

Ancient wisdom inspires an exciting new brand for Tswalu

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One of South Africa's foremost private game reserves, Tswalu, approached leading strategic branding and communications consultancy, HKLM to spearhead a brand repositioning that would reflect how far it has come and provide scope for future growth both locally and across Africa.



Tswalu is much more than just an ecotourism destination. It is a place of immense possibilities, matched only by the infinite vistas of the green Kalahari. It's also a vital conservation project, with ongoing research initiatives geared towards understanding and conserving key ecosystems.

The sense of place was vital to the brand repositioning process, but equally, uninformed perceptions about the Kalahari needed to be addressed and corrected. HKLM's collaborative approach to addressing these intriguing questions saw the agency team work very closely with key Tswalu stakeholders. In-depth research was brought to life by site visits and one-on-one interviews.

Since its inception as an amalgamated collection of farms purchased by the South African Oppenheimer family, Tswalu has grown to be a byword for conservation excellence. 2019 saw the complete refurbishment of the Motse guest accommodation and this provided the perfect opportunity to revitalise the brand.



By immersing themselves in the rich heritage and direction of Tswalu, HKLM was able to arrive at a compellingly fresh new brand positioning. The Oppenheimer family creed – 'To leave the world better than how we found it' – informed every touchpoint.

Tswalu has a unique brand architecture, comprising the physical entity of Tswalu and the Tswalu Foundation which exists to promote the understanding, empowerment and artistic interpretation of the Kalahari ecosystem and the wider communities which form a part of it.

The original inhabitants of the Kalahari – the San – left their mark in the form of rock carvings or petroglyphs. While their precise meaning has been lost, they were clearly intended to communicate and record the resources of Tswalu.

“The history of the San people centres around respecting and preserving the land for future generations,” explains HKLM Brand Consultant, Janeke Bouwer. “Their local relevance and important conservation message are perfectly aligned with Tswalu’s purpose and speak to the timeless quality of this very special place.”

Tswalu can be translated as ‘a new beginning’ and this was best represented by a petroglyph showing a tree. It perfectly symbolises the potential for growth and talks to the idea of Tswalu being a thriving ecosystem – a direct challenge to the notion of a lifeless desert.

This new primary identity has helped propel the Tswalu Foundation to the forefront of the Tswalu brand, whilst also more closely integrating the work of the Foundation with the ecotourism offering.

The botanical theme inspired by the new primary identity was carried into the visual language of Tswalu through the use of Gillian Condry artworks. In the same way as the San art once did, imagery to be used throughout Tswalu will reference local fauna and flora. The colour palette will be inspired by the constantly changing hues of the land and sky.

“We’re very proud of our new logo and identity which have reinforced the sense of ownership and renewed purpose throughout the Tswalu family,” says executive chairman of Tswalu, Arnold Meyer, adding that this new brand platform faithfully embodies all that Tswalu stands for.

As part of the broader brief, HKLM also redesigned [Tswalu’s website](#), giving it a fresh new look and feel and improved functionality and accessibility. The agency also created guidelines for the roll-out of the new identity across all applications and facilitated a user-friendly Digital Asset Management (DAM) system.

“The website represents an opportunity to communicate the conservation message of Tswalu to a much wider audience,” says Meyer. “The new site both highlights the vastness and space of Tswalu and allows people to dig deeper into the specific research projects that underpin the entire enterprise.”

“We loved working with HKLM,” he concludes, “and the process was made that much simpler by the fact that both teams were completely aligned with a common vision and purpose.”

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