be seen as Spanish success stories on the world stage rather than simply as global brands.

There's no intention for the Forum to substitute the public sector role in place branding. In Spain, there are different departments at the national level responsible for promoting

Spain's image and reputation abroad: for example, for exports there is ICEX, for tourism there is TourSpain. Between 2012 and 2021, there was a Brand Spain initiative originated in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, but in Pablo's view this did not succeed because of this structure: it didn't have strong political support, the Ministry did not really have sufficient budget, the other departments felt that this responsibility should sit with them, and the private sector was not really involved. The Forum is trying to mobilise both the public and private sector to support its ambitions and is delighted that the King of Spain is the honorary Chairman of the Foundation. Pablo strongly believes there should be a public sector initiative that would combine with the Forum's own efforts, possibly led by the Prime Minister's office, to create one coordinated voice to tell Spain's story.

A private sector-led nation brand alliance

Pablo López, Managing Director, Leading Brands of Spain Forum

The Forum is financed by membership fees, and also by donations. It also receives some specific project funding support from the public sector.

In terms of activities, in 2023 the Forum launched a toolkit of brand assets, including content focused on different attributes or industries. They have also launched an annual publication to promote the brands and brand strengths of Spain. And they also recognise Spain's Brand Ambassadors – Spanish individuals from sports, culture, business, innovation, who have contributed to the good reputation of Spain abroad are Spain Brand Honorary Ambassadors, and the Friends of Spain initiative recognises international citizens for their links to, collaboration with, or support for Spain and Spanish companies.

The Forum is also working on a new diaspora project, to create a connected network of Spanish people abroad. Official figures suggest that there are 3 million Spanish people living abroad, many with good business connections, and the objective is to mobilise these individuals as potential ambassadors of Spain Brand.

Pablo's team also work with foreign journalists in Spain to better explain the Spanish corporate ecosystem, and with international students to share the opportunities created by leading Spanish brands. Given the importance of tourism to the Spanish economy, the Forum is also working on tourism related projects in partnership with the Ministry of Industry and Tourism, aiming to ensure that visitors leave Spain with a better understanding of and attitude to Spanish brands. They are creating brand experiences around fashion, gastronomy, and even industrial sectors.

Pablo also suggested that there are some global brands that originated in Spain which don't acknowledge their Spanish heritage, preferring to promote their global brand status. He believes it's the Forum's job to demonstrate the value of acknowledging Spanish heritage.

I asked him if it was always easy to engage the private sector members in the Forum's activities. Unsurprisingly perhaps, levels of interest vary between projects – members were keener to join trade and country brand promotion missions to Mexico where many companies already have an important presence than Texas, which provided a great experience but where there were fewer existing connections. For events taking place in Spain, the Forum works to ensure that there is something for everyone, for the larger global corporates and the smaller, family-owned businesses.



Pablo acknowledges that the Leading Brands of Spain Forum is potentially a one-off. Whilst Italy, France, and indeed Spain, have organisations that bring together the luxury brands of that country, the breadth of the Forum's ambition is unusual. They have benchmarked other countries' approaches and recognise that most countries have a public-sector led nation brand initiative and public-sector led promotion of trade: he sees that the most successful of these also have strong engagement with their private sector, as he says, "the key to any kind of place branding initiative is to try to involve the private sector and try to get the citizens, the society, involved because otherwise it's only a public initiative, a government initiative that's not going to work".

Private sector marketing partnerships



Chris Lund

Senior Marketing Manager,
Great Western Railway [GWR], UK
Ambassador and partner for the
Great West Way



Great Western Railway are ambassadors and partners for the Great West Way brand, a touring route between London and the city of Bristol established as a destination brand in 2018 with Discover England funding. The ongoing brand management and marketing of the Great West Way is funded by 270 Great West Way Ambassadors: businesses and destinations investing as partners in the project. As marketing manager for Great Western Railway network [GWR] which operates throughout the counties traversed by the route, Chris Lund has been working with the Great West Way team from the outset as it was important to bring a public transport angle to the proposition.

Chris raised the changes currently happening in the UK tourism landscape, with the restructuring of destination marketing organisations into fewer, larger Local Visitor Economy Partnerships [LVEPS – for more information, please see the [City Nation Place Structure & Governance Report](#)]. He sees this restructuring as largely positive, creating an “established hierarchy of contact that we will have” but stressed that he and his team are still happy to work with all tourism providers and that the GWR Network is fortunate to have the resources to have these multiple relationships.

Returning to the relationship between Great West Way and GWR, Chris explained that the network is a member and also a sponsor – ensuring a greater level



of branding than other members as a prominent transport provider. This is a relationship which is replicated with other destination marketing organisations across the wider region covered by the network, ensuring that Chris’ marketing team have access to the assets and information they need to deliver their own advertising and marketing plans. This tactical partnership marketing approach is a crucial level of activity below the GWR corporate brand advertising.

As a transport partner, working with multiple DMOs, I asked Chris how these organisations build his trust? What makes a good partner a great partner? For Chris, it’s important that the DMO has an established, healthy, growing member base of businesses that are engaged in the destination

marketing. To be a good marketing partner, Chris is looking for a good social presence, a good volume of marketing spend, and ideally an understanding of and strategy for developing international visitors. It’s also important to Chris that the DMO provides regular reporting on the performance of partnership marketing activity. The Great West Way was a destination brand where GWR saw strong potential for growing the international visitor customer base and also, as a connector of multiple destinations and attractions, GWR saw the benefit of tapping into the Great West Way network of contacts to support their marketing campaigns. Chris greatly values the Great West Way weekly newsletter round up of what’s going on in the region.

Private sector led diaspora engagement



Walter May

Founder & CEO, GlobalWelsh



Walter describes GlobalWelsh as an evidence-led, not for profit organisation dedicated to building connections with the Welsh diaspora to attract investment into Wales, build trading opportunities for Welsh companies, provide mentoring for Welsh entrepreneurs, and provide knowledge and thought-leadership.

What motivated him to found the organisation? With a career background in manufacturing, when he returned to Wales he was, he says, shocked by the lack of the country's progress in terms of recovering from its industrial background and building an entrepreneurial economy. In 2015, when the organisation first formed, their research showed that the most ambitious, talented individuals left the country and very few returned. The Welsh Nation is in fact twice the perceived size when you take into account this diaspora, and there was an opportunity to offer a connection back to Wales, at scale, and provide reasons to be interested in becoming involved.

The organisation was initially founded on donations: Walter approached high net worth individuals and institutions with his vision. Now it is funded through membership fees, offering individual memberships and corporate memberships [at different rates according to the size of the organisation]; through "success fees" when start-ups secure funding through the GlobalWelsh community; and through project fees.



This raises the question of government support: given the success of what GlobalWelsh has started, is there not an opportunity for the government to support and leverage the diaspora community created? Some of these project fees have been from government and the public sector. Walter stressed that he would not want GlobalWelsh to be dependent on government patronage or funding as he values the autonomy of the private sector-led, not for profit organisational status. However, there is some frustration that where government support would be helpful, it's not always forthcoming, primarily for reasons of budget restrictions. For example, GlobalWelsh is currently carrying out a research study to provide a better understanding of the Welsh brain drain – government funding could help them amplify the project to secure more responses to the survey, but this is not currently available. He also believes that his organisation's understanding of the Welsh diaspora could be used to inform, for example,

tourism and economic development strategy. There have also been occasions in the past when the government has offered funding, but this has come with too many onerous strings attached for a small organisation that needs to keep its overheads low.

The success of GlobalWelsh lies in the successful management of a digital community engagement platform. Walter provided a tour of the platform which supports a mentoring programme; promotes events hosted by Welsh companies or Welsh-owned companies abroad; enables members to make connections and set up meetings with fellow Welsh citizens when travelling; provides an opportunity to seek funding for new business opportunities; supports recruitment; and supports geographic hubs for networking and business connections. Individual's profiles include information on what makes them feel connected to Wales and their personal history of being Welsh – harnessing the business leaders in your diaspora means connecting with their personal motivations.

GlobalWelsh does not tap into or have access to the storytelling creative that the Welsh government leads with when building the nation brand for investment, talent, and tourism. However, it does continually tell stories of Welsh success, both home and away. As Walter says, "If you're going to inspire the next generation, you need to tell inspiring stories". And so, in this way, GlobalWelsh is an ambassador for the nation brand.

Building private sector networks to support the place brand



Gill & Will Sherwin

Co-Founders, Best of British Beer
Ambassadors and sponsors for
We Are Staffordshire

Gill & Will are the co-founders of the Best of British Beer company, which is an online business marketing a wide range of craft beers produced in the UK. They see themselves as a business with a purpose – not only to celebrate and market the best of British Beer but also to be a “good” business. The company’s employees are now also shareholders, with 51% of the business in employee shareholdings.

Gill & Will are signed-up ambassadors for We Are Staffordshire, and are also now sponsors of the organisation. Interestingly, neither of them are natives of Staffordshire – Gill is from Scotland, and Will is from Newcastle. So why did they choose Staffordshire and why are they so committed to helping to build a more positive reputation for the county?

Will explains that as an online business, selling to the whole of the UK, their Staffordshire location is not an integral part of their brand story. Their motivation for supporting the work of We Are Staffordshire is partly for their staff - to improve the quality of life, to build pride in where they live and work. Gill added that it’s important to their business to encourage length of service in their staff. “We don’t want them to think once they’ve got some experience, ‘oh, I’m off to Manchester now.’ We want them to have pride of place and enjoy living and working here.”

Given Staffordshire’s history of brewing, it’s perhaps a shame that this isn’t part of the company’s brand story. What they do value in Staffordshire is its history and strengths in

manufacturing, ensuring that they have access to all the materials they need for shipping for example. Will adds that in Staffordshire, there’s a lot of goodwill between businesses; people are helpful, there’s a desire to get things made and done, “in a sort of enabling and functional way, the place is really, really important to us”. Will also emphasised that they try to ensure that all the products and services they invest in as a business are local – to keep the money around the local economy.

Gill and Will feel gratitude to Staffordshire for the support they’ve received and so they want to give back and feel there’s a real need to talk up the county and its assets, Gill says, “It’s such a fantastic county and, as Will said, it’s really under the radar. The people here are really like, ‘oh no, we’re not that great,’ and they don’t like to talk themselves up; it’s not what you do, you play it down a lot”. They also acknowledge that the county is best known for its cultural heritage as the home of the potteries, and whilst that’s great, there’s a much bigger story to be told.

Gill and Will have been involved with We Are Staffordshire since the place brand organisation was first formed, during COVID. They would suggest that the organisation’s success in building a strong network of private sector ambassadors is because the county actually has quite a tight knit community - “once you get involved in one thing in Staffordshire, you sort of tend to get involved in more... there’s a lot of goodwill so everybody feels very committed to making Staffordshire

better.” As ambassadors, the couple see their role as contributing to the development of telling a better story and encouraging people to experience the county in a better way. They can see the momentum building behind the vision of We Are Staffordshire.

The British Beer company are also introducing more beer brands to be a part of the story – they’ve commissioned brewers to create “pottery beers,” named after the famous products of the potteries, and these are sent around the UK.

We discussed what gives the We Are Staffordshire team their energy, and as well as their passion Gill and Will could see that their separate status from the local authority allows them to be more dynamic and focused.



Once you get involved in one thing in Staffordshire, you sort of tend to get involved in more... there’s a lot of goodwill so everybody feels very committed to making Staffordshire better.”

Gill and Will believe that what We Are Staffordshire do well is to foster networking through the Ambassador events – inviting good speakers from other places to share best practice in place storytelling, as well as showcasing the venues and businesses from across the county. The events have a quality feel which imbues more pride and they value how the team shine a light on things in the county that those living there should be proud of. They can see that the next stage is to promote this message more externally, “I think we’ve done really well at getting everyone in the county to know what’s going on, but haven’t done enough yet to let everyone else outside the county know what we’ve got. There’s a lot of patting on the backs, which is great, but that’s maybe not half the job yet” and this is the reason for the investment as sponsors. The team at We Are Staffordshire have built their trust and Gill and Will back them to continue to achieve.

Place of origin export promotion



Denise Stubbs

Thokozani Wines

Trade platform partner of Wesgro, the official tourism, trade and investment promotion agency for Cape Town and the Western Cape

Denise joined me for an online chat having just returned from an event organised by Wesgro with one of the major banks in the region where she'd been asked to speak about the challenges of securing investment and trade as an SME business. Denise is pleased to have the support of Wesgro as a smaller business which is facing what she sees as some of the challenges of doing business in South Africa. She sees that there are some perception challenges for the nation brand but believes that the brand of Cape Town and the Cape Town region is more positive.

Denise shared the history of Thokozani Wines, and her own personal history. She addresses issues of race and South Africa's history in a very upfront way: as a woman of colour raised by farm labourers. "I grew up in Pniel, which was mostly agricultural land at the time, with my parents who were farm labourers. Diemersfontein was owned by a white South African couple, the Sonnenbergs, who had lived in the UK for 25 years before deciding to return to South Africa permanently. They were committed to transforming the farm and, not having children of their own, wanted to leave a lasting legacy. To do so, they supported their workers in establishing their own business named Thokozani under the umbrella of Diemersfontein."

Thokozani means "celebration" but Denise is clear that it's been hard work from the outset, with the first challenge being to change the mindset of the farm labourers. But



over the past 20 years they have built a wine business, and so also a tourism product. The Sonnenbergs provided education and support on running a business and on the process of winemaking and Denise is very proud of their brand, and of the fact that there are 69 farm workers who have worked the land and are now shareholders and own the brand. They are producing a fine wine and offering a luxury visitor experience – they want people to choose them because they are niche, because they are different. She's proud that Wesgro position her company as one of the "little gems" of the region.

Denise is also hugely proud of the Wesgro region, "Western Cape is unique and it's also the most successful province in the whole of South Africa."

Thokozani Wines are a member of the Made in Cape export and trading platform and finds it to be a powerful and useful tool, especially because of what is built around the online platform, including one-to-one meetings and trade delegations. She compares it favourably to other trade platforms where you don't see the results: "Of all the platforms I've been



Western Cape is unique and it's also the most successful or growing province in the whole of South Africa."

on, with the Made in Cape I've made a deal immediately". Denise appreciates the opportunity for her brand to be associated with the Wesgro brand and the Western Cape place brand, and to be there in good company alongside other fine wineries.

Denise feels supported by Wesgro – not just with the Made in Cape platform but also by additional opportunities, such as trade missions. She also specifically mentioned the value of Wesgro's Export Council which provides free-of-charge education on how to export and on understanding export legislation etc. In turn, she is keen to support Wesgro's endeavours, "I never say no. If I can, I go." And she's keen to recognise the strength of relationship building by Wesgro and even goes so far as to say that she feels like family.

Reflecting on her participation in trade missions, Denise suggests that having now travelled more than she expected to be able to, it's made her value home and everything that the Western Cape has to offer even more. If she were asked by Wesgro to be an ambassador for the region's opportunities, she would raise both hands.

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