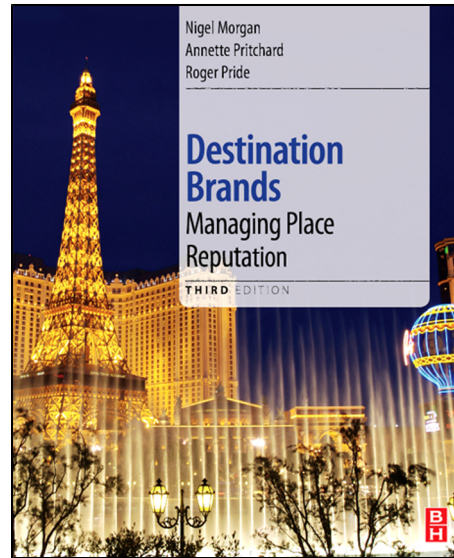


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Branding and the opportunities of movies: Australia

Bill Baker

INTRODUCTION

It has long been recognised that films can play a positive role in the tourism marketing of destinations, and the nation of Australia has proven to be no exception. For decades, films and television programs have successfully projected the outstanding beauty, adventure and character of Australia to international audiences. Australia experienced a tremendous surge in interest in the late 1970s and 1980s following the international success of the films *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *Mad Max*, *Crocodile Dundee*, and the television mini-series *The Thorn Birds* (filmed in California and Hawaii). Despite the success of *Crocodile Dundee* in particular and Australia's innovative tourism marketing during the 1980s, there was very little integration of the two, yet both contributed enormously to Australia's appeal as a desirable place to visit. Australia's *Shrimp on the Barbie* campaign, starring Paul Hogan, aired in North America in January–April 1983; whilst there was no direct “link” to the movie *Crocodile Dundee*, which also starred Hogan and was released in 1986, they clearly had a symbiotic relationship. Subsequent campaigns featuring Paul Hogan played on the Dundee persona and leveraged the film's extraordinary success.

Branding and marketing destinations is challenging at any time, but none more so than in the unprecedented 2008 business environment. A highly competitive media marketplace, the increase of new destinations, rising oil prices, a strong Australian dollar, and a global economic crisis and recession were major issues confronting Australia's tourism industry. Due to the worsening global economic backdrop in 2008, Tourism Australia believed it would be more difficult than ever to convince people around the world to take a holiday to Australia. During a time when there were dozens of practical reasons for people choosing not to travel, it was critical to appeal to their emotional desire to take a break and get away. Tourism Australia felt that there was no more powerful emotional tool than film, and film-makers are



masters at emotional storytelling. The production and release of the film *Australia* in 2008 and the prospect of having Australian Baz Luhrmann, an Oscar-nominated director, create the advertising represented a unique and timely opportunity. It would enable Tourism Australia to showcase the country in a way that had not occurred before and expose little known aspects of the country's geography and history to an international audience.

An integrated marketing program was developed to link the film's themes of adventure, romance, and transformation through multiple projects and a variety of media to enhance Australia's approach towards experiential branding. The film was set for release in 70 countries from October 2008, with the DVD release to follow in March 2009. Importantly, the wide international release represented excellent coverage of Tourism Australia's 22 priority regions. While the film release and associated tourism marketing campaign was global, the specific examples included in this chapter relate to the integrated marketing conducted in the UK. Thus, the chapter:

- Briefly outlines the powerful role of film in the tourism marketing of destinations;
- Illustrates through the example of the movie *Australia* how an integrated marketing program can be developed to link a film's themes to enhance a destination's approach towards branding.

FILM-INDUCED TOURISM

The study of film tourism is relatively new in tourism research. Sometimes called movie-induced or film-induced tourism, film tourism can be defined as tourist visits to a destination or attraction as a result of the destination being featured on television, video, or the cinema screen (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006). In some cases the tourism potency of a major motion picture can extend far beyond its initial launch. In their 1998 study, Riley, Baker and van Doren discovered that growth of 54% in visitation of featured destinations was evident at least 5 years after release of the 12 movies in their study. Additionally, the continual screening of a movie over decades can influence the disposition of many generations of film-goers towards the location. A good example of this is the 1953 classic *Roman Holiday* starring Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn, filmed on location in Rome. Today it is frequently in the program lineup of cable television channels and reproductions of the original movie posters are still widely available at souvenir and market stalls in Rome's most popular tourist areas. *Roman Holiday* has been a perennial ambassador for Italian tourism without having had any ties to a destination marketing organisation (DMO). Yet, the film's irresistible backdrop of Rome has drawn untold thousands to visit and explore the Eternal City.

In the 57 years since the release of *Roman Holiday*, DMOs and the tourism industry have played far more proactive roles in capitalising on the awareness, celebrity, and marketing power of films to promote their destinations. Audiences would not have been so aware of the fact that the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy was filmed in New Zealand had there not been very close collaboration

between the New Zealand Government; the New Zealand Tourism Board; and the film's production, publicity, and distribution companies.

New Zealand-born director Peter Jackson filmed the three movies in various locations around New Zealand. Jackson's special effects team turned New Zealand's already impressive landscape into a magical Middle Earth (New Zealand Tourism). The New Zealand Government created a special cabinet level position, appointing Peter Hodgson as Minister for the Middle Earth to capitalise on the opportunities that would arise from the trilogy's New Zealand roots. 'This film will really put us on the map,' Hodgson said on his appointment. 'Not many people knew that *Star Wars* was filmed in Morocco, but everyone will know that Middle Earth is in New Zealand,' he added. The destination marketing associated with the movie *Australia* also demonstrates the benefits of close collaboration between the marketing of a high profile movie and a well-known destination.

AUSTRALIA THE MOVIE

Produced by Bazmark Films (Luhrmann's production company) and Twentieth Century Fox, *Australia* is a romantic action adventure set in Northern Australia in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The story centres on an English aristocrat (Nicole Kidman) who travels to the Australian Outback where she meets rough-hewn stockman (Hugh Jackman) and a mixed-race Aboriginal child (Brandon Walters). Joining forces to save the cattle station she inherited, the three embark on a transforming journey across hundreds of miles of beautiful yet unforgiving terrain, only to face the Japanese bombing of the city of Darwin.

Australia was filmed on location in Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Queensland, and New South Wales. The outback scenes were shot in the Kimberly region of Western Australia, while other scenes were shot at Bowen on the Queensland coast, at Vaucluse on Sydney Harbour, and in the historic NSW town of Camden. In addition to the inspiration that came from these locations, Luhrmann became fascinated with what he refers to as 'the naturally occurring collisions of characters and imagery created by the juxtaposition of the Anglo administration, Aboriginal cowboys, Chinese pearlers, crocodiles, palm trees, and other contrasting elements' (Fox Filmed Entertainment, 2008).

THE OPPORTUNITY EVOLVES

Tourism Australia approached Twentieth Century Fox in 2006 about a film in production called *Australia*. This was followed by further discussions with director Baz Luhrmann and the production team at Bazmark Inq. Tourism Australia Managing Director Geoff Buckley said the unique opportunity created by the production of Luhrmann's epic film *Australia* was one that the organisation could not let pass. 'We knew that this film would create a wave of publicity that would put the country in the spotlight around the globe,' he said. 'And we found that the film's story had a remarkable resonance for what

we do in marketing the country as a travel destination. The challenge was always going to be how to ride the power of the film, but with a stand-alone and self-reliant tourism campaign. Getting Baz Luhrmann and his team on board to make that campaign was simply the best result we could have hoped for' ([Tourism Australia](#)).

Mr. Luhrmann said, 'When Tourism Australia came to us, we were reticent at first because we did not want to confuse the promotion of the film with a tourism campaign. The more we talked, the more I realised that we both had the same aims; to celebrate the truly unique and transformative power of this ancient and extraordinary continent. With this in mind, we agreed to put our team into the conception and realisation of a contemporary campaign which, while not aping the film, reflects this singular and attractive truth' ([Tourism Australia, 2008a](#)).

Like their counterparts in the fast-moving consumer goods category, destination marketers need to periodically introduce ways to supplement or replace conventional marketing practises that are losing their effectiveness. This philosophy led Tourism Australia to consider alternate approaches to the traditional communication and media channels such as radio, television, direct mail, and print advertising in order to cut through the clutter and resonate with key audiences. The Australian tourism industry was confronted with a highly competitive media marketplace, the rise of new destinations, the introduction of low cost carriers, a strong Australian dollar, and a rapidly unfolding global economic crisis. Australia needed a paradigm shift to successfully address these challenges.

Partnering with Twentieth Century Fox for the launch of *Australia* the movie offered Tourism Australia a unique and timely opportunity to address these challenges and break through the 'noise' of competitors, expand exposure for the country, and reach new audiences on an emotional level. Despite the enticing benefits of the project, Tourism Australia executives carefully considered a variety of factors to ensure that it would be a viable marketing proposition for Brand Australia and the Australian tourism industry. These considerations included the following:

- Alignment of the film's theme, locations, storyline, characters, and depiction with the core values of Australia's destination brand.
- The likelihood of resonating positively with target markets, given the need to communicate with culturally diverse audiences in many countries.
- The willingness of Twentieth Century Fox to work with Tourism Australia to the extent needed for optimal tourism benefit.
- Whether Tourism Australia could develop cooperative programs that would appeal to tourism partners and be acceptable to the movie's stakeholders.
- Ensuring that the essence of Australia's brand, as well as its visual and verbal identity would be retained in the collaboration.
- The opportunity to feature key tourism experience themes in an environment that will likely be dominated by the brand messages of the movie.
- The risk of failure that could be associated with the movie and the chance that it may not be seen by a large audience.

In 2007, Tourism Australia and Baz Luhrmann agreed that Bazmark Inq would produce a special, stand-alone campaign and that the best way to ensure synergy between the movie and Tourism Australia's advertising was for Luhrmann himself to conceive and produce the ads and link the campaign to the movie. The campaign would highlight the movie's 'essential truth' and its link to the country's tourism brand. To achieve this, Tourism Australia and Bazmark Inq identified those aspects of the movie's story which captured the country's tourism brand. Those themes were adventure, romance, and the transformative power of an Australian experience (Tourism Australia, 2008b).

While there was the consideration that the movie, like all movies, ran the risk of commercial failure, the decisions by Tourism Australia were made on the basis that success would not be measured on the result of box office returns. The primary focus of the campaign was to ride the wave of marketing and publicity to intensify a viewer's desire to visit Australia. The first, and in many respects most important, benefit was the opportunity to capitalise on the estimated one hundred million dollar marketing investment by Fox. It was anticipated that hundreds of millions of people globally would be exposed to the movie's publicity and tens of millions were likely to see the movie. The marketing strategy of positioning the word 'Australia' as meaning adventure and romance would reach a global audience. The buzz created by the Twentieth Century Fox marketing campaign for the movie offered an unprecedented opportunity to engage prospective visitors on an emotional level and link to enticing travel products. It was considered that every moviegoer was a prospective visitor to Australia who was paying to be immersed in the country for more than 2 hours. An added bonus was that the movie created a positive perception of Australia as a romantic place and a place that will change the visitor for the better. It was this expanded perception that was expected to enhance Australia's current brand position and make it more enticing to a wider global audience.

BRAND AUSTRALIA

Tourism Australia, and its predecessor the Australian Tourist Commission, have been vigorously marketing Australia internationally as a tourist destination for more than 40 years. During this time, Australia has established a reputation as an innovator in tourism marketing and has built one of the world's most successful and desirable destination brands. Overall, the nation performs well in global studies such as FutureBrand's Country Brand Index (number 1 for 2 years running) and the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index (top 10 since 1995). Impressively, Australia also ranked first out of 104 countries in the 2008 Legatum Prosperity Index that found that the conditions that drive both economic prosperity and personal well-being are currently stronger in Australia than any other nation.

Australia's Brand Platform

Australia's Brand Platform provides the foundation which guides all aspects of the brand: its visual and verbal identity, communications, product and experience

development, partnerships, and organisation and stakeholder behaviour. The positioning statement that encapsulates Australia's Brand Platform is:

The people of Australia are unique. Their friendly, straight talking and open attitude make visitors feel welcome. The Australian people make it easy for you to enjoy adventures you could never have imagined. They turn the wide open landscapes, pristine oceans and vibrant cities into a vast yet accessible adventure playground.

Australia's Brand Platform is underpinned by a set of five global tenets that influence all brand communications. These represent the qualities, benefits, and value the brand presents target audiences. Transformation – A holiday in Australia gives a fresh perspective.

- Welcoming – Australia is a welcoming holiday destination.
- Immersion – Holidays in Australia are about participating in life, not observing it.
- Adventure – Australia is an adventure holiday destination.
- Nature – Australia offers engaging experiences in the natural environment.

Experiential branding

To link the Brand Platform with its target audiences, Tourism Australia employs an experiential branding approach. It presents Australia's immersive experiences in ways that connect with them on a sensory and emotional level to increase preference for Australia. Using their extensive research, Tourism Australia worked with the State Tourism Organisations and the tourism industry to develop an experiential framework based on the tenets that underpin the Australia brand and provide its competitive edge. This framework provides industry partners with strategic, consistent, and meaningful ways to align with Australia's overall tourism brand and their marketing and product development efforts.

Through its consumer research, Tourism Australia is able to match the experiences which best meet the motivations and behavioural needs of specific audiences, and highlight those which differentiate the country from competitors. This strategy increases visitor dispersal throughout the country and ultimately, higher visitor spending. Importantly, it motivates target audiences to move from preference to intention to travel. To accomplish this, Tourism Australia and its industry partners emphasise seven key Australian Experiences. These are:

- Aboriginal Australia
- Aussie Coastal Lifestyle
- Australian Major Cities
- Australian Journeys
- Food and Wine
- Nature in Australia
- Outback Australia

Tourism Australia's General Manager UK/Europe Rodney Harrex highlighted the priority that Australia places on experiential branding when he said, 'The success of Brand Australia is not conveyed by our advertising alone, but through all encounters and experiences with Australia and its people. To achieve this we are transforming the brand from being presented as a trip, vacation or destination to becoming a wholly immersive, aspirational and engaging experience' (Baker, 2007, p. 154).

GLOBAL EXPERIENCE SEEKERS

Tourism Australia has undertaken extensive global psychographic research to identify the ideal visitor segment for Australia. This research has identified a group of travellers who, regardless of their culture or background, are looking for the type of experiences that Australia offers. This target audience has been termed Global Experience Seekers. The studies examined how these travellers think and feel in order to determine their likely travel preferences and behaviour.

Experience Seekers were identified across different cultures in all international markets, except New Zealand and Australia. They are well travelled and have a unique set of values, attitudes, and motivations that extend beyond typical holiday behaviour. Experience Seekers are long haul travellers and can be found among all age groups, income levels, and occupations; however, there are commonalities in their attitude towards travel, personal development, and everyday life.

Experience Seekers want to encounter cultures and lifestyles different from their own and are more inclined to travel off the beaten path to interact with local people and develop personal relationships. They welcome the opportunity to learn and to challenge themselves. The research revealed that this group can best be reached through internet communications, cable television, lifestyle channels and programs/documentaries, digital media, and cinema ([Tourism Australia](#)). Some of the words describing what they want from their travel and which they strongly identify Australia as offering are:

- Active/energetic
- Adventure/daring
- Carefree
- Letting go
- Lose inhibitions
- Natural
- Spontaneity/playful
- Vital/alive

'Come walkabout' marketing campaign

The advertising created by Baz Luhrmann was designed to encapsulate Australia's brand tenets and core experiences in a campaign named *Come Walkabout*. The goal was to encourage movie goers, especially Global

Experience Seekers, to get excited about Australia, research the destination, and ultimately book their Australian holiday. While developing the concept for the 'Come Walkabout' campaign, Luhrmann and his team faced the additional creative challenge of ensuring that the tourism advertising was capable of standing alone as a brand campaign for the destination, and not be about the movie. While the advertising does not mention the movie, it does reflect the themes of the movie by capturing the transformational qualities of an Australian holiday or vacation.

The advertising tackles head-on the stress that Australia's target markets feel due to life's pressures. It follows a harried couple escaping their everyday pressures in a metropolis to their self-discovery and rejuvenation in the Australian wilderness. This mirrors Luhrmann's film, which tells the story of a woman who has lost her sense of self but finds adventure, romance, and her true self when she comes to Australia. He achieved this by creating engaging, short film-styled advertisements for Tourism Australia using the movie's core themes of adventure, romance, and transformation by using the uniquely Australian concept of 'walkabout' – a tradition steeped in the Aboriginal culture. The term, 'walkabout' involves a person returning to the bush for a short period to reconnect to the land and their traditional way of life. For the majority of Australians, their 'walkabout' takes the form of a holiday – a time to refresh and reconnect.

The campaign was based around the notion that exploring Australia can transform your life. The idea that Australia is a place to experience, not just to see, is central to Australia's tourism brand. This is expressed by the words 'Sometimes we gotta get lost to find ourselves. Sometimes we gotta go walkabout,' which are key lines in the advertising.

An important linking device to connect the *walkabout* theme across all applications was the tagline, *Lose yourself in the movie. Find yourself in the country*. Although, in the North American market the approved tag line was *Lose yourself in the movie. Find yourself in Australia*.

The meaning and outcome of an Australian *walkabout* reinforces Tourism Australia's experiential branding strategy and touches on all of the key motivational themes at its core. By encouraging people to 'come walkabout' in Australia, Tourism Australia retained the tradition that it had set in past advertising by issuing a warm invitation. On this occasion, the welcome was again extended in an innovative, yet authentic way. *Australia* star Brandon Walters, a young Aboriginal boy, issued the invitation to come walkabout in each of the television and cinema advertisements.

Two television advertisements were created in a variety of formats from 30 to 90 sec for the international markets, one for eastern regions and one for western markets. They were aired in 22 regions which included the UK, US, Canada, Ireland, the Nordic countries, Germany, France, Netherlands, Switzerland, Italy, the Gulf countries, Malaysia, Thailand, India, Singapore, Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, New Zealand, and Australia.

Integrated marketing strategy

In order to simultaneously leverage the movie's capacity to gain attention and Fox's huge marketing budget, an integrated global strategy was developed

by Tourism Australia to convey Australia's tourism messages through a variety of methods, partners, and channels. Because the campaign was to be screened predominantly in cinemas with rich digital media and television as the secondary channel, Luhrmann developed short film-styled advertisements. Tourism Australia's newly appointed creative agency DDB Worldwide produced the print, online and outdoor versions, all based on Luhrmann's inspiration.

Of vital importance to the integration of the campaign was the need to ensure broad reach and engagement of target audiences across a variety of media and channels. The strategy called for extensive cinema and television advertising that would build excitement and emotion to provide a link to the movie, while print and rich digital channel executions would allow the 'walkabout' theme to be fully revealed and connected to Australia's key tourism experiences and products.

Through the partnership with Twentieth Century Fox, the Australian tourism industry was presented with opportunities to develop dimensions to marketing programs not previously possible. These opportunities included participation in Fox promotional activities, access to Fox marketing assets relating to *Australia* the movie and opportunities to reach and convey messages to new audiences.

In the UK, the campaign rolled out from October 2008 and in all markets in which Tourism Australia is active. It was scheduled to coincide with the most critical decision-making period for holidaymakers, while overlapping with both the launch of the movie and the DVD release several months later. The budget allocated by Tourism Australia for this worldwide investment in conjunction with the movie including the Twentieth Century Fox campaign and the Fox partnership was approximately AU\$40 million (£23 million).

1. Consumer marketing

Building upon the momentum of the movie and communicating directly with consumers enabled Tourism Australia to expand the Australian tourism story and encourage consumers to learn more about its travel experiences and travel opportunities. Critical to this was extensive cinema, television, print, and online advertising, as well as custom produced magazines, high profile consumer events, and competitions in priority markets. The themes of romance, adventure, and transformation are delivered through stunning imagery and short messages such as:

'Arrived with a thousand things on our minds. Departed without a care in the world.'

A select group of industry partners including tour wholesalers, Aussie Specialist travel agencies, and airlines were encouraged to work cooperatively on movie-related projects. The objective was to find beneficial methods to leverage the release of *Australia* and in doing so, inspire people to see the movie, motivate them to visit Australia, and point them in the right direction to book their travel.

One of the most prominent cooperative marketing programs in the UK was with Emirates Airlines featuring a national television and cinema advertising

campaign designed to encourage Brits to travel to Australia for a rejuvenating holiday experience. The campaign included print, online, and outdoor activity in London rail stations.

Additionally, in the UK, 1 week before the premier of the movie, a cinema promotion in partnership with Emirates Airlines and Tourism Western Australia was launched. The advertising saturated key cinemas in the UK. Posters in cinema foyers and washrooms directed consumers to branded postcard racks in the foyers stocked with themed postcards which comprised a fold out film experiences map and a 24-page booklet containing motivating images and information about Australia. Movie-goers were also invited to enter an online competition to win a 2-week holiday to Western Australia and experience some of the movie's locations first hand.

2. Trade marketing

Developing enthusiastic support among wholesalers and travel agent staff was considered a priority in order to satisfy consumer demand for Australian travel experiences arising from the media attention associated with the movie. To achieve this, a range of programs were designed to increase trade awareness and encourage them to develop travel products and promotions related to the movie.

Tourism Australia and 13 partners exhibited at the 2008 World Travel Market in London. Tens of thousands of travel professionals attended the event where Australian tourism operators met with the trade, travel agents, and media to discuss opportunities to promote Australia. The booth decor featured both print and television creatives from the campaign along with *Australia* the movie images and video trailer. The trade marketing activities included exclusive screenings and training for Aussie Specialist Travel Agents in major cities.

Tourism Australia encouraged their industry partners (including tour wholesalers, travel agents, and airlines) to align their marketing to the key messages and themes of the movie. Tourism Australia secured permission from Twentieth Century Fox for the partners to actively participate in the campaign and use the movie promotional artwork in their individual marketing activities. This step provided yet another level of marketing that fused the movie with Australian travel opportunities for consumers. The Tourism Toolkit materials and templates included the following:

- Print advertisements
- Posters and banners for window displays/offices and themed events
- Postcard templates to send clients
- Advertorial templates
- Direct mail template for postal or electronic distribution
- Invitation templates to enable agents to host movie screenings for their clients
- Folder template for itineraries and tickets
- Tour shell template for itinerary productions and special packages
- Online templates for advertising and special package promotion

3. Media relations

Movie and campaign messages were extended through media liaison programs, which resulted in wide exposure in some of the world's leading print, online, and broadcast media. Assistance was given to leading journalists and travel programs to visit Australia so that they could experience and report on locations in Australia relevant to the movie and core experience themes. Importantly, Tourism Australia worked in conjunction with Fox to encourage the stars and the director of the movie to tell their stories of filming in the outback as a way of inspiring Experience Seekers to travel to Australia.

4. Digital marketing

Tourism Australia's digital marketing strategy continued to be highly innovative. Australia was the first country to enter the MySpace community and is currently social networking worldwide with 250,000 people online. This internet strategy facilitates the distribution of tourism messages through high traffic consumer and social media sites including Australia.com, YouTube, Facebook and Flickr, and a variety of country specific platforms.

5. Affinity partners

Working with a range of like-minded brands, Tourism Australia strengthened the distribution of tourism messages via editorial, merchandising, competitions, and direct marketing. As exclusive wine partner of Australia the movie, Jacob's Creek Wines launched the most prominent affinity partner campaign with consistent media and outdoor advertising, and in-store promotions. The company launched an on-pack promotion offering the chance to win prizes ranging from a luxury Jacob's Creek Wines hamper to cinema tickets to the ultimate Australian holiday experience.

CONCLUSION

Australia had been seen by over 23 million people worldwide as of April 2009 and had grossed over US\$211 million by the end of that year. This makes it the second highest grossing Australian movie of all time, trailing *Crocodile Dundee* (US\$ 328 million). In the US, *Australia* sold almost two million DVDs in one month, 80% of what the studio predicted it would sell altogether. Since being released in Australia, the DVD has sold double what the studio expected (Box Office Mojo). The critical reviews for the movie were mixed to positive with the general consensus that it was a good, but not great movie.

Tourism arrivals for all of Australia's competitor destinations were negatively impacted by the global recession which coincided with the launch of the movie and Tourism Australia's marketing programs. Results for Australia were also below expectations; however, this cannot be attributed to the results of the film's marketing or Tourism Australia's strategy. The campaign generated an unprecedented level of exposure for Australia among target audiences worldwide, generating an estimated US\$ 440 (£270) million worth of publicity for Australia (Tourism Australia). A record 155 million

people were exposed to Tourism Australia's marketing, including 1,200 Aussie Specialist agents who completed the movie-related destination training program.

While the economic climate has suppressed results from the campaign in the short term, Tourism Australia research indicates that people who have seen advertising campaigns for Australia are 22% more likely to visit the destination. Tourism Australia executives are confident that the high profile campaigns in conjunction with the movie will result in increased visitation in the medium term.

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