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### Moving forward together
01

Context
Welcome to Ottawa

Canada’s capital city has much to be proud of. While Ottawa’s status as a G7 capital signifies its role in international governance, our people also take pride in our rich cultural mosaic, joie de vivre, connection with nature, and the many intangibles that make Ottawa a quintessentially Canadian city.

Economically, we prosper. Ottawa has the fourth-highest gross domestic product per capita among major Canadian cities (source) and the Ottawa-Gatineau region places fifth-highest in Canada for median family income (source).

However, some Canadians underestimate Ottawa’s strengths. Research shows that many people see the city primarily as the seat of government. They fail to see the many other remarkable achievements that make Ottawans proud. For example, Ottawa is also home to one of Canada’s most respected tech hubs. The city employs 72,000 people in the tech sector alone, led by companies like Shopify and QNX. Combined with stable, well-paying government jobs, Ottawa’s economic diversity is the envy of Canada.

Ottawa’s infrastructure - including The Shaw Centre and the expanding O-Train system - makes it well positioned to continue its role as the nation’s capital. This city offers appealing, Canadian experiences to international visitors, including Parliament Hill and a collection of world-class museums.
There is no doubt that Ottawa is a marvelous place to live and work.

In 2017, MoneySense named Ottawa the number one place to live among 400+ Canadian places (source). Internationally, Ottawa ranks 19th in the 2018 Mercer Quality of Living Survey, a comparison of the world’s top cities. (In 2018, Toronto ranked 17th, Montreal 21st, and Calgary 33rd.) The Mercer survey also ranked Ottawa number two in the world for city sanitation, an important factor in a city’s attractiveness (source).

However, Ottawa’s city brand is underperforming.

While Canada’s brand holds the fifth position in the 2018 Anholt Nation Brands Index (NBI), its capital does not appear among the top 50 places in NBI’s City Brands Index (source). In fact, the 2018 World’s Best Cities Report by Resonance ranked Ottawa 71st. This is just behind Cologne, Germany, Atlanta, U.S.A. and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. When it comes to brand, Ottawa places far behind Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto (source).

Perceptions of Ottawa do not match the city’s true excellence as a place to live, work, visit and study. This misalignment poses a long-term business risk for those who do call Ottawa home. More people need to become aware of Ottawa’s most appealing attributes. The good news? This brand weakness hints at Ottawa’s extraordinary potential for growth.
The Ottawa challenge

Ottawa is a high-performing city with an underperforming national and global reputation; in other words, Ottawa’s brand must improve so that the city can reach its full potential.

A city brand is not built overnight. It is gradually shaped by the experiences of citizens, visitors, students and businesspeople. The brand contains the stories they share and memories they treasure.

Ottawa’s brand needs to align with the identity of the place and its people. In an economy fueled by word of mouth recommendations, the way we present our city must rest on this foundation. Only then can we ensure that our experiences and promotional activities align with the millions of stories that Ottawa generates each year.

Our Place DNA™ project revealed Ottawa’s identity and opportunities to improve our brand. There are significant gaps between our city’s identity, the way we see ourselves collectively, and how others see us. City brands improve when these three perceptions align.

The purpose of this brand storybook is to define:

- Ottawa’s DNA, or place identity,
- the framework for Ottawa’s brand,
- the themes that will guide our brand stories and
- the right audiences that our stories will resonate with.

This document will also provide content marketing tactics and best practices to allow all partners across the city to start implementing the brand recommendations immediately with the aim of increasing Ottawa’s brand reputation through stories and experiences that stem from our city’s true identity.
Our process

The increased competitiveness of Ottawa’s place brand hinges on successful collaboration amongst the entire city and its different entities, people, and businesses.

As such, the process leading up to the development of Ottawa’s brand and corresponding key themes was based on extensive research and working closely with local partners, businesses, institutions, citizens, and led by Ottawa Tourism and the City of Ottawa.

Input and consultation with stakeholders and the wider community, paired with Destination Think’s proven, comprehensive qualitative and quantitative approach, ensures that an inclusive perspective sets the foundation for a new, data-driven brand and themes to guide citywide storytelling efforts.
This brand storybook is written using the combined knowledge gained from previous steps in our city identity and branding process:

01 Place DNA™:
Uncovering Ottawa’s core identity, which is a collection of its defining attributes.

02 Brand framework:
Beginning to express Ottawa’s Place DNA™ by defining the city’s brand story, brand promise, and brand essence.

03 Brand themes:
Identifying core ideas and concepts that will complete the foundation for Ottawa’s stories, resonate with its people, and remain true to its identity (DNA).

04 Brand storybook:
Defining guidelines for implementing the new brand framework and themes through communication and experiences.
This process was supported by research that included:

**Engaging Ottawa citizens through a Place DNA™ survey, workshops and interviews.**

To gather current citizen sentiment, Destination Think! surveyed a relevant sample of 1,393 Ottawa citizens for their input. The Place DNA™ survey is a quantitative assessment that shows the Ottawa attributes and assets that locals deem most important. This ensures that the city brand resonates with local perspectives, creates loyal brand ambassadors and aligns the experiences of citizens, businesses and students with future brand promises.

**Gathering input from Ottawa’s civic leaders and business communities through additional workshops and focus groups.**

Destination Think! interviewed 25+ community leaders, people from several businesses, City of Ottawa employees and experts from the tourism industry. Four workshops with 100+ attendees were also organized for entrepreneurs and people from Ottawa’s cultural and tourism sectors.

**Completing sentiment analysis of 7 million online conversations about Ottawa from around the world.**

To better understand Ottawa’s reputation, Destination Think! evaluated sentiment of 6,929,628 online conversations from 500,000 online sources that occurred over a period of two years. Sources include established media hubs, public social media posts, comment threads, and blogs, to better understand Ottawa’s reputation.

**Assessing Ottawa’s existing communication channels**

To do this, Destination Think! completed a detailed review of the online activities from a representative sample of 18 prominent Ottawa organizations and over 45 different channels. The review examined websites, social media channels, social media tactics and general online communication skills.

**Researching key audiences**

This desktop research drew key insights by reviewing primary audiences that are relevant for city marketing: citizens, visitors, students, and business communities.

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*4 workshops*
02

Place brand
Branding our city

In city marketing, a brand is more than a set of colours, fonts, logos and communications guidelines. It’s a collaboration that comes from within the place and is expressed outwardly through the passionate people who bring it to life. Citizens, visitors, students and businesspeople each have a voice in civic life and a stake in the decisions that affect their communities. They tell the stories that shape public perception; they have and create meaningful experiences that make a place what it is; the brand belongs to them.
Identity and DNA

What makes this city what it truly is? Ottawa evokes a distinct sense of place - a complex blend of ingredients that coexist in a single location. Elements of identity include geography, economy, culture, history, climate and people. Citizens can reveal a city’s character as they experience it, which helps to define the city’s Place DNA™.

Place DNA™ is a city’s identity. It is the foundation of a city brand, and the primary influence for everything the city develops or communicates. It is the truth of a place; it’s who that place really is. A city that ignores its DNA risks losing brand authenticity and credibility. It is likely to build urban experiences that are disconnected from its identity, while its city marketing makes promises it can’t fulfill. Many places struggle with this. Place DNA™ is the way to ensure that our city’s brand voice is a trusted expression of the people and their desires.

Building a city brand

While a city’s Place DNA™ reveals its true identity, a city’s brand is a choice. Brand is the overarching story and experience that its people deliver and communicates to people to give them positive, memorable experiences and to build a matching reputation.

REMINDER
A city brand is the sum of all stories told about the city and all experiences people have within it.
The Experience Economy

The model for modern city marketing has stories at the core.

The organizations responsible for promoting the city tell stories, but so do industry members, students, citizens and visitors. Every person who says anything about the city has a voice as a storyteller. The stories people tell communicate their experiences and perceptions.

Those experiences are extremely valuable. In *The Experience Economy*, Joseph Pine II and James Gilmore describe a framework for how value is created. Commodities gain value when they become goods and products; value increases again when those become services, and the value of services rises even more by forming an experience (source).

It’s easy to see this in action. Experiences are the reason why people will pay more for a cup of coffee at Starbucks. The coffee is a good combined with a service, layered over the combination of details unique to Starbucks, from the scent of their coffee to the misspelled names on paper cups. The experience may become transformative if that customer travels to meet the farmer in South America and learn the story of where coffee had come from by experiencing it firsthand.

Or consider travel. For a couple seeking a weekend in the city, the value of a trip is more than the price of goods and services like train tickets, hotels, food and festivals; the trip is valuable because of the new memories they will be able to share through the experience. Going beyond this requires a life-changing, or transformative, travel experience. This is where the highest value is found.

Cities that offer a unique experience provide greater value to citizens, visitors, students and businesses alike. The most passionate supporters will be willing to pay extra or travel longer distances to be there. Products, like tourism attractions or restaurants, that are common to many places can become unique experiences when they align with a shared story. A casino in Las Vegas feels different than the same casino anywhere else. Local identity is the reason. Every city offers a different experience that is rooted in the DNA of its community.

*Source: B Joseph Pine II & James Gilmore “The Experience Economy” (1997-2011)*
City branding requires alignment

A strong city brand requires community participation and alignment. To lead stakeholders in the right direction, city marketers need to identify:

- What their city truly is (its DNA)
- What their city says it is (its projected image)
- What the world says about it (its perceived image)

When there is a gap between these three things, the city risks losing its distinctiveness and its ability to offer people compelling reasons to visit or invest. Cities can mitigate those risks by rallying their communities around thematic storytelling that they can apply across all experiences and communication.
A city brand built on identity

Nashville becomes Music City through authentic stories and experiences.

The city of Nashville, Tennessee can sum up its brand with one word: music. In 2003, the Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp. (NCVC) led a bold, collaborative effort to begin building the Music City brand to show that Nashville is a year-round destination for the world’s music lovers.

Deana Ivey, NCVC’s Chief Marketing Officer, explains that the organization “worked to position the Music City brand around all genres of music, not just country, and told the story of Nashville’s rich music history dating back nearly 150 years.”

Music City is more than a promotional idea; it is an important part of Nashville’s identity. To verify this, NCVC invited stakeholders to participate very early on in the branding process. This way, the brand is validated by the people, and so are the city’s marketing activities. Community input has been instrumental to the way Nashville continues to evolve its genuine experiences and stories.

“We have been fortunate to have partners who understand the impact an authentic brand can have on business, and the community has rallied around the brand,” says Ivey, who notes that NCVC continues to keep stakeholders involved and motivated by recognizing “businesses and brands throughout the city who embraced the Music City brand by naming them Brand Champions.”

Today, music permeates everything Nashville says and does. The Music City brand has helped support many industries in the city beyond music or tourism. By showcasing other creative people in the city and by integrating musical elements into other locations including the airport and the hospital, the underlying message is clear. For Nashville, music has laid the foundation for what Ivey calls, “Nashville’s creative spirit.”

The Music City brand has certainly helped keep the lights on. Nashville has achieved seven straight years of record-setting growth in hotel room nights sold leading into 2018 (source). In 2017, the city gained an all-time-high $20.7 billion of economic impact from tourism (source).

Nashville’s story shows what is possible when a city’s people rally around its authentic experiences and stories.
A brand made of real experiences and powerful storytelling

Destination British Columbia strives to become North America’s most recommended destination.

When people have a remarkable trip, they tell their friends. This is the simple principle at work behind Destination British Columbia (DBC)’s brand. The organization has set itself an ambitious goal to become North America’s most recommended destination, and as visitors and citizens share more and more stories online, the finish line gets nearer.

Over the years, DBC has learned to build online advocacy and turn the province’s visitors and citizens into its best marketers. Stories told by British Columbia’s citizens and locals are inherently rooted in the destination’s DNA, which, over time, inevitably communicates an authentic brand. The #ExploreBC hashtag is one way the organization encourages advocacy online. “In 2012, we ran a successful – and fairly innovative at the time – crowdsourced blogger tour, which kick-started the #ExploreBC hashtag,” says Leah Poulton, DBC’s Director of Global Content. This grassroots approach has paid off, demonstrating the power of online advocacy. #ExploreBC now has over 4.4 million mentions on Instagram alone. People continue to share an incredible volume of quality stories. Poulton says that projects like #ExploreBC have helped to “demonstrate the power of social platforms, peer-to-peer advocacy, and influencer tactics to colleagues both inside and outside the organization.” By collecting and amplifying these stories, DBC is able to measure and benchmark its brand performance.

Of course, #ExploreBC’s success rests on the destination delivering a quality experience that matches visitors’ expectations. “We know that we do a really great job on the advertising and promotional side,” says Grant Mackay, Vice President of Destination & Industry Development at DBC. “However, we also recognize that at the end of the day, our message is only one of the messages that gets out there. The more dominant message probably comes from what our visitors are saying on social media.”

“This made us realize that we should be spending time ensuring that our destination and all the component pieces that make up an experience are memorable and remarkable.” To accomplish this, DBC provided a province-wide education and product development program (led by Destination Think!) for select tourism operators who sought to improve the tourism experiences they provide as well as increase their businesses’ online storytelling potential. The program included workshops, individual coaching, and site assessments.

Over time, the British Columbia brand has more closely aligned its true identity with the way it portrays itself. For example, newer brand guidelines lead DBC’s visual style toward darker, moody images of clouds over water, instead of bright and sunny beach scenes. This reflects the reality of a visit to the province’s west coast, where visitors are likely to find overcast skies and rain at many times of the year.

Most importantly, DBC’s leadership continues to involve its province-wide network of organizations in brand development. “Think about the things we can do together. [...] We can compete, we can coexist, or we can collaborate,” says Mackay. British Columbia has chosen collaboration.

This video shows how one craft brewery and program participant in Prince Rupert, BC created shareable moments at the bar counter:
Ottawa's Place DNA™
Ottawa’s DNA

As the country’s capital, part of our identity is inextricably linked with our nation’s government. But this does not solely define us. We’re ready to tell our story and share our pride for this special city we call home. Ottawa is a city that has been shaped by the connections it forges between people, nature, and across time.

DNA statement

Home first to the people of the Algonquin Anishinabe Nation, Ottawa has been shaped by the history of Canada. Situated at the intersection of three rivers and two cities, we bring together the past and the future, city and nature, English, French, and Indigenous communities. We are the confluence of peoples and cultures that shaped Canada and, as its capital, we connect our citizens with the rest of the country and the world.

The people of Ottawa are proud of their city. We enjoy a slower pace of life in our intimate city with its unique heritage, stately architecture and surrounding nature. We are developing our city with care in order to protect and add to the holistic story of Canada while maintaining our own identity. We have a vision for our future, now it’s time to actualize it.
The Place DNA™ process revealed the gaps between Ottawa’s identity and perceptions.

Mind the gaps, please.

Many people do not know enough about Canada’s capital and do not see it as a unique, authentic place.

Ottawans are proud of their city and see themselves as urbanites, but the outside world does not see Ottawa as a vibrant, urban city. They sometimes perceive it as boring.

In the French-speaking world, Ottawa struggles with a lack of awareness for being bilingual.

Ottawa is a natural meeting point at the confluence of three rivers.

Ottawa’s infrastructure has shaped the city and is recognized by both its local community and visitors.

Ottawans see their city as truly urban, but the outside world is unaware of this vibrancy and perceives Ottawa as boring.
04

Ottawa's brand
The brand framework

Our identity is not a choice; it's a representation of who we are. Our brand, however, is a choice; it's how we actively present our identity to the world. By grounding our brand in our Place DNA™, we will present ourselves in a genuine way that attracts the right citizen, visitor, student or business.

A city’s brand is truly the sum of its parts. City marketers cannot create a brand - instead, the city brand is shaped by the people who live there, the experiences that happen within it and the stories those experiences create. Every interaction with a place affects how a person perceives its brand, so it is vital to understand what makes Ottawa unique and ensure that the brand flows naturally from its identity. The following brand framework for Ottawa is based on Ottawa’s Place DNA™ defined above.

A brand is a living thing and is perceived differently by every person. A family with young children from France who visit in the winter will see Ottawa differently than a student from Winnipeg who considers Ottawa as a place to study, or a prospective business from the U.S. that contemplates opening a new branch. This means that Ottawa’s brand framework should serve as a template to deepen the experience and communication for each defined audience group.

Building a true city brand is a collective effort. Instead of leaving Ottawa’s brand to be owned and executed exclusively by a single organization, the brand framework and corresponding storybook should empower each entity to emphasize their unique attributes and contribute to a city-wide story. This document has been created to help guide, inspire and unite the city of Ottawa, partners, individuals and businesses in a common vision that strengthens the city’s brand. The brand serves as the compass that guides the communications and experience delivery.

The purpose of the brand framework is to:

01. Provide direction for all communication (within the city’s control).
02. Provide direction and align stakeholders in communication and storytelling.
03. Act as a guide for destination development initiatives.
Ottawa’s assets

Heritage
Ottawa’s heritage runs deep. As the capital of Canada, you can feel and see Ottawa’s rich history the moment you step into the city. Indigenous and European roots are woven into museums, eclectic and cultural festivals, and Victorian architecture. This is a place that connects Canada’s past and the present.

Riverland
Because of its relatively mild climate, Ottawa is surrounded by a natural wonderland year round. Located on the Canadian Shield, dense forests abound, while its deep river valleys serve as a picturesque backdrop to a vast landscape of rolling hills and vibrantly green flat plains.

Events
Bringing people together from all walks of life is Ottawa’s specialty. Our city is the gathering place for people to connect and share in something meaningful. From tulips to celebrating Canadian winter, its many festivals and events showcase Ottawa’s spirit while also uniting various cultures.

Quintessential Canada
Past and present; urban and nature; Indigenous, French and English culture all come together where three rivers converge. The country’s heritage lives on through the city’s famous landmarks like the Rideau Canal, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The country’s presence is alive within the passionate Canadian citizens that call this place home. Ottawa’s history and diversity make it an embodiment of Canadian culture.
Ottawa’s personality traits

**Beautiful**
Ottawa’s elegant appearance marks the balance between city and nature. Our city lies at the edge of nature. The natural landscape is one of vibrant green riverlands and forest. The city’s landscape is stately, charming and comfortable. Together, they combine to create a beautiful place that is intimate and inviting.

**Proud**
Ottawans have a unique sense of pride unlike any other Canadian city. We are proud to live in Canada’s capital. We are also proud of our city - and our country - for being a place with an open-minded attitude, neighbourly values, and natural splendour.

**Intimate**
Ottawa is an eclectic urban centre, but our small-town vibe gives our city an intimate feel that is rare to find in a national capital. Ottawa is metropolitan, but maintains a warm and friendly nature. Its citizens have the camaraderie of a small village; this permeates the entire city, creating a warm welcome to visitors.

**Lively**
If Canada is a mosaic, then Ottawa is the tile that completes the picture. We are home to a diverse range of cultures from all around the world and because of that, there is never a dull moment. From a thriving art and music scene to a wide-ranging culinary community, Ottawa is as interesting as it is engaging.
Ottawa’s brand story

“The moment you arrive in Ottawa, you will feel connected to Canada. In a place that unites the past and the present, this historic city calls on you to uncover the richness and complexity of a unique nation.

Tap into the spirit of Canada by learning the story of its origins and future. As a city, Ottawa connects three rivers and its sister city Gatineau. As a capital, Ottawa unites the country of Canada. Engage with the diverse cultures and peoples of Ottawa, who are unified by their pride for their beautiful city with an intimate vibe.

This easily accessible city is a place where you can be yourself, experience the heart of Canada, raft through the city and visit Parliament. Immerse yourself in a city that will refresh you with its welcoming nature and an invitation to come together.”

Ottawa is where you can connect with Canada's soul.
Ottawa's promise

Canada in one city.
Ottawa's essence
05

Ottawa’s brand themes
Ottawa’s brand themes

In city marketing, brand themes help people tell the specific stories that are most closely aligned with the city’s DNA.

In literature, a theme is considered the core of a story. It is the connective tissue that holds the story together and conveys a lesson, idea or concept integral to the human experience.

Themes can also be found in places. Themes within places affect what you see (how a place looks) and what you feel (freedom, relaxation, danger). For example, Las Vegas’s appearance is characterized by neon lights, expansive hotels with lagoon-style pools and buzzing casinos. In some ways, it looks like a theme park for adults. How people feel when they experience and interact with the place is aligned as well: everyone knows that “What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas.” People experiencing Las Vegas feel adult freedom, an absence of consequences, and lowered inhibitions.

As in literature, the themes of a city are at the centre of its stories. Themes provide a compass for developing experiences and improving communication around the city’s core truths. Genuine storytelling supports the themes that grow from the roots of the city’s DNA and are essential to building a strong reputation. Each brand-driven story strengthens perceptions of experiences that a place can claim as its own and become known for.

Ultimately, the theme is the source from which experiences and, as a result, stories flow.
Four brand themes

These four themes flow from Ottawa’s brand and Place DNA™, which was developed through extensive research. The themes, whether used individually or in combination with each other, should be found at the heart of all stories told by city storytellers.

Ottawa’s legacy
- The future gifted from the present.
- Parliament shaping policy and life for all Canadians, present and future.

Connect with Canada
- Canada’s past, present & future.
- Urban & nature.
- Connecting people, geography, politics, provinces & languages.

Joie de vivre
- Quality of life.
- A personal & intimate city.
- Time taken for celebration & vibrant events.
- A lively urban experience.

Canada’s village
- Unity in diversity.
- Acceptance & freedom of individuality.
- A caring community.
Theme 1: Connect with Canada

At the heart of Ottawa’s brand is the truth in which defines this place and its very essence: Canada in one city.

All Canadian cities are part of the fabric of the country, but not all cities are an embodiment of the country itself. In this regard, Ottawa is distinct. This is where you can connect with Canada at any moment in time. You can see beyond the present moment into what has been and what is yet to come.

Ottawa is home to the hallowed ground of Canada’s past. This city preserves the nation’s memory and gives it the spark of life through its museums, galleries, Parliament and monuments. Canada’s presence is alive in the streets of the city and the hearts of the citizens. It is where you can connect with the people who truly live by Canadian values. Indigenous, French, English, along with people from all corners of the world, have created a diverse society that is quintessentially Canadian. This society is rooted in diversity, acceptance, warmth and welcome. On the horizon is the future of a city and of a country. Ottawa offers the opportunity to connect with the intangible, to see beyond what is, to what could be.
Theme 2: Canada’s village

The Huron-Iroquois word “Kanata” translates to village and Ottawa is where Canada comes together.

A village is a community with common customs, culture and convention. It is a place of comfort and safety where people have formed a type of family. Ottawa has achieved this on a city scale. During the winter, you may spend the day skating the Rideau Canal and drinking hot chocolate. In the summer, you might join a yoga session on Parliament Hill, taking on the most peaceful of practices at the epicentre of our nation’s political power. This city has not lost its village soul. Whether it is your first time visiting, or where you have spent the last semester, or the last 10 years of your life living here, Ottawa welcomes you with a friendliness and accessibility unique to G7 capital cities that wield a similar level of economic and political might. A village houses a diversity of perspectives and people, but is united on a foundation of respect, acceptance, and the recognized value of all people.

Benefit/impact:

Strengthen Ottawa’s brand
- Authenticity
- Build reputation
- Increase desirability
- Elevate importance

Build advocacy
- Pride
- Ownership
- Engagement

City marketing
- Development
- Alignment
- Vision
Theme 3: Joie de vivre

Joie de vivre is a philosophy that translates to the “cheerful enjoyment of life; an exultation of spirit.”

It can be found in the joy of conversation, eating, travel, or celebration; it is the joy of living. Ottawans love to enjoy life, to live better, to find and pursue happiness in the place they call home and in its people.

They take great pleasure in the beauty of their city and its intimacy, the seasons as they turn throughout the year, a delicious meal shared with friends, vibrant events that bring the people and city to life and the nature that surrounds them. Ottawans offer newcomers or visitors an invitation to join them by welcoming them into that intangible experience – the joy of living.

Benefit/impact:

- Strengthen Ottawa’s brand
  - Address dull & boring perceptions
  - Build reputation
  - Increase desirability
- Build advocacy
  - Pride
  - Ownership
  - Engagement
- City marketing
  - Alignment & participation
Theme 4: Ottawa’s legacy

Ottawa’s legacy is an enduring, unbroken circle. The people of the past have laid the foundation for Ottawa’s future, just as the people of the future will inevitably become part of Ottawa’s past, and so the cycle continues.

Both our physical and social cityscapes reflect Ottawa’s many coexisting legacies. Each generation adds a new layer to our history. This city has long been home to changemakers, pioneers and those who can see beyond what is, to what could be.

Since the beginning, Ottawans have looked forward to ensure that they were preparing this place and its people for success. The Rideau Canal is a gift of economic prosperity and competitive advantage given from the past to the future. The Parliament buildings are the very embodiment of a country and a capital city’s legacy as shaped by the leaders of the nation. From policy, economy, and trade to culture, education, healthcare and the environment, fundamental Canadian values become reality in Ottawa.

Benefit/impact:

- Strengthen Ottawa’s brand
  - Authenticity
  - Increase relevance

- Build advocacy
  - Pride
  - Ownership
  - Engagement

- City marketing
  - Align multiple stakeholders around common vision
Audience profiles
More than 100,000 students at four leading post-secondary institutions make up Ottawa’s diverse student population. Maintaining and growing this student population will be incredibly important for providing a talent pool for both the technology sector and the capital’s other growing industries.

Canadian universities are becoming increasingly appealing to international students and Ottawa is no exception, its bilingual offerings definitely playing a role in its global appeal. In Ottawa, education excels within many different subjects including medicine, law, finance, and STEM. When looking at medicine specifically, the University of Ottawa alone is ranked 90th globally for clinical medicine, and also 91st in the world for social sciences and public health.
Student profile

Psychographics

Believe

- Students seek **independence** to discover their passions, and learn how to live in the world as their own person.
- Students need a city that offers ample **opportunity for employment** after their studies.

Need

- Canadians’ **can-do attitude** attracts international students but they need to be reassured about the **cold weather** and **vibrancy** of the city.

Like

- 40% of all citizens give Ottawa a very high score for **attracting** post-secondary students. 10% feel the city is doing a poor job.
- 83% feel satisfaction with the **quality of teaching**.

Desire

- Creating **more student groups** within universities and colleges would help to alleviate the dilemma of the lack of campus life.

Media consumption

Hierarchy of channel consumption

1. YouTube
2. Instagram
3. Facebook
4. Snapchat
5. Twitter

Best practices

- Ottawa’s public library is making a great effort to communicate to students.
- The use-it guides in Europe speak directly to students and are an outstanding example of how to communicate with young people.
Student profile

**Product**
- **Bilingualism** is one of the main reasons to choose institutions in Ottawa.
- **Forging bonds** with a diverse group of people is another very important aspect to the Ottawa experience that students would like more of.
- **Absence of campus life.** Many students are local citizens of Ottawa that go home once the academic break begins, which affects the vibrancy of the culture on campus.

**Price**
- **Price of tuition** is favourable compared with the competitive set.
- Students believe studying in Ottawa is a good investment. It is a city that offers ample opportunity for employment after their studies.
- Students that are from Ottawa chose to attend post-secondary schools locally to save money and live at home.

**Promotion**
- **Engagement** on institution channels is too low (and higher among ex-students).
- **Content** is often repeated on many platforms and not channel-specific.
- **Imagery** is sometimes underwhelming.
- Become video savvy to reach out to video natives.

**Place**
- Students prefer eclectic nightlife and would like to have more options when it comes to partaking in social activities.
- **Local transport** needs improvement. Light rail would be welcomed.

---

“I wanted to try a bigger city that wasn’t as large as Toronto but also not as small as London or Waterloo.”

Shannon Landreth, Algonquin College
A fast-growing hub for tech, and an established centre for government, health care, insurance, finance, and more, Ottawa is Canada’s most educated city with a rich talent pool. The professional workforce here earn the highest median income in any of Canada’s cities, and generally see low levels of unemployment. A huge amount work in engineering and science – the second largest concentration of scientists and engineers live here. Already home to tech giants like Shopify, the city’s business landscape continues to attract new talent from across Canada and the world, drawn by Ottawa’s low cost of doing business, liveability, government support, and excellent pool of university-educated talent.

Breakdown of Ottawa GDP

- 18.9% comes from tech
- 18.2% comes from government
- 10.4% from finance, insurance, and real estate
- 7.5% from healthcare and education
- 2.1% from tourism
- 9.4% from trade
- 4% from construction
- 1% from primary (rural output)
- 28.6% others

When looking at the breakdown of Ottawa’s GDP:

- 18.9% comes from tech
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- 10.4% from finance, insurance, and real estate
- 7.5% from healthcare and education
- 2.1% from tourism
- 9.4% from trade
- 4% from construction
- 1% from primary (rural output)
- 28.6% others

Demographic

G7 GROUP OF CITIES

Total workforce

756,000

Population

Canada’s fourth largest city, home to just under

1,000,000 PEOPLE

Population is growing and is expected to continue growth based on forecasts.

Age

42% OF POPULATION between 35 and 64

22% OF POPULATION between 20 and 34
Businesses profile

Income

$86,451

Highest median family income amongst Canada’s 6th largest cities. Employment levels in Ottawa are consistently higher than other regions in Ontario since 1999.

Ethnicity

ROUGHLY 18% of Ottawa’s overall population was born outside Canada.

Immigrants who settle in Ottawa are attracted to high paying jobs and post-secondary studies. They tend to be more educated, advanced in their career, and earn higher wages than immigrants in other cities. Large amounts of refugees and family-based immigrants are drawn to Ottawa as well.

Housing

Compared to other Canadian cities, housing prices in Ottawa remain reasonable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian avg.</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>87.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Typical Ottawa household spending of pre-tax income, to cover the cost of home ownership, is lower than the Canadian average and much more affordable than Toronto’s and Vancouver’s.

However, the booming economy is contributing to a housing boom based on supply and demand and Ottawa is seen in late 2018 as a “sellers market,” especially in areas near highly sought after urban amenities. The average resale price of a housing unit in Ottawa during the first two quarters of 2018 was $450,367.

Office vacancy

In 2018, office vacancy showed a 10.3% DECREASE FROM THE YEAR BEFORE

Looking forward

In May 2018, the Capital Build Task Force was unveiled by the Ottawa Board of Trade (formally the Ottawa Chamber), focusing on five priorities: LeBreton Flats redevelopment; train line between Ottawa and Gatineau; Civic Hospital redevelopment; revitalized ByWard Market; and federal employment node in Orléans. In 2018, Amazon also announced it would be opening a new fulfillment center in Carlsbad Springs that will bring another 600 jobs to the area.
Psychographics

Believe

- Citizens do see the advantage of living in a business friendly environment but still do not know the value of Ottawa’s economy enough.
- Outside media and rankings believe Ottawa is friendly to do business.

Need

- Space and vacancy of offices in desirable location.
- Professional workforce, likely university educated.
- Resources for startups: hiring pools, legal advice, funding access, mentorship opportunities.
- A city with good liveability to attract and maintain workforce. This means good transport and access to proper amenities.
- Community support - lately large tech hubs have transitioned from “good guys” to the villains as their expansions change urban landscapes and lead to urban crises in housing, gentrification, income disparity, and more.

Like

- Access to creative community.
- Universities nearby with excellent engineering programs, and ability to maintain a healthy relationship with them.
- Universities to better prepare students for the workforce with teamwork, communication, problem solving skills, and ability to be flexible.
- Easy contact with public officials.
- Healthy startup and entrepreneur ecosystem.

Desire

- Education system to modernize and focus on STEM from early years.
- Better government assistance for companies on the fast track to success.
- Likely that tech growth will start to prioritize urban areas vs suburban areas (Amazon in Seattle vs Apple bussing employees from the city to the suburbs).
- Some trends point to: New approaches to hiring where skills and ability, not necessarily a degree are the determining factor for hires.
Media consumption

Internet
1. LinkedIn
2. Twitter
3. Facebook

Word of mouth
- Coworker referrals are huge in the B2B space.
- Software companies often get customers from existing customer referrals—often as high as 80%!
- Think of how word of mouth can drive content marketing for consumers and brand building.
- Shopify gives tips on how to better leverage word of mouth with consumers to retailers on its blog.

Traditional media
- Newspapers and traditional media remain important, especially to the C-Suite.
- However, time poor professionals need traditional media to be clear, quick, and relevant with informative headlines. They also desire traditional media to be easily accessed on the go.
- Concise headlines in Ottawa Business Journal’s Tech news section help busy professionals learn the news relevant to their industry quickly.

Digital
- Email newsletters remain important for C-Suite professionals.
- News stories and trends updates that are bundled into easily digestible newsletters are important for busy professionals of all levels.
- Keeping up to date with industry trends is something that busy professionals might not always have time for, so podcasts, newsletters, and more become important here to address that need.
- The Fetch: newsletter with curated events and learning opportunities for busy professionals. It provides wrap ups of news events, lectures, networking events and more for “people who don’t have time to go to events.”

Best practices
- Use LinkedIn for networking, product launches, expanding horizons and learning from others, plus easily reaching decision makers.
- Facebook is growing into a very important tool for both customer service and networking.
- Ottawa Board of Trade does a good job of sharing current, relevant news and business advice on LinkedIn.
Businesses profile

**Product**
- One of Canada’s leading tech hubs.
- Strong healthcare cluster.
- Strong and growing tourism sector.
- Headquarters of public sector.
- Manufacturing and construction.

**Price**
- Affordable housing compared with Vancouver, Toronto and Montréal.
- Presence of talent pool with six post-secondary academic institutions.
- Government support and incentives.

**Promotion**
- Growing attraction as business hub.
- Presence of success stories famous entrepreneurs (e.g. Shopify).
- B2B and word of mouth can benefit from coordinated storytelling.

**Place**
- Liveability.
- Great opportunity for work/life balance.
- Lack of urban vibrancy to become top of mind for creative community.

“Ottawa may be one of the best places in the world right now to build a multi-billion dollar business, (...) In fact, we consider Ottawa to be one of Shopify’s competitive advantages.”

Harley Finkelstein, Shopify’s CEO.
Citizens profile

Ottawans are proud of their intimate city, valuing its work-life balance, stunning green spaces and access to nature, in addition to the variety of cultural assets that enrich their lives. On the whole, the citizens of Ottawa are incredibly culturally diverse and are also more highly educated than any other Canadian city. In fact, the second-highest concentration of scientists and engineers in North America call Ottawa home. They are optimistic, collaborative and invested in making a positive contribution to their community and the city at large.

Ottawa’s citizens are the true owners of the Ottawa brand and must be engaged in communications and developments around it.

Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Census Metropolitan Area</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Median Family Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>OTTAWA CMA</td>
<td>1,236,324</td>
<td>$96,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CALGARY CMA</td>
<td>1,214,839</td>
<td>$104,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>EDMONTON CMA</td>
<td>1,159,869</td>
<td>$101,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>REGINA CMA</td>
<td>210,556</td>
<td>$97,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>OSHAWA</td>
<td>149,607</td>
<td>$92,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>SASKATOON CMA</td>
<td>260,600</td>
<td>$94,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ST JOHN’S, NL CMA</td>
<td>196,966</td>
<td>$96,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>VICTORIA, BC CMA</td>
<td>344,630</td>
<td>$89,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>KINGSTON, ON CMA</td>
<td>159,561</td>
<td>$86,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>KITCHENER-CAMBRIDGE-WATERLOO CMA</td>
<td>477,160</td>
<td>$86,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>HAMILTON CMA</td>
<td>721,053</td>
<td>$87,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>GREATER SUDBURY CMA</td>
<td>160,770</td>
<td>$90,550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2016 Census unadjusted data.

Source

Calculation of the population:

\[ \text{Population} = \text{Median Family Income} \times \text{Population} \times \text{Median Family Income} \]

Ethnicity

- 24% of citizens were born in another country
- 23.7% of the population are non-European Caucasians

Population demographics:

- 40.1% Asia
- 28.8% Europe
- 16.6% Americas
- 14.2% Africa
- 0.4% Oceania and Other
Citizens profile

**Religion**
- 65% of Christian denomination
- 23% don’t affiliate themselves with a specific religion
- 6.7% Islam
- 1.4% Hinduism
- 1.3% Buddhism
- 1.2% Judaism

**Family type**
(i.e. families, singles, seniors, etc.)
- 1 PERSON: 28.2%
- 2 PERSONS: 32.3%
- 3 PERSONS: 16%
- 4 PERSONS: 14.8%
- 5 PERSONS: 7.6%

**Political orientation**
73% LIBERAL
(source: DNA survey: 73% of citizens define themselves as liberal).

**Education level**
38.2% OF CITIZENS HAVE A UNIVERSITY DEGREE
Ottawa - Gatineau had the largest proportion of adults with a university degree among all major cities in Canada.

**Life stage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0-19</th>
<th>20-34</th>
<th>35-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2031</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
Citizens profile

Psychographics

Believe
- 90% of the citizens see themselves as happy and honest.
- 76% of citizens define their city as bureaucratic, and 75% as slow-paced.

Need
- 83% of citizens see their city as ‘in transition’ and 67% define it a ‘developing’ - both are indicators of change.

Like
- ¾ of Ottawans define themselves as social and see their community as one with strong community ties.
- On the other hand 70% of the citizens see themselves as introvert.

Desire
- 81% of citizens see Ottawa as vibrant and urban. Notably, sentiment research measuring conversations about Ottawa globally reveals that outsiders don’t see that vibrancy and define the capital as quiet, rural and even boring.

Media consumption

Internet
- Podcasts are on the rise. 26% listen to a podcast monthly.
- 92% of consumers trust earned media so it is important to use real people’s memories and experiences of Ottawa to promote the city.
- Ephemeral content allows you to be more authentic in storytelling to younger segments of the population (i.e. Instagram Stories, Snapchat, and Facebook stories).

Word of mouth
- While earned media is highly trusted information, there is growing skepticism toward social media driven by four issues; misuse of personal information, hate speech, cyberbullying, and fake news.
- The rise of intimacy and personalization in 11 communication: WhatsApp/Messenger groups / Viber.

TV
- Replace: Only 9.9% don’t watch on demand videos on a daily basis.
- Citizens between 55-64 pay more attention to programs and commercials than any other age group. Ads generate 23% more attention from women than men.

Digital
- Mobile is critical and where most people consume information. Internet use by platform:
  - 60% via computer
  - 79% via smartphone
  - 44% via tablet

Best practices
- Glasgow, Scotland has been struggling for a long time but found they were able to create a new source of engagement and equity through their in style value proposition.
- Cleveland, Ohio addressed negative brand perceptions head on by reinventing themselves with a Cleveland Anthem that engaged citizens and put their DNA at the centre.
- Nashville, Tennessee made a conscious strategic choice to root their brand in their identity by developing and promoting the city with their main experience: music at the core of everything they do.
Citizens profile

**Product**
- Citizens value the presence of *nature* at the edge of their city and the rural aspect of greater Ottawa that allows them to access things like farmer markets and outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Only 55% of all Ottawans are very satisfied with the *attractions* in the city.

**Price**
- Affordability and *value for money* in housing are still assets for Ottawa compared to Vancouver, Montréal and Toronto. This *positively* impacts quality of life.

**Promotion**
- Ottawa’s *bilingualism* is not well known and presents an opportunity to further develop and promote.
- 92.5% of all citizens are *proud* of their city. A clear sign that Ottawa’s citizens should be turned into the city’s best marketeers.
- Citizens want to read content that drives *trust* on social media. Credibility can be signaled through production, credentials, and transparency.

**Place**
- People outside Ottawa who have not visited the city yet, perceive it to be it a *slow-paced* and boring place.

“*My greatest hope for my children is not that they live in beautiful, stately homes in spectacular surroundings, but that they are healthy and happy. Likewise, our greatest ambition for our city shouldn’t be that it’s as picturesque as Paris or as historic as Washington but that its citizens are safe and content.*”

Marc Sutcliffe, citizen
Visitor profile

The last few decades have seen a seismic shift in consumer behaviour. The explosion of information on the Internet, combined with the proliferation of social media and data, has disrupted the traditional strategies used in destination marketing.

Ottawa is a thriving tourism destination. 2017 saw a significant shift toward Ottawa being put on the map for national and international visitors. The challenge will be to hold momentum. Visitors will increasingly have less time, want individualized experiences and be heavily influenced by word of mouth.

In order to attract the right visitors (economically, socially, etc.), Ottawa needs to work harder on a distinctive brand, address the low awareness of the fact that they are bilingual and develop more product that contributes to the vibrancy of the city.

**Number of visitors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration of visit</th>
<th>Number of visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2 nights:</td>
<td>33.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4 nights:</td>
<td>27.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 nights:</td>
<td>18.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8+ nights:</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Number of spending**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Travel motivators</th>
<th>Number of spending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>37.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>35.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>11.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor</td>
<td>10.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFR (Visiting Friends &amp; Relatives)</td>
<td>7.05%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Visitor profile

Psychographics

Believe
- Value and experiences are increasingly important for meeting planners.
- Destination brand is increasing to visitors.

Need
- More personalized travel experiences.
- More personalized information.
57% of visitors feel that destinations should tailor their information based on personal preferences or past behaviors.
- Less holiday time has led to the rise of short-trips and mini-vacations.

Like
- Experiencing a local’s way of life.
- Off peak travel becomes increasingly popular. Winter festivals are on the rise.

Desire
- A balanced need for growth with responsible and sustainable development.
- The rise of meaningful and even transformational experiences.
- Google’s data shows that 36% of consumers are willing to pay more for these personalized experiences.

Media consumption

Internet
- 74% of visitors use social media while on vacation.
- Destinations need to participate in building platforms for the visitor experience.

Word of mouth
- Peer-to-peer buyer influence drives customer purchases.
- 76% of consumers today feel advertisements are “very” or “somewhat exaggerated.”
- 92% of consumers trust peer recommendations more so than advertisements.

Traditional
Loss of relevance as resulting from being a generic source of information but specialized programming still has value for niche audiences.

Digital
- Visitors typically visit 22 websites in 9.5 web-sessions when researching a trip.
- 85% of visitors use their smartphone while abroad.
- Over 1 in 3 visitors across countries are interested in using digital assistants to research or book travel.

Best practices
- **Copenhagen, Denmark** is a good example of a city that connects the visitor experience with the quality of life of their citizens.
- **The Hague, Netherlands** excels in the meeting industry by embracing storytelling and being strongly aligned with the brand and value proposition of the city.
- **Berlin, Germany** is an outstanding example of a city where tourism plays a great role as cultural champion of a destination.
- **Tel Aviv, Israel** is a strong example of a place where leadership in technology influences tourism and vice versa.
Visitor profile

**Product**
- Ottawa is the place that tells the story of a city and a whole country.
- Museums are unique in Canada.
- Ottawa is growing in the meeting industry and has a clear ambition to become top of mind for associations.
- More storytelling about indigenous people is necessary to embrace the role of Capital.

**Price**
- Within Canada, Ottawa has a strong value for money proposition.
- Lack of enough direct connections overseas makes Ottawa less accessible.

**Promotion**
- Growing impact online.
- Celebration year 2017 could have a lasting effect on the city’s reputation.
- Bilingualism is not known enough in the French speaking world globally.
- More coordinated efforts needed to project a more distinct image of the city.

**Place**
- Walkability of the historic core of the city is a great asset.
- Improvement of local transport is planned and needed.
- Presence of all seasons, rivers and the green surroundings together make the cultural offerings of Ottawa an all Canadian experience.
07

Modern brand storytelling
Ottawa as a story

With a modern brand strategy, Ottawa can begin to shine through storytelling. The capital city can be proud of its many strengths, from the legacy of the Canadian telecom sector to the Kanata North business cluster that leads technological innovation today. It is a place to reflect on history like the battle of Passchendaele in the Canadian War Museum, or on our cold war-era heritage in the Diefenbunker.

However, research shows that people are not aware of our most exciting stories. Many continue to see Ottawa as a generic and boring government town. There is a lack of coherence and coordination in the way our organizations and people tell our city’s story. The result has been an unfocused message and an inaccurate perception. Without a clear and compelling story for the world, Ottawa faces large business risks in the future.

This presents Ottawa with an opportunity. Storytelling has a powerful influence on what people think about our capital city and the experiences they have. To reach our potential, Ottawa needs to work together and coordinate a storytelling program based on the four chosen brand themes. By telling these stories using the right tactics, through the right channels, to the right audiences, we will improve our capital city’s appeal and make it clear that Ottawa’s people are proud to live, work, study and visit here.
The power of storytelling

Stories are at the heart of a city brand. They directly affect a city’s reputation. Storytelling has a powerful influence on what people think about a place, how much affinity they feel, how desirable it is and how memorable their experiences are. As perceptions change, so does behaviour. Stories that resonate can literally shape cities.

A story can transform the physical products of a city into an experience. A city’s most important stories reinforce remarkable experiences: those that make the place feel special. Storytelling has the power to make memories by helping people find a sense of connection. The most remarkable stories are easily shared. For example, the city of Paris is more than a collection of streets, buildings and the Seine river. Over time, it has become known as a city of romance and of light. Likewise, Venice contains more than ancient stones; it’s known as a beautiful but decaying city that evokes nostalgia.

Stories like these are fundamental to human communication. They help us make sense of our lives. Stories activate parts of our brains that data points do not, which makes them more memorable. This is why cultures using oral histories were able to transmit ideas through generations of people for thousands of years before literacy and writing. Stories are that powerful.

Stories are also memorable because they build an emotional bond. You can see the impact everywhere: a superhero film premiere draws a long line-up, a high school reunion brings up long-forgotten memories between friends, or a couple travels to the same holiday destination year after year. These stories endure because they are meaningful and emotionally resonant.
The story of a city

All stories in literature follow a formula. The formula is a recognizable pattern that helps your brain easily understand the story. To be memorable, position your product along this path.

Here are the basic elements of a story in literature:

**Elements of a story**

- **Plot**: The events that happen.
- **Setting**: Where the story is located.
- **Characters**: Who is involved in the story.
- **Conflict**: Problems that the characters work to overcome.
- **Theme**: The core idea that drives the story.
Every story has a theme

The theme is an idea, concept, or lesson that appears repeatedly throughout a story, reflects the character’s internal journey through the external experiences, and resonates with the audience. It is the connective tissue that holds the story together.

Now, we can apply these elements of story to a city or a destination.

In this story formula, the theme is what makes the setting compelling to the characters, who are the city’s citizens, visitors, businesses and students.

Through challenge and change, the city becomes the place where the characters find meaning. During their experiences, the people may face challenges that cause a personal change, growth or transformation. They may meet and connect with strangers, accomplish important goals, or find community support as they overcome the discomfort of moving to a new city. The most memorable place is the one that changes someone’s life through emotional and meaningful events.

Elements of a city’s story

- **Stories that people tell**: The word of mouth storytelling that affects a city’s brand.
- **Experiences**: The things people do and the things that happen to them within the city.
- **Theme**: The central idea or concept that encompasses the distinct aspects a place is about.

These three elements are the catalysts for a city’s experiences:

- **Place**: The setting of the story, which is the city.
- **Visitor, citizen, student, business**: The characters that interact with the city or destination.
- **Change or challenge**: The personal growth or emotional impact on the person interacting with the place.
Storytelling and experiences

You can genuinely move people by infusing your product or place with emotion and meaning. In doing so, you will help people remember their experience and tell others about it.

People can use the elements of story to turn their products into experiences and influence behaviour. Powerful storytelling also helps to connect the right people with the experiences they desire the most, which become more stories through word of mouth.

Memorable stories resonate with audiences. A great story about a city is something that every business, student, visitor or citizen can interact with or take part in. Stories like this spread. People need to be able to see their own desires reflected in a story, otherwise they will tune out - there is simply too much competition. Storytellers that tell mediocre stories will be ignored. People see thousands of marketing messages each day, but a clear story that connects with precisely the right audience can shine through and motivate people to action.

The world’s most well-known brands and destinations also have clear, memorable stories. Iceland? The isolated, underdog nation with surreal landscapes. Las Vegas? The playground for adults. Airbnb? Stay anywhere like a local.

Storytellers can amplify the most important experiences about a place through content that compels the audience to participate. No one wants to miss out on a meaningful experience.
Storytelling through content
Why content marketing matters to Ottawa

This is storytelling in action

Everyone in Ottawa has the ability to tell engaging stories and share the proudest moments of our capital city. Online content is one of the most powerful tools at our disposal. When we all work together, we can raise awareness and influence people about the best of Ottawa by creating and curating compelling social media and digital marketing content that connects with people who need to know what Ottawa is all about.

Recent studies tell us that online content plays a strong role in influencing behaviour.

- 74% of consumers make purchasing decisions based upon what they discover on social media (source) and,
- 69% of online consumers agree that the quality, timing, or relevance of a company’s message influences their perception of a brand (source).

Online content holds the potential to tell the story of a city and its people.
CONSIDER THESE FIVE WAYS IN WHICH CONTENT CAN HELP A CITY ELEVATE ITS REPUTATION:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>01</th>
<th>Builds awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content about a city makes people aware of its personality and the experiences it offers. By consistently producing and sharing quality content, a city increases its exposure. A united effort to tell Ottawa’s authentic stories will benefit the whole city. A more desirable city is a better place to work, study, visit and live. High-quality content can connect Ottawa’s diverse experiences with the right people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>02</th>
<th>Encourages investment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great content can help potential visitors, citizens and investors decide to spend time and money in Ottawa. This benefits the whole city. When content challenges outside perceptions (that Ottawa is a sleepy government town, for example), it can inspire people to find out more and change their views.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>03</th>
<th>Generates revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa’s organizations can publish content that encourages people to visit their websites or e-commerce platforms. This way, they can build interest and trust in their brands, products and services. You can motivate people to take action by sharing informative and helpful content. For example, art venues can share stories about upcoming events. Restaurants can share new menu items and tell people how to make a reservation. This makes Ottawa’s experiences more readily visible and accessible.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>04</th>
<th>Creates loyalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each piece of valuable content builds trust. With consistency, organizations can build loyalty by helping people solve problems and find the experiences they want most. Content can connect with first-time visitors and retain existing customers. Content that focuses on customer service helps show that Ottawa is a welcoming, friendly city.</td>
<td></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>05</th>
<th>Raises the bar</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Story by story, Ottawa’s brand will gradually improve through our collective effort to share meaningful content. An overall increase in quality content from our city’s businesses and institutions will better showcase the distinctly Ottawan experiences that are available. By encouraging people to share their experiences online, we gain a source of authentic and engaging content to promote Ottawa and show the world why Canada’s capital city is a great place to be.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The people who tell Ottawa’s stories all have a connection to our city. They are the citizens, visitors, students and businesspeople who share experiences here.

These story starters show how you can apply content marketing principles to bring Ottawa’s themes to life for each group of people.
Connect with Canada

At the heart of Ottawa's brand is the truth in which defines this place and its very essence: Canada in one city.

All cities within Canada are part of the fabric of the country, but not all cities are an embodiment of the country itself. In this regard, Ottawa is distinct. It is where you can connect with Canada at any moment in time. Not only the present moment, but with what has been, and what is yet to come. Ottawa is home to the hallowed ground of Canada’s past; a pivotal aspect of the country’s very beginning. A nation’s memory preserved and given the spark of life by those who uncover it through Ottawa’s museums, galleries, Parliament, and monuments.

Canada’s present is alive in the very streets of the city and the hearts of the citizens. It is where you can connect with the people who live by and bring Canadian values to life. Indigenous, French, English, along with people from all corners of the world, have created a diverse society that is quintessentially Canadian. One that is rooted in diversity, acceptance, warmth and welcome. On the horizon is the future of a city and of a country. Ottawa offers the opportunity to connect with the intangible, to see beyond what is, to what could be.
Connect with Canada

When writing content that incorporates “Connect with Canada”, consider the following thought starters:

- Brainstorm how your organization demonstrates strong Canadian connections. Do you have a long heritage as a Canadian organization? Are you located near other iconic Canadian businesses, locations, places in Ottawa?
- How are other places, cities, and provinces represented in Ottawa through the lens of your organization? Think about food, traditions, customs, language, personalities, MPs, etc. Think about how your organization reflects Canada’s national cultures and experiences.
- Incorporate a wide variety of perspectives in your content i.e. Indigenous perspective, French perspective, plus other stories from diverse peoples who represent Canada.
- Use images that illustrate the diversity of Canada’s population.
- Inspire local pride when developing content. Ask more questions so people can share their pride and love of their city; this works well to start meaningful conversations. Share statistics, articles, or staff testimonials about why Ottawa is a great place to live, study, and work to help build pride.
- Heritage isn’t limited to people. Think of how your organization aligns with Canada’s outdoor heritage and other experiences tied to our unique landscapes when writing content.
- Your tone of voice should be warm and welcoming, reflecting the warm and hospitable nature Canada is known for around the world.
Canada’s village

Ottawa is where Canada comes together. ‘Kanata’, now Canada, translates to village. A village is a community where customs, culture and convention are common. A place of comfort and safety. Where the people within it have formed a different version of family. Different, but the same, with a familiar kind of comfort, but on a city scale.

During the winter, a day may be spent skating the canal followed by hot chocolate or, in the summer, anyone may join in doing yoga on the footsteps of Parliament, the most peaceful of practices on the hallowed grounds of a nation’s political power. This city has not lost its village soul. Whether it is your first time visiting, or where you have spent the last semester, or the last 10 years of your life living, Ottawa welcomes you with a friendliness and accessibility unique to G7 Capitals that wield a similar level of economic and political might. A village houses a diversity in perspectives and people, but is united in a foundation of respect, acceptance, and recognized value of all individuals.
Canada’s village

We're a G7 capital with a community and village feel.

- Think about Ottawa as though it is a small town. What community-focused activities and experiences can your organization speak about in your storytelling?
- Use images that inspire people to get outside, meet each other, and explore the world beyond their doorstep.
- In the absence of a specific event or activity, how can your organization support neighbours meeting neighbours? Maybe it’s a Meetup group, a happy hour you announce on LinkedIn, or even supporting other online communities to develop and grow.
- Remember that communities can gather offline and online. Cultivate your online community by engaging with them regularly, being available to answer questions and facilitate connections. Don’t focus on follower numbers. Focus on the quality of interactions and the quality of people following you.
- Speak about family-friendly activities, safety, and other themes that showcase Ottawa as a community-minded city where people take care of each other.
Joie de vivre

Joie de vivre is a philosophy that translates to the “cheerful enjoyment of life; an exultation of spirit.” It can be the joy of conversation, eating, travel, celebration; the joy of living. Ottawans love to enjoy life, to live better, to find and pursue happiness in the place they call home and all the people within it.

They take great pleasure in the beauty of their city and its intimacy, the seasons as they turn throughout the year, a delicious meal shared with friends, vibrant events that bring the people and city to life and the nature that surrounds them. Ottawans offer those new to the city, or just visiting, an open visitation to join them and welcome into your experience — the joy of living.
Joie de vivre

Leverage the engagement from your audience to shape the story of Ottawa.

- Brainstorm with your team about what makes them happy to live in Ottawa. When do they feel like they’re living “the good life?” Is it the food, the easy access to the outdoors, the engaging conversations they have with others? Think of how the topics they bring up can be woven through your content.
- Brainstorm with your team the best things to do in Ottawa during all four seasons. Does your target audience know about these experiences? If not, communicate Ottawa’s unique activities from your team’s perspective.
- Research events that you think your target audience would be interested to experience. How can you add value to the conversation around these events and provide value to your audience? Are you going to have a presence at any large events? Let people know so that they can come and meet you in real life.
- Joie de vivre presents plentiful opportunities for you to switch from broadcast to engagement. Don’t tell people Ottawa is lovely, ask them why they love it. Where are their favourite places to go? What are their favourite events? Where is the best ice cream in the city?
- Level up WHY you’re asking these questions by looking out for hashtag holidays. A quick online search will lead you to calendars that layout social media holidays throughout the year. Select the ones that are relevant to your business and use them as conversation starters with your audience. For example, your business is in the restaurant industry and it’s #NationalMargaritaDay. Ask your audience to let you know their favourite recipes or tell you which margarita on your menu is their favourite.
- Share timely photos that showcase the joy found in taking spontaneous trips within the city. Instagram stories could be a great platform for this.
Ottawa’s legacy

Ottawa’s legacy is enduring. An unbroken cycle without end. The people of the past laid the foundation for Ottawa’s future, just as the people of future inevitably become part of Ottawa’s past, and so the circle continues.

The cityscape from both a built and a societal perspective reflects Ottawa’s many legacies, coexisting together, with each generation adding a new layer to the tapestry. It is a city that has long been home to changemakers, pioneers and those who can see beyond what is, to what could be. Since the beginning, Ottawans have looked ahead to ensure that they were setting their place and its people up for success. The Rideau Canal is a gift of economic, prosperity, and competitive advantage given from the past to the future. The Parliament buildings are the very embodiment of a country’s and Capital’s legacy as shaped by the minds, vision, and leaders of the nation. From policy, economy, and trade to culture, education, healthcare and the environment, fundamental aspects of Canada are galvanized in Ottawa.
Ottawa’s legacy

Utilize Ottawa’s history and stories of the past to tell your audience how this forms the future for the destination.

- Every generation adds a new layer to Ottawa’s history. How does the past, present, and future of your organization tie into this? How are you making an impact on Ottawa’s future?
- How can you recognize First Nations culture and heritage through your content?
- Include key dates or events in Ottawa’s history.
- Find creative ways to weave personal stories throughout your content; highlight key personalities in your past, historic images or stories of successes from the past.
- Ask for your online community’s input. Let them play a role in small decisions for your business i.e. maybe a new menu item, an idea about your outdoor patio layout, or anything else that would allow them to feel involved.
- New changes in store for your organization? Announce them with pride in your online content and find ways to use these opportunities to start a conversation with your audience.
Student Audience – content examples

**Canada’s Village**

Carleton University
27 November at 08:45

There is never a dull moment in Ottawa! Every month, the people and the city of Ottawa come together at fun festivals and cultural events. Which annual festival are you looking forward to the most this year?

On ne s’ennuie jamais à Ottawa! Tous les mois, les gens et la ville d’Ottawa se rassemblent à d’amusants festivals et événements culturels! À quel festival annuel avez-vous le plus hâte cette année?

www.ottawatourism.ca/major-annual-events/

**Joie de vivre**

**Connect with Canada**

**Ottawa’s Legacy**

**University of Ottawa**
@uOttawa - 3h

In Ottawa, connect with Canada’s past, present and future at any of the 6 National Museums in the city. And #DidYouKnow that all of them offer free admission at least one day a week? See the link for details:

www.ottawatourism.ca/major-annual-events/

**Skating, paddling, cycling, or running: where are your favourite places to enjoy the outdoors? Studies show that exercise and fresh air not only help with concentration and focus, but also help to reduce stress and anxiety!**

View all 41 comments

**Instagram**

Algonquin College

833 likes

Skating, paddling, cycling, or running: where are your favourite places to enjoy the outdoors? Studies show that exercise and fresh air not only help with concentration and focus, but also help to reduce stress and anxiety!
Businesses Audience – content examples

Shopify
27 November at 08:45
What is one of the best things about working at Shopify? Ottawa! Not only are we based in one of the most affordable cities in North America, we have amazing green spaces at our doorstep, and our new friends are all amazingly smart (this is Canada’s most educated city after all). Take a look at what roles we are currently hiring for in Ottawa, and apply today!

ottawabot
27 November at 08:45
Is it time to go beyond LinkedIn and connect with friendly business people in Ottawa? The Ottawa Board of Trade puts on frequent events to help you build relationships, meet potential customers and great mentors. We are here to help you succeed!

Invest Ottawa
With the most educated workforce in Canada, and a high quality of life in a G7 nation, Invest Ottawa offers services to support companies relocate and expand businesses to Ottawa. Join the 1,750 Knowledge Based companies that work with Invest Ottawa, to expand your here business today.
Visitor Audience – content examples

Connect with Canada

Ottawa Tourism
27 November at 08:45 • 
The Royal Canadian Mounted Police have been an iconic symbol of Canada for years. See them in Ottawa at the RCMP Musical Ride which includes a free tour of their training school and stables. These tours are available year-round. Press the link for opening hours: http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/ride-centre

Connect with Canada

Instagram

833 likes
Welcome to Ottawa! While waiting for your bags, why not snap a selfie with Canada’s first Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonald?
Share your selfie with the hashtag #flyyow for a chance to be featured here!

Canadian Tulip Festival
@CdnTulipfest - 3h
What do you love about spring in Ottawa? How about one million tulips during Ottawa’s annual Tulip Festival?! This year the festival runs May 10-20, 2019! https://tulipfestival.ca/about/
Citizens Audience – content examples

Calling all local musicians. Your music could be played as a local caller waits on the phone to be connected!

The City of Ottawa is committed to providing new opportunities to incorporate Canadian music into the community, and show musicians our appreciation. Apply at Ottawa.ca and get your music out to a broader audience! Applications close March 18, 2019. #Ottmusik

Appel à tous les musiciens locaux. Votre musique pourrait jouer pendant qu’un appelant local attend sa connexion téléphonique!

La Ville d’Ottawa se consacre à fournir de nouvelles occasions d’incorporer de la musique canadienne dans la communauté et de démontrer son appréciation aux musiciens. Posez votre candidature à Ottawa.ca et élargissez votre auditoire! Clôture des candidatures le 18 mars 2019. #Ottmusik

View all 41 comments
What is great content?

In city marketing, the best-performing content has one or more of these attributes:

1. **It adds value**
   In other words, it's relevant. This content informs, entertains, solves a problem or shifts perceptions about a city or experience. You can become a trusted resource by sharing consistently valuable content to your most passionate supporters.

2. **It is authentic**
   Ottawa's greatest content is about real places, people and experiences that show people what this city is truly about. It helps the audience connect with our city and set appropriate expectations. Authentic content also often shows current, real-time, experiences that make Ottawa more achievable and accessible. Say goodbye to stock imagery and staged photoshoots with professional models; this is about real people doing real things.

This post informs visitors and citizens about one of the top festivals in Canada and the world, and has a link for them to purchase tickets.

This post shows people skating, which is a popular, feel-good winter activity. It depicts an authentic and joyful moment.
What is great content?

3. It is adaptable
Use the best content again and again by adapting and repurposing it. Use data and insights from your audience to find the best performing pieces and match them to the most appropriate channels. For example, you can share a great video on multiple platforms, using captions optimized for each one.

4. It is shareable
Friends share great content with friends. This helps us reach, engage and attract more people to Ottawa. Emotions are the key to shareable content. Think about the last couple of things you shared on your own social networks. You will most likely find something funny, inspiring, informative or heart-warming.

[Image: Ottawaytourism Instagram post]

Instagram goals? Grab some girlfriends and head over to Vieux Hull for a wander after brunch! Who's coming with you?

[Image: City of Ottawa Instagram post]

Instagram goals? Grab some girlfriends and head over to Vieux Hull for a wander after brunch! Who's coming with you?
Creating and curating effective content

Always focus on your audience when creating content or finding content made by someone in your community. This way, you will have a better chance of sharing content that is engaging and relevant.

Ask yourself this question before you publish: Who is my intended audience, and what makes this content valuable to them? This checklist can help.

Effective content should tick one or more of these boxes:

- Inspires interest/intrigue, motivates action and travel; video/photo albums.
- Grabs attention; stops people from scrolling and focuses them immediately.
- Entertains; shows remarkable visuals.
- Informs; provides local tips/insider information, or event dates and time of year to visit.
- Adds value; exclusive offers or deals/demonstrates value in terms of money and time.

Keep these five areas in mind when you are creating your own content or curating content from your community to share on your channels.

How do you know if it’s working?

Measure the effectiveness of your content to learn which posts resonate best with your audience on each channel. Focus on engagement statistics (likes/reactions, comments and shares) for each piece of content you post. Set realistic goals for each channel. This will motivate you to keep producing and sharing content that boosts your overall business objectives.
Why do people share content on social media?

Think about the content that you engage with on your personal social channels.

- What do you share?
- What do you tag your friends in?
- What do you react to with a like or a comment?
- What videos do you save to watch later?

Then, think about your motivations for sharing. This will help you understand why some content drives people to act or engage while some does not.

- Does it make you look fun, cool, interesting or intelligent?
- Does it make you think of a friend or family member who would also enjoy it?
- Would someone you know benefit from seeing the content?
- Does it reflect activities you enjoy?
- Does it surprise you with something you didn’t know or hadn’t seen before?
- Does it represent the community that you are a part of?
Your organization’s content marketing strategy

Using the Hero-Hub-Hygiene model

Now that you know some of the principles for effective content, how do all of those pieces fit together? An effective content strategy will help you think about the bigger picture and understand how each piece of content helps you meet your overall goals.

The hero-hub-hygiene (HHH) strategy developed by Google will help you organize your content ideas and make sure that everything you publish has a purpose. It is suitable for businesses of any size and budget and can be applied to existing promotional and marketing efforts.

Imagine this strategy as a pyramid with three layers. The layers describe the role for each piece of content you create or curate.

**Hero-hub-hygiene content pyramid**

- **Hero**
  - Large-scale, tent-pole events or “go big” moments designed to raise broad awareness

- **Hub**
  - Regularly scheduled “push” content designed for your promotional prospect

- **Hygiene**
  - Always-on “pull” content designed for your core target

**Hygiene content**

This is the most common type of content and rests at the bottom of the pyramid. Its purpose is to keep your organization, and Ottawa, top-of-mind and to consistently pull new people in. These social media posts focus on engagement, reach, and new followers to increase awareness. When new people find your valuable content, they may then provide permission for you to engage further, whether through social media, email, or another method.

Common examples include social media posts on platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

**Hub content**

While hygiene content pulls visitors in, hub content is pushed outward at regular intervals to a more specific and engaged target group - your more passionate fans. Ideally, hub content is also a place for those people to congregate and generate conversation. Hub content can be a landing page or a website that acts as a home for pieces that fill a specific purpose.

Examples include blog posts, targeted promoted posts and landing pages.

**Hero content**

This is your wow moment. Hygiene and hub content work to consistently build interest and engagement, but your hero content is designed to be highly shareable, uniquely impressive and have a lasting impression on a wide audience. This content needs to meet a high standard, so marketers spend more time, money and effort to make their hero content shine.

Examples include seasonal campaign launches or high-quality videos.

You can take these three layers and make a plan for putting the HHH content strategy in action. The strategy helps you think beyond the day-to-day and toward a holistic idea of what message you need to communicate, and who you need to speak with. You can use these ideas to make the best use of your limited time and budget by testing, adapting and repurposing your content in order to build a loyal audience.
Marketing has shifted toward engagement

City marketing is changing as people use technology to share their experiences online through word of mouth.

Traditional advertisers are used to broadcasting their messages in one direction through billboards, commercials on television and radio, or print ads. However, modern marketing demands community engagement, advocacy and audience building using newer tools like social media platforms. This goes beyond pure promotion and into conversation. The marketers who get the best results today are the ones who listen to their audiences’ needs, build trust and engage in a meaningful way.
Boost word of mouth through engaging content

Effective content engages the audience. Remember these four tips to maximize engagement across your online channels:

1. Have conversations
Show people that you are open for business by engaging in real-time conversations. This builds trust as people begin to see you as a reliable source of expertise. You don’t need to wait for people to come to you, either. Find and participate in discussions on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and forums - anywhere that your audience tends to gather. An easy way to start is to search for #MyOttawa on Instagram. Hashtags like this can lead you to conversations that are already happening.

2. Use a call to action
Don’t be afraid to ask people to do something specific. You can ask for engagement by saying, “Add your photos to the comments!”, or point people to your blog post or website with, “Click the link to learn about...”. If you are offering a specific service, product or discount, a call to action is essential.
3. Ask questions
The simple act of ending a post with a question mark helps to increase engagement. People become more likely to respond with a comment. When engagement increases, you will also reach a wider audience, as many social media platforms tend to expose posts that get lots of interaction.

4. Create value
Provide informative and helpful answers to questions about your business, products or services - and about Ottawa - to build trust and show people that you are there to help. The Facebook comment threads below your posts are great places to add more information and send people to your website.
Social media recommendations

Social media platforms hold some of the greatest potential for audience engagement. Each social network varies according to audience, optimal posting tactics, engagement and tone, which makes it important to structure your posts for maximum impact. Use these recommendations to help you create content tailored to each of your social media channels.
Content to share on Facebook

Image posts
Powerful images capture attention and improve post visibility threefold. Be consistent with your photo captions and use the same format from post to post. This helps people better connect with your brand. For example, how do you credit the photographer each time? Do you use parentheses, or the camera emoji followed by their username? There is no right or wrong way, but choose a method and stick with it.

Video posts
Facebook users watch over eight billion videos per day (source). Your audience likely has some video-watching habits too. These tips will help your video posts succeed:

- **Upload directly to Facebook.** You will get higher reach from posts that contain a video uploaded to your Facebook page, versus posts that contain a YouTube link. A day or two after posting, check your page’s analytics. The platform provides data that includes total views, length of views and audience retention. Learn from these insights to constantly improve your video offerings.

- **Make it brief.** Most Facebook users will only watch a video in their News Feed for 10-15 seconds. Videos that receive the most engagement and views are short, to the point and easy to consume. Look at the retention rate on each video you share by using your the Insights page and adjust accordingly to improve over time.

- **Make it visual.** 85% of the time, people watch Facebook videos without sound (source). Use your video to show, not tell. It is an opportunity to attract attention through the most stunning visuals you have access to. If your video has a voiceover, add subtitles so that people can understand it with the sound turned off.

- **Maximize the mobile screen.** Vertical or square cut video works best on Facebook because people are most likely to watch on a mobile device. 47% of users only use the mobile app (source).

Facebook Live
Facebook users spend three times longer watching live videos than regular video posts (source). Use this feature to make announcements, share special offers and events, or simply show off your surroundings on a remarkable or beautiful day. Facebook Live is also a great platform to conduct interviews with relevant experts or influencers.
Link posts
Add a link to your post to generate a link preview that includes an image and the title. Facebook includes link clicks in its News Feed algorithm and rewards high-traffic links by showing them to more users. Here are a few tips for link posts:

- **Select a relevant link.** Make a list of the most relevant topics to your audience. Then, try a quick Google search of your topic or your business name. Searching Pinterest for the name of your organization can also reveal new images and links.
- **Post a short, appealing caption.** The link is the focus of a link post. Do not draw attention away from it with a lengthy caption.
- **Use enticing headlines.** The more intriguing the headline, the more likely a user is to click on it. Headlines which include numbers, such as “Top 5” or “6 Best”, perform particularly well, as do headlines that evoke emotion. Though you can’t change the headlines or images on third-party articles, you can be selective of those you share.

Facebook content best practices
- **Make it valuable.** Always ask yourself why your post will be valuable to your followers. Create content that resonates best with your Facebook audience.
- **Be consistent.** Try to post around a regular schedule so your followers know what to expect. The goal is to ensure your content is seen and engaged with.
- **Never post more than once a day.** Posting too much will risk lowering your performance within the Facebook algorithm.
- **Share stories and conversation pieces, not sales pitches.**
- **Be human.** Use a friendly, conversational tone. Respond as soon as you can and be helpful.
- **Share unique, diverse content.** You can choose exactly who sees it through targeting.
- **Share user-generated content.** This encourages fans to share their own stories.
- **Unless you own the content, always credit photos and videos.**
Facebook examples

**EXAMPLE 1**

*ByWard Market*

15 November at 06:49 ·

Are you ready, Ottawa? It's going to feel so much like Christmas tonight in the #ByWardMarket! Stay tuned for details about Choirs, free wagon rides, shopping features, dining specials, and so much more coming up in December.

18 Likes 1 Share

**EXAMPLE 2**

*BeaverTails Ottawa*

24 November at 04:00 ·

Happy Friday 😊! What’s your favourite WINTER BeaverTails flavour? Avalanche? Coco Vanilla? Is it different from your SUMMER 🍄 favourite? Or do you like the same all year round? Like the classic Cinnamon & Sugar? Tell us in the comments below! 😊

10 Comments
Content to share on Instagram

**Image posts**
Like Facebook, Instagram’s Feed runs on an algorithm that favours some posts over others. With this in mind, always consider the value of what you are posting. Create content that resonates best with your audience and as measured by engagement. Adjust your efforts based on what you learn. The better your content, the more likely people are to follow you and interact, but poor quality, inconsistent or uninteresting posts will not be able to compete.

**Video posts**
Publish your most polished video content on your main Instagram feed. As on Facebook, keep these videos short. Between 15-30 seconds is ideal here. You can trim the length of the video within the app and choose a cover image to make it most effective.

**Instagram Stories**
Use Instagram Stories for candid moments. These videos are only available to view for 24 hours after posting, which makes this the perfect avenue to show your personality and share time-sensitive information. Post behind-the-scenes content, make announcements, share special offers or events, or show off your surroundings on a beautiful or remarkable day. The Live Video feature in Stories is also a great tool to conduct interviews and Q&As with staff, guides, experts and influencers.
Instagram content best practices

1. Post your very best content. Instagram is all about quality images. Accounts with a curated, cohesive looking feed are the ones that attract more followers. Stick to content themes and ensure your photos have a similar look and feel. Do not post content that looks out of place.

2. Follow a consistent style. Use scheduling tools such as Planoly, Later or Iconosquare to plan out the look and feel of your Instagram feed. Formatting captions in a consistent way will also help you create a distinct and recognizable style.

3. Make it valuable. Always consider the value of what you are posting. Create content that resonates best with your Instagram audience.

4. Keep your caption short and get to the point. Most Instagram post captions are cut off after the first 80 characters, so lead with what you need to say in the first sentence to make people curious enough to press the “more” button.

5. Engage with others to grow your network. Like, comment and follow other accounts that are posting and talking about similar experiences. Sometimes a simple like or well-crafted comment is enough to gain a follower. Avoid comments that are generic and overused such as “Great capture!”

6. Be consistent. Try to post on a regular schedule so your followers know what to expect. The goal is to ensure that people see and engage with your content.

7. Keep your profile current. Choose an identifiable profile picture and provide a clear description in the bio with your business address, your hashtag and website link. Switch to a business account if you have not already. This will make it easier for potential customers to get in touch with you.

8. Use hashtags wisely. Only use hashtags that are related to your product or Ottawa. Always include the #MyOttawa hashtag, for example. For a more impactful caption, post the majority of your hashtags in the first comment. People can only post on Instagram via mobile, and rarely access the platform with a desktop.

9. Tag your geo-location. This is one more opportunity to engage with people and help new followers find your content. Always include the geo-location of where your photo was taken and encourage users to tag their location too.

10. Maximize the mobile screen. Post square or vertical videos and photos for best results. People can only post on Instagram via mobile, and rarely access the platform with a desktop.

11. Follow your profile current. Choose an identifiable profile picture and provide a clear description in the bio with your business address, your hashtag and website link. Switch to a business account if you have not already. This will make it easier for potential customers to get in touch with you.

12. Use hashtags wisely. Only use hashtags that are related to your product or Ottawa. Always include the #MyOttawa hashtag, for example. For a more impactful caption, post the majority of your hashtags in the first comment. People can only post on Instagram via mobile, and rarely access the platform with a desktop.

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14. Maximize the mobile screen. Post square or vertical videos and photos for best results. People can only post on Instagram via mobile, and rarely access the platform with a desktop.
Instagram examples

EXAMPLE 1

This is a perfect example from Ottawa Tourism’s Instagram page of how to educate your audience with helpful information, using appropriate and relevant hashtags, and geo-tagging the photo. This post succeeds in informing your audience about harvest season at ByWard Market, and the relevant hashtags help to get your content in front of other larger audiences. Also, because it’s a vertical photo, it is perfectly optimized for mobile viewing.

EXAMPLE 2

This is an example of posting your best content. Typically, aerial shots of beautiful, vibrant scenery perform very well on Instagram, and this photo proves that. It is also geo-tagged, short and engaging with inquisitive copy.
Twitter content and best practices

- **Add images and video.** Tweets with images receive 150% more retweets than tweets without images [source](source). Follow the Facebook image post guidelines and use attention-grabbing photos to make your posts stand out as users scroll past.

- **Use hashtags and keywords.** Hashtags make it easier to find tweets that relate to the same topic. Add one or two relevant hashtags to your messages. Then, take the time to explore those conversations and interact with other users. Identify keywords associated with your organization or with Ottawa and listen to what people are saying through them. Potential hashtags: #MyOttawa #OttawasOwn #DiscoverON #ExploreCanada

- **Keep Twitter content original.** Twitter requires a different posting style that Facebook does, so linking the two together (i.e. posting the same content on both channels by connecting them) does more harm than good. If you have content that you want to share across multiple platforms, create and write separate posts.

- **Post frequently.** If possible, share one or two tweets per weekday (along with a couple of retweets and as many replies as needed). Get in the habit of scheduling a number of posts per month. This can help you keeping a consistent frequency when paired with live posts.

- **Think of your Twitter account as a customer service centre.** Frequently check your mentions and respond to any interaction. If someone retweets a post, take time to thank them. You will build a positive impression when followers see you interacting with other users.

- **Use Twitter in real-time.** Despite developments on other channels, Twitter is still the most relevant tool for real-time information and conversation. It is the best platform for informing people that you are closing early for the day, for example.

- **Know your audience.** Use Twitter’s audience insights to understand the demographic profile and passion points of your followers. This information can help you create new content themes and ideas.
Website content and best practices

Your website is your home base, the place where you can tell your story online exactly as it needs to be told. Here are five tips for producing valuable web content:

01 Help your customers. To do this, you need to know their needs better than anyone. Think about the journey they take as they make the decision you are asking for. An effective website can help people in many stages, from awareness to consideration to purchase, by providing the right information to the right people at the right time. Great websites are easy to navigate, and they display helpful information clearly. Don't be clever with your copy, especially with the navigation menus on your site; be clear.

02 Provide contact info. Not everyone will use social media to ask you questions, so you need to provide other options. Make sure your contact information is complete and easy to find. Many organizations have a contact page that includes phone numbers, email addresses, team members, chat services and social media channels.

03 Avoid information overwhelm. Less is often more when it comes to clear communication. Design your website’s information architecture to provide the most useful facts and stories at exactly the right time. Often, the best approach is to keep most web pages - especially homepages - minimal and focused, saving lengthy descriptions and detailed histories for blog posts. This way, your web visitors will spend less time and energy searching and sifting, and more time getting closer to your mutual goals.

04 Build your website to be social. What is your website’s role in your digital marketing strategy? Ideally, it is part of your online ecosystem that includes social media. Think of your website as a content source that can break down into smaller, shareable pieces. The pieces go out through social media, but the website holds them all together.

05 Help your customers find you through search and social. Make sure people can find your most helpful pages by consistently updating the details in the backend of your website. This is just as important as managing the content in the front.

Be diligent with metadata to help people find your website in searches by:

☑️ Using topic keywords in your page titles and descriptions.
☑️ Keeping descriptions brief so that they aren’t cut off in search previews.
☑️ Writing page URLs that match your keywords.

Details like these can improve your search engine optimization (SEO) and increase the chances that visitors will find the helpful information they are looking for.

Help people find your site through social media by updating your link previews. When someone shares a link, social platforms like Facebook and Twitter will automatically display a link preview and description of your page. You can influence how this looks with publishing software like Wordpress. Use engaging preview images and a compelling description for each page or post.

BONUS TIP: Test a link using Facebook’s Sharing Debugger to see how it will appear in the News Feed.
Eight takeaways for great online content

These principles will help your content connect with your audience, no matter the platform.

1. **Make it valuable**
   Valuable content can take many forms. Value can be insider information. It can offer a deal or a prize. It can be a distraction from a busy day. There is opportunity to provide value everywhere. As writer and speaker Jay Baer says, “Make your marketing so useful people would pay for it.”

2. **Make it easy to share**
   Content that is difficult to share will not be shared. This includes off-brand content, heavily branded content, low-quality content and uncommon formats.

3. **Speak like a human**
   Don’t speak like a company. Use simple, personable language. Wordy, dry or sales-oriented copy tends to underperform on social media. Instead, add humour, ask questions and include “you” and “I” where possible. This will help your audience feel that they are having a real conversation.

4. **Respond to questions**
   Answer questions promptly and directly with relevant information. Make sure that links take people to the correct pages and contain useful information.

5. **Share other people’s stories**
   This is a great way to build trust in your brand. By sharing real stories from real people, you can reassure your audience that others like them have gotten involved with your organization and had a great experience. User-generated content (UGC) can come from Ottawa’s citizens and visitors alike.

6. **Be creative**
   When taking photos or shooting video, look for new and interesting angles. Think about the stories that are unique to you and to Ottawa, and how you can align them with the Ottawa brand.

7. **Be consistent**
   Without consistency, people are not likely to come back to your channels. Being consistent means keeping a similar rhythm in your posting schedule from day to day and week to week; sticking to a visual style that may use the same filters on photos; and using captions that follow a consistent format per channel.

8. **Promote your content**
   Asking people to share your content can help it reach people well beyond your own networks. You can create a list of bloggers and influencers connected to your organization and its interests, and reach out to them with relevant content.

Example message: “Hi @travelinfluencer, we know you write about Ottawa’s museums and galleries. We thought this photo of our new exhibit may be relevant to you. Feel free to mention this if it fits :).”
The value of user-generated content

User-generated content (UGC) can build trust within your audience by showing how others like them are also enjoying what Ottawa has to offer. Effective UGC, reused with permission, has been shown to generate engagement that is almost seven times higher than brand content (source).

Follow these steps for sourcing UGC:

First, find content to re-share
Begin with outreach to find content from new audiences. Doing this regularly will help to grow your community. To understand how it works in more detail, we have shared the process for Instagram below.

Then, ask permission to re-share content
It is always best practice to ask the creator before you re-share their images, videos, or stories. It is the polite thing to do, but it also builds goodwill and creates a connection between you and the person who owns the content. Consider a variation of the below copy depending on the social platform and always wait for a “yes” reply before sharing the content.

SUGGESTED COPY:
“Hi @InsertUserHandle, we love this photo! Would you mind if we shared it on our own Instagram account with credit to you?”

Outreach process for Instagram

1. Use the search bar on Instagram to input a relevant term. Look at the results under Places and Tags. Places will show you all of the content that is geo-tagged from a certain location, while Tags gives you a list of relevant hashtags around your search term. Think beyond official hashtags to all the combinations that people might use. You can tell how active each tag is by reading the number of posts beside each one.

2. Keep a list of commonly used location tags and hashtags. Check these regularly.

3. In the mobile app, use the save function (it appears as a flag at the bottom right of each post) to organise content into collections.

4. Use your organization’s account to message people in a friendly tone, asking permission to share their content with credit to them. This is also a good way to gain engaged followers as you are personally introducing them to your account.

Example: @InsertUserHandle, what a beautiful photo of Elk Falls! Would you mind if we shared this on our Instagram account with credit?

5. On the mobile Instagram app, keep checking saved posts for replies and permissions.

6. Once permission has been granted, use a downloading service like www.dredown.com or www.web-stagram.com to save images.

Bonus tip:
High-resolution images will get more engagement, so avoid taking a screenshot of a user’s content to share it onto your channels. The original version reflects the effort taken by the original owner and will always get better results.
Paid advertising

What is the role for paid advertising in a world with so much interactive content? Advertising can help you tell Ottawa’s stories and influence behaviour, but it may require a shift in perspective to truly reap the rewards that are possible today.

City marketers are used to equating advertising with one-way messages to a mass audience. Billboards, newspaper ads and TV commercials are all examples.

However, you now have access to tools that let you connect with exactly the people you most need to talk to. The principles of powerful storytelling still apply and so does the goal of matching the right people with the right experiences. The difference is that now, paid media can both make sure that the specific group of the right people hear the story and let you measure the results.

By targeting audiences according to their passions and interests, you can dramatically increase the impact of your ads. To do this, you need to know your audience. Who most wants what you are offering, and why? Think about grouping people according to their interests rather than their demographics. For a gallery advertising a new exhibit, it’s more important to know that the target audience for an ad loves art than that it belongs to a certain age group.

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram all offer interest-based advertising tools that allow you to focus on the most relevant audiences for your business. Through Google Ads and other platforms, you can send messages to people who have visited your website. Some of these tactics are more advanced, but they allow you to track the path to purchase at great detail. You can encourage your niche audience to take a series of actions toward the goal (a purchase, a subscription, etc.) and then measure the results of each step, optimizing the experience and the stories told along the way.

TO GET STARTED:
Visit the Facebook Business page (link) to learn how to create ads for Facebook and Instagram that match your specific goals.
Best practices for visual content

Elements of a great photo

It takes less than a second for someone to judge whether or not to stop scrolling and view your content. With this in mind, here are some principles for selecting and creating a good photo. Images with these elements tend to earn higher-than-average engagement levels on social media.

VANISHING POINTS

Vanishing points create a sense of depth and are aesthetically pleasing. Photo ideas include roads and sidewalks, hiking trails leading into the distance, shorelines, and rivers.

REFLECTIONS

Reflecting surfaces often capture a person’s attention as they scroll through their Facebook or Instagram feed. Consider running a photo competition on your channels and ask your community to submit their best reflection photos.
Ideally, the people in your photos should be looking toward where you want your followers to look. Viewers tend to follow the gaze of the subject in the photo. Engagement increases when the person in the photo is looking out at a landscape or feature, rather than at another human or directly at the camera.

People connect to photos that appear to be taken in a candid moment or that show a realistic scene. Avoid over-staged, over-edited images and stay away from stereotypical scenes. Authenticity is always best.

Including people in your photos helps your audience picture themselves taking part in the same experience. Avoid sharing photos of empty venues or landscapes and instead use an image with people.
Photos that show iconic scenes from a different perspective are well received. Think of ways to encourage your community to share varying views of the same landmark or location.
Patterns are visually pleasing and stand out in a Facebook or Instagram feed. Images that capture the interruption of a pattern also perform well. For example, a road or river cutting through the trees in a contrasting colour.

Photos using one dominant colour perform particularly well on social media.
Elements of a great video

Online video is consumed more than any other medium (source). Understand the elements of a great piece of footage on social media to make sure that your time creating video content is well spent.

KEEP IT SHORT
The shorter the video, the more views to completion it will receive. The ideal runtime for Facebook is less than 10-15 seconds and for Instagram, between 15 and 30 seconds. You risk losing your audience during a longer video. Review your page’s retention statistics to see when your audience stops watching. This will help you adjust the length of your videos according to how your unique audience views them.

COMPPELLING WITH OR WITHOUT SOUND
A great video grabs the attention of the audience with or without sound. Assume that people are not viewing with the sound on. If people speak, add subtitles. Minimal text overlaid during transitions can help guide viewers visually.

AUTHENTIC AND EMOTIVE
Compelling video triggers an emotional reaction. Content that is informative, funny, inspirational, joyful or heartfelt will be watched and shared more than a video without a strong emotional pull. Videos that contain authentic stories and real moments often do this well.

ORIGINALITY
Videos that show scenes from an unusual perspective are well received. For example, underwater and aerial footage can help grab the audience’s attention in the important first few seconds of a video.
Content and stories come directly from experiences

However you choose to create and publish your content, remember that all Ottawan storytelling is based on the real experiences of people in Ottawa.

These content best practices will help you tell your stories in the most effective ways possible, but improving the stories themselves means improving the experiences they come from. For example, provide strong customer service to find positive messages from your customers on social media. Provide remarkable, shareable experiences to help your customers tell captivating, shareable stories.

Today, everyone is a storyteller and it’s up to you to share authentic, genuine stories so that the world knows your chapter in Ottawa’s storybook.
Moving forward together
Moving forward together

This brand storybook brings together the vital elements of Ottawa's collective DNA, our city brand and our brand themes. Our shared vision should be embodied within every Ottawan experience, story and initiative that you and your organizations are a part of.

The Ottawa brand, its corresponding themes, and storytelling best practices are not a set of rules to adhere to, but a kick start for our living city brand that can only come to life through the actions and stories of Ottawa’s citizens, visitors, businesses and participating organizations. Instead, this guide will help Ottawa tell powerful stories and build its reputation by sharing its authentic identity with the world. Ottawa’s collective success can only happen with your participation.

Use the best practices of content marketing to tell your Ottawan stories. In doing so, you are contributing to the larger mosaic that is the story of our city. A city that works together, succeeds together. Your efforts will help multiply the influence we have on people who will benefit most from what Ottawa can deliver.

Learn about our city’s brand and take action to embed our stories into your services, experiences and communication. In doing so, you will help prepare Canada’s capital city for a bright future.