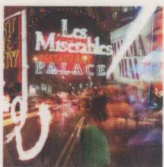
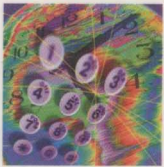


destination marketing

An integrated marketing communication approach



Steven Pike

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To Louise, Jesse and Alexandra
– Arohanui

With thanks to Don and Pearl

Prologue – It's a bloody shocking ad!

In early 2006, Tourism Australia launched a new destination brand positioning campaign. Even though the brand was designed for use in overseas markets, controversy surrounding the new positioning slogan ensured that the topic of destination marketing would be a key topic of conversation around the nation for weeks. Never before had a tourism campaign stirred so much debate in Australia.

The Australian campaign sets the context for this text in so many ways. The branding initiative, and ensuing publicity, encapsulates many key aspects of the issues related to the theory and practice of destination marketing. For example, much of the public (and I daresay private) discussion about the appropriateness of the new slogan seemed to be based on personal opinions, rather than an objective assessment of what makes for a successful destination brand. Other themes inherent in the campaign process that are addressed in the text include:

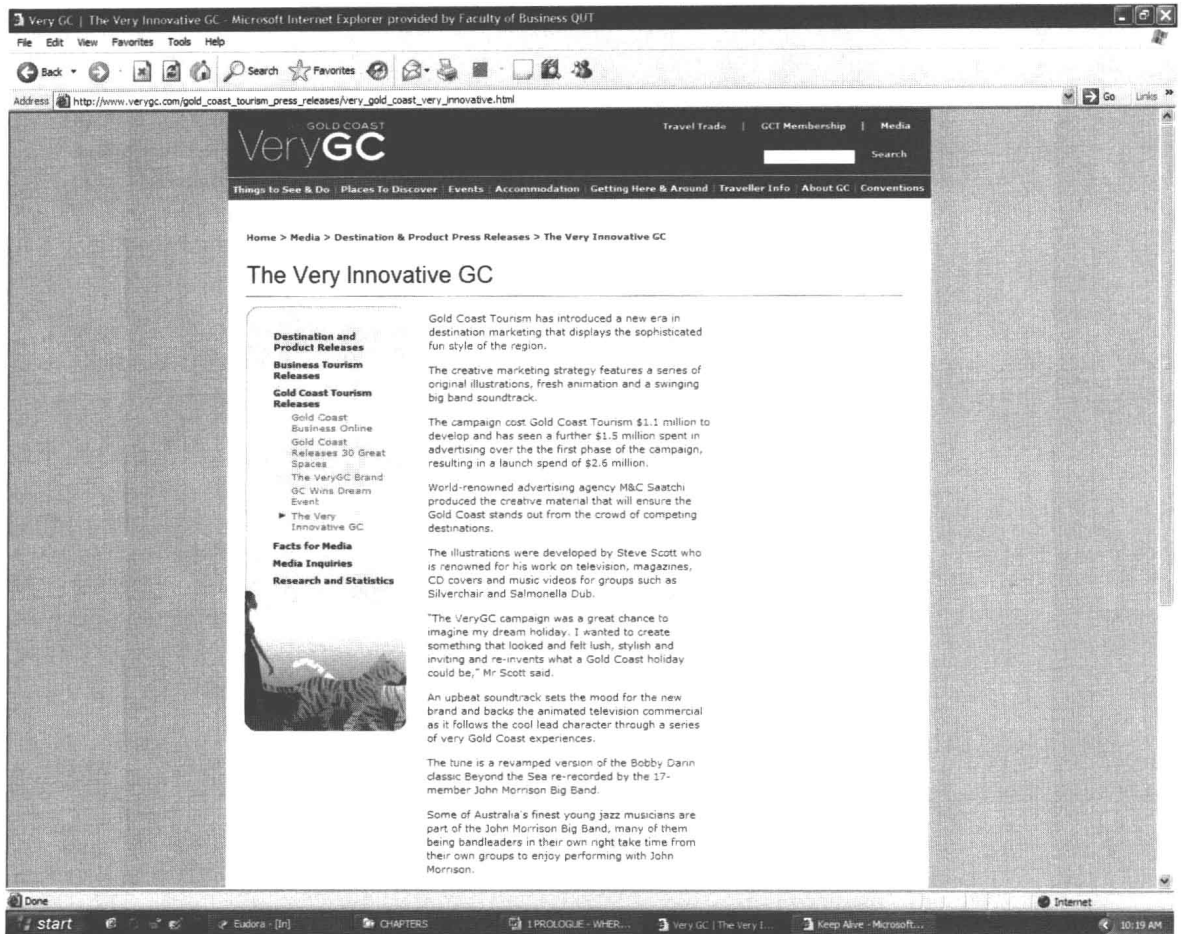
- the importance of differentiation in the marketplace
- the politics of destination marketing decision-making
- the high profile nature of destination marketing in the community
- the value of publicity in creating awareness of destination marketing activity

- the difficulty in developing a succinct destination slogan that encapsulates a sense of place in a few words
- the difficulty in developing a one brand positioning theme for use in different markets
- public criticism of destination marketing efforts
- the challenge of measuring brand campaign performance.

It is not being unkind to suggest that neighbouring country New Zealand stole a march on Australia in destination branding at the beginning of the new millennium. Indeed it has been suggested by others that Australia failed to capitalise on the global attention of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. Critics have lamented the lack of a destination brand that captures the spirit of the Aussie culture. The last campaign to do so was during the 1980s when the star of the hit movie *Crocodile Dundee*, Paul Hogan, urged American and British TV audiences to 'throw another shrimp on the barbie'. The campaign succeeded in getting Australia noticed in crowded international travel markets. Arguably, as important as the success in attracting international visitors, the campaign also struck a cord at home... most Australians were proud of the way the ads portrayed their part of the world.

Since 2000, the *100% pure New Zealand* brand campaign has been widely regarded as one of the most successful destination marketing initiatives. However, not many realise the strong connection between the New Zealand brand and the new Australian campaign. Not so long ago the marketing director responsible for Tourism New Zealand's *100% pure New Zealand* campaign moved to Australia to become CEO of Gold Coast Tourism, the regional tourism organisation responsible for promoting Australia's best known resort destination. Building on the experience of the *100% pure New Zealand* campaign, the new CEO initiated a re-branding for the Gold Coast. Re-branding is nothing new for the Gold Coast. After all, the place we now call Surfers Paradise was originally known as Elston.

The Gold Coast's new brand positioning launched in 2005 was *Very GC*, which attracted a lot of attention locally for a number of reasons, including the use of cartoon imagery (http://www.verygc.com/gold_coast_tourism_press_releases/very_gold_coast_very_innovative.html):



Not long after the launch, the CEO departed Gold Coast Tourism to take up the position of Marketing Director for Tourism Australia, the national tourism office. Now building on the experience of the *100% pure New Zealand* and *Very GC* initiatives, the Marketing Director coordinated the development of a new destination brand for Australia. Tourism Australia's

rationale for the new brand was (<http://www.tourism.australia.com/Marketing.asp?lang=EN&sub=0413>):

The new destination campaign has been developed in recognition of the fact that it is no longer enough for our customers to have a positive awareness of Australia as a great place for a holiday. Whilst Australia is highly desired by tourists worldwide, we need to convert this positive yet passive predisposition towards Australia into an actual intention to travel to the country.

To do this Australia needs to cut through the clutter of sameness in tourism destination marketing, by presenting a compelling single brand proposition about Australia to consumers in all markets.

The launch of the *So where the bloody hell are you* campaign (see www.wherethebloodyhellareyou.com) attracted a flurry of media publicity in Australia and overseas, with opinions very much divided. Elements of the campaign also received mixed reviews from the advertising industry. For example, the decision by the advertising agency to use a 'foreigner' to shoot the new campaign was labelled 'appalling' and 'idiotic' (see Nguyen, 2006). Australian Commercial and Media Photographers national president described the decision as a 'slap in the face' for local creatives.

Some of the many negative media headlines included:

- 'Better bloody work – why does the tourism industry need taxpayer help?' – *The Australian* (Editorial) 24/2/06, p. 17.
- 'Just too bloody stupid' – *The Courier-Mail*, 27/2/06, p. 11.
- 'Ad campaign suffering from vernacular disease' – *The Courier-Mail*, 25–26/2/06, p. 5.
- 'Tourism Australia chief defends advert' – *The Australian Financial Review*, 10/4/06, p. 16.

And some of the positive media headlines included:

- 'Bloody crass, but a bloody good viral campaign' – *B&T*, 3/3/06, p. 1.
- 'Tourism's \$180m bloody well spent' – *The Australian Financial Review*, 27/2/06, p. 46.
- 'True blue language sells Australia to the world' – *The Courier-Mail*, 24/2/06, p. 5.

A number of overseas governments, such as Canada and Britain, objected to the campaign. Some of the headlines about overseas reactions included:

- 'Ads use swearing to attract tourists down under' – *China Daily*, 24/2/06, p. 6.
- 'Bloody Brits censure ads' – *The Australian Financial Review*, 10/3/06, p. 15.
- 'No bloody swearing, we're British' – *The Courier-Mail*, 10/3/06, p. 3.
- 'Bloody difficult job for Minister' – *The Sunday Mail*, 12/3/06, p. 34.

One of the problems inherent in the debate about the new brand was that so much of it appeared to be based on personal views, and not on an objective assessment of what these types of campaigns try to achieve. At one point, Tourism Australia's Managing Director (formerly Director of the New Zealand Office of Tourism and Sport) was forced to point out: '... its just a bloody ad, not a cultural essay'.

The tourism market is fiercely competitive. No other marketplace has as many brands competing for attention and yet only a handful of countries account for 75% of the world's visitor arrivals. The other 200 or so are left to fight for a share of the remaining 25% of traffic. Destination marketers at city, state, and national levels have a far more challenging role than other services or consumer goods marketers. This is no place for the fainthearted, and launching a new destination brand slogan is usually a courageous move, for a number of reasons (see Pike, 2005):

- Destinations are multi-dimensional. That is, the destination product is an amalgam of a diverse and often eclectic range of attractions, activities, people, scenery, accommodation, amenities, and climate. And yet to get noticed in the market, that diversity has to be synthesised into a statement of around seven words that capture the spirit of the place, with some focused imagery that will fit on to a billboard or magazine page. This is an almost impossible task for a city like Los Angeles or Manchester, so imagine the challenge facing marketers of a land mass the size of Australia. That's why we see so many broad-scoped brand slogans such as *Take time to discover Bundaberg, Coral Coast and Country*, and *Ohio – so much to discover*. It is not often we see a focused destination slogan such as *Snowy Mountains – Australia's high country*.
- Local tourism businesses don't all share the same market interests. For example, some target American backpackers, while others might be more interested in Japanese honeymooners or German campervanners. Is one slogan, such as *Idaho – great potatoes, tasty destinations*, likely to be meaningful in every market?
- Related to the previous points is the issue of tourism industry politics. Naturally, all tourism businesses would like to see advertising that features their type of product, so the issue of who decides the brand slogan and how they are held accountable is important. Often a neutral stance is adopted, such as *Greece – beyond words*. I have personally been involved in a destination brand campaign that was scrapped after a six-year investment, purely on the whim of one influential stakeholder.
- There must be a balance between brand theory and community consensus about what is an acceptable campaign, because a top-down approach won't work. Destination marketers lack any direct control over the actual delivery of the brand promise. Instead they need buy-in from local tourism businesses so that all are 'flying in formation'. Many Australians interact with tourists at some point, so it helps if members of the host community feel part of a potentially stereotypical brand promise such as *So where the bloody hell are you?* Apparently, focus group testing in Australia found only one person who objected to the use of the word bloody. An NTO spokesperson advised in true Aussie fashion that this participant was firmly told by the others to 'pull your head in mate'.

With these points in mind, what makes for an objective assessment of a destination brand slogan? From an analysis of over 200 destination slogans from around world the following considerations are offered, in no particular order of importance (see Pike, 2004):

1. Does the slogan have a clear proposition? That is, is it quickly evident what value is being suggested to travellers? In the majority of cases, such as *Brisbane – its happening*, there is a clear proposition. In other cases, such as *Utah!*, there isn't.
2. Who will find the proposition meaningful? Will it be obvious to all our target markets, because what we should be trying to do is make the consumer's decision-making easier by tapping benefits they seek, such as *Be inspired by Wales*. If we have to sit down and explain the meaning, such as in *Slovenia – the grown place of Europe*, or *Blackall – there's more than stuff all!*, we will have lost their attention.
3. Does the slogan differentiate us from the thousands of other destinations offering similar beaches, theme parks, museums, clubs etc.?
4. Is the message likely to be memorable? Staying in the hearts and minds of consumers is an expensive and long-term venture. Once the initial publicity has waned, will the theme last for a decade or so, such as in *I ♥ NY*? Simplicity, such as *Nicaragua – a water paradise*, and courage under fire are paramount.
5. Finally, can the host community deliver the brand promise? Creativity must be tempered with reality because we travellers aren't stupid. Do we really believe the claims of *Barbados – just beyond your imagination*, or *England's North Country – the perfect package*, or *Greenland – out of this world*?

The quickest route to becoming memorable in the consumer's mind is to reinforce positively held perceptions, and not to try and change people's minds. The uniqueness of the Australian people is a big part of the travel experience here, and Tourism Australia's aim to inject that spirit into the campaign to differentiate it could be a sound choice. At the end of the day what will matter is not the publicity gained from the shock value. The decision-makers at Tourism Australia know that the true success of this campaign is not going to be judged by the amount of publicity gained or the number of advertising creativity awards. The government, taxpayers, and tourism businesses will be looking for evidence that the campaign generates more visitors who stay longer and spend more. In this regard, expectations are huge. But how do you measure the number visitors to Australia who are here as a direct result of the campaign, as opposed to those who are here as a result of word-of-mouth referrals from friends, a movie, a cheap airfare deal, a sporting event etc.? Read on.

Postscript

It has been said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. In light of the publicity surrounding Tourism Australia's campaign, the Irish Tourism Board ran advertisements in Australia with the headline "Get your ass over here"!

Further reading

- Pike, S. (2004). Destination brand positioning slogans – Towards the development of a set of accountability criteria. *Acta Turistica*, 16(2), 120–124.
- Pike, S. (2005). Tourism destination branding complexity. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 14(4), 258–259.
- Tourism Australia. (2006). A uniquely Australian invitation – Strategy & execution. [http://www.tourism.australia.com/content/Destination %20Campaign/Strategy%20and%20Execution.pdf](http://www.tourism.australia.com/content/Destination%20Campaign/Strategy%20and%20Execution.pdf)

Discussion questions

- Why do you think Tourism Australia selected such a potentially controversial positioning theme?
- Why do you think Tourism Australia conducted focus groups of Australian residents, when the campaign was designed for use in overseas markets?

Accompanying Resources



To support **Destination Marketing** we have provided you with the downloadable PowerPoint slides and Word documents to accompany this book. These contain solutions for all discussion questions, review questions and case studies found in this book and will provide you with a useful teaching aid when using the book in your classes.

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The study of destination marketing

Effective tourism managers who are able and willing to apply appropriate management techniques are increasingly needed. They should possess an understanding of the specialised management functions such as financial management, human resource management, as well as an appreciation of the structure, economics, and historical development of the tourism industry.

Witt & Moutinho (1994)

Aims

The aims of this chapter are to enhance understanding of:

- the rationale for the study of destination marketing
- a range of gaps in the destination marketing literature
- the need to bridge the divide between tourism practitioners and academics.



Perspective

The study of destination marketing is essential for anyone who is currently working in, or contemplating, a managerial or entrepreneurial career in tourism, travel or hospitality. The success of individual businesses is often as reliant on the competitiveness of the destination in which they are located, just as the success of any destination is reliant on the competitiveness of individual businesses. Opportunities to develop mutually beneficial relationships between destination marketers and tourism businesses are plentiful, but often untapped by both parties. The politics, challenges and constraints facing destination marketers are quite different to those faced by individual businesses. An understanding of such issues enables stakeholders to take advantage of opportunities in promotion, distribution, and new product development, thereby enhancing their own success as well as contributing to the effectiveness of their destination marketing organisation (DMO). The chapter sets the context for the study of destination marketing. I conclude the chapter with a brief discussion on the perspective from which I have approached the text. From careers as both a destination marketer and tourism academic I lament the divide between tourism practitioners and academics, acknowledge the wealth of academic theory of practical value to marketers, but provide a warning that due to the complexity of destination marketing much of this theory can be *easier said than done*.

Introduction

Most tourism activities take place at destinations. Not surprisingly then, destinations have emerged as 'the fundamental unit of analysis in tourism' (WTO, 2002), and form a pillar in any modelling of the tourism system, as shown, for example, in Leiper's (1979) outline of the geographic elements of tourism in Figure 1.1. Travellers are now spoilt for choice of destinations, which must compete for attention in markets cluttered with the messages of substitute products as well as rival places.

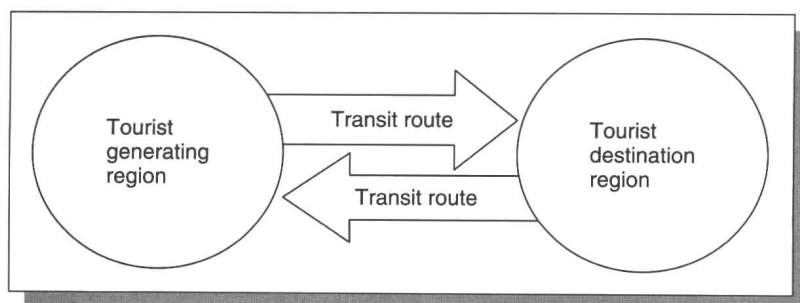


Figure 1.1
Geographical elements
of tourism

Destination marketing texts

Destination marketers are concerned with the selling of places, a field of study that has only recently attracted significant research attention. Given the prominent place of destinations in the tourism system it is surprising there have been relatively few texts to date that have focused on the operations of destination marketing organisations (DMO). While tourism has been around, in an organised form at least, since the late 19th century, texts concerned with destination planning, marketing and management have only emerged in earnest since the 1990s. Notable contributions are highlighted in Table 1.1. My previous text, *Destination Marketing Organisations*, was published in 2004 (see Pike, 2004b).

Table 1.1 Texts related to destination marketing

Topic	Author(s)
Destination planning and management	Lickorish (1992), WTO (1994), Laws (1995), Godfrey & Clarke (2000), Howie (2003)
Urban destinations	Page (1995)
Case studies of tourist organizations	Pearce (1992)
CVB functions	Harrill (2005)
Destination marketing	Wahab et al. (1976), Ashworth & Goodall (1990a), Goodall & Ashworth (1990), Heath & Wall (1992), Nykiel & Jascolt (1998), Kolb (2006)
Place promotion	Ashworth & Voogd (1990), Gold & Ward (1994)
Destination branding	Morgan et al. (2002, 2004)
Conference marketing	Davidson & Rogers (2006)
Destination crisis marketing	Beirman (2003a)

Destination marketing conference themes

A growing number of academic conferences featuring the destination marketing theme have also emerged since the 1990s:

- In 1990 the topic of the third international tourism workshop organised by the Geographical Institutes of the University of Groningen and the University of Reading was selling tourism destinations (see Ashworth & Goodall, 1990).

- The 1993 Association Internationale d'Experts Scientific du Tourisme (Aiest) conference addressed the issue of the competitiveness of long-haul destinations (see Ritchie & Crouch, 2000a).
- In 1996 the Fundacion Cavanilles for Advanced Studies in Tourism organised the Second International Forum on Tourism, themed the future of traditional tourist destinations (see Buhalis & Cooper, 1998).
- In 1998 the 48th Congress of the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism (Aiest) focused on 'Destination marketing – scopes and limitations' (see Keller, 1998).
- The 1999 TTRA Europe conference was themed 'Tourism destination marketing – gaining the competitive edge' (see Ruddy & Flanagan, 1999).
- Also in 1999, the Centro Internazionale di Studi Economia Turistica (Ciset) conference on destination marketing and management was held in Venice.

Since 2000, the number of conferences featuring destination marketing in the core themes has increased remarkably, as has the number of marketing conferences featuring a destination marketing track. In 2005, the first conference focusing on destination branding was hosted by the Macau Institute for Tourism Studies in conjunction with Perdue University. At the time of writing the organisers were planning to stage the conference biennially (see www.ift.edu.mo/conference/index.html).

Destination marketing journal publications

There has been a wealth of material related to destination marketing published in academic journals. For example, I reviewed 142 papers published in the literature between 1973 and 2000 that were concerned with just one aspect of destination marketing – that of destination image analysis (see Pike, 2002a). While there is not yet a dedicated destination-marketing journal, the journal *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* was launched in 2004.

Research gaps

This text synthesises the current extent of academic knowledge in the field. For teaching purposes the discussion is linked to real world industry examples and case studies. However, as we progress through the chapters, many research gaps relating to destination marketing issues will be highlighted. The following are some examples of areas in which DMOs face practical opportunities, challenges and constraints, and would benefit from more published research:

Governance and the politics of decision-making

Who decides on the priority of target market selection and the destination's positioning theme? Is this the domain of impartial DMO staff or the role of a committee or board that may or may not be representative of the local tourism industry? Will those businesses whose market interests

or products do not feature in destination promotions accept the decisions for the holistic good of the destination? For example, the launch of the *Where else but Queensland* campaign in Australia attracted criticism from the Queensland Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union over the destination's use of branded thongs (jandals) that leave the imprint 'Queensland' in the sand, because they were made in China (Barrett, 2006). Who decides the governance structure and membership of the board of directors? Should directors be democratically elected or hand picked on the basis of expertise? What is the optimum number of directors for an effective board?

Effective organisation structure

How should a DMO be structured? Fast moving and entrepreneurial, or consultative and conservative? Public or private sector? A public-private partnership? Is there still a place for small community-based DMOs, or does competition dictate greater efficiencies and effectiveness through macro-region entities? Should structure be designed to enable a competitive strategy, or does structure dictate strategy?

Destination management

To what extent are DMOs representative of destination *marketing* organisations or destination *management* organisations?

Alternative funding sources

If the government withdraws funding, as in the recent cases of Colorado and California in the USA and Waikato in New Zealand, what alternative funding sources are available? What are the expectations of the funders, and will they be independent of strategic and operational decisions?

Strategic planning and implementation

To what extent are DMOs able to engage in long-term strategic planning versus the priority of short-term tactical initiatives?

Brand positioning

Will one brand positioning slogan suit the needs of all markets? Or does market heterogeneity demand consideration of the design of different themes? Should the brand theme represent the interests of all local tourism businesses and intermediaries? How well does the brand encapsulate the host community's sense of place? How well will the theme(s) be delivered by stakeholders and intermediaries? How is it possible to represent a multi-attributed destination with a promotional message that is succinct enough to fit on a billboard or postcard? To what extent is the brand identity congruent with the actual brand image? What is the life expectancy of an effective destination brand?