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Using the Media to Re-Invent the ‘Secrets’ Image of South Australia

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Abstract

As a tourist destination South Australia has many attractions (eg nature, festivals, food and wine and a ‘sense of difference’), but it doesn’t have the icons so favoured by international visitors – the Rock, the Reef – and it doesn’t have the high profile of Sydney, the Olympic city with its idyllic natural harbour, bridge and opera house.

The majority of its attractions are easily accessible. The Barossa and Adelaide Hills wine regions and the Murray River are within an hour’s drive of Adelaide. The natural wilderness of Kangaroo Island and the expanses of the Outback are also just hours away.

Most tourism (80%) in South Australia is from the domestic market, but extensive research showed the key markets of Sydney and Melbourne didn’t know what South Australia had to offer – and this was the major factor preventing growth in domestic tourism. Potential holidaymakers had few negative perceptions about the State; rather they were inhibited by a lack of information.

In 1998, the South Australian Tourism Commission developed the ‘Best Kept Secrets’, a marketing strategy which promoted authentic experiences and positioned South Australia as a compelling holiday destination. It involved extensive use of the media - cinema, magazine and print advertising and the nation’s largest direct mail tourism campaign. It derived much of its impact from the use of iconic vision and images.

It has been a particularly successful campaign, with a return of $64 million on the original marketing investment of $9 million. ‘Secrets’ has successfully established South Australia as a compelling holiday destination. And the camera was all-important in portraying that ‘secret’ image.

Key words: secrets, marketing, media, cinema, South Australia

Introduction

South Australia is vast in area, nearly four times the size of the United Kingdom, but the majority of its attractions are easily accessible. The Barossa and Adelaide Hills wine regions and the Murray River are within an hour’s drive of Adelaide. The natural wilderness of Kangaroo Island and the expanses of the Outback are also just hours away.

The State is home to 1.4 million residents who mostly live in the southern coastal region and the capital city of Adelaide (ABS 2002). Despite the South Australian Tourism Commission’s SA Brand Health Monitor (2002) confirming that South Australia is the State most closely associated with wine and food, festivals and events and arts and entertainment, the State still has some well-kept secrets, including nature, festivals, food and wine and a ‘sense of difference’. It doesn’t have the icons favoured by international visitors – the Rock, the Reef – and it doesn’t have the high profile of Sydney, the Olympic city with its idyllic natural harbour, bridge and opera house.

Role of Media in Tourism

The challenge for any marketing manager is not only to raise awareness of their product (or destination), but also to attract the attention of the potential client (or visitor) in the first place, and then to hold it for long enough to get across the message that the place is worth visiting. Urry (2002) argues for the fundamentally visual nature of tourism experiences. He suggests that it is the image, or the ‘tourist gaze’ that provides some structure to the visitor experience, and the images that are part of the experience are what establishes the ‘difference’ of the place from elsewhere. Others argue that the concept of the tourist gaze does not accurately capture the moving, mobile or fleeting character of the difference in the context of the ‘other’. It focuses on the tourist whilst at rest, rather than when walking or looking out from a train or car window (Larsen 2001).
Photography has been essential to the development of contemporary tourism. Osborne (2000) suggests that they are not separate processes, but that each derives from and enhances the other, creating an 'ensemble'. He talks about the 'ultimate inseparability of photography from tourism's general culture and economy', and Taylor (1994) shows that photography has been essential to the development of tourism. Urry (2003) also argues that 'photography gives shape to travel ... and turns sites into sights, and have constructed what is worth going to sightsee, and what images and memories should be brought back', demonstrating that images are an important part of both destination marketing and the visitor experience.

It is this use of photography and visual imagery that has formed the basis for the 'Secrets' campaign that has positioned, and re-positioned, South Australia as a tourism destination.

Other strategies that have been utilised as part of this campaign include a comprehensive understanding of who the State's visitors are, what they want and how the environmental features and landscapes, both natural and cultural, are interpreted once they are here.

Tourism Means Business

Tourism is an important industry for South Australia, accounting for $3.4 billion in spending and 10% of the State's economic growth in 2001 (Economic Research Consultants, 2002). Tourism, directly and indirectly, contributes to the employment of more than 44,000 people with job growth at 5.5 times the rate of all job growth in the State (Brian Dermott and Associates, 2002). South Australia attracted 1.9 million interstate visitors and nine million interstate visitor nights in the 12 months to June 2002 (see figure 1). Victoria and New South Wales are the State's biggest interstate markets, providing 43% and 29% of the State's interstate visitor nights respectively. A range of factors influence people's decisions to travel, including time, disposable income, business, special interest attractions and availability of appropriate destinations and attractions. This study looks at the role that the media played in increasing visitor numbers, specifically from the domestic market, to South Australia, with particular reference to the Secrets campaign.

![Figure 1: Interstate Visitor Numbers to South Australia 1998 – 2003](image)

Tourism Image

The South Australian Tourism Commission developed the "Tourism Means Business 1996 – 2001 Strategic Plan" (1996) after extensive research, analysis and community consultation. It provided the foundation for the development of a large, integrated domestic tourism campaign specifically designed to reinvent the image of South Australia.

The plan included a detailed analysis of the State's competitive advantages, an in-depth review of marketing strategies and target markets and a series of objectives, including the need to:
• Establish a strong market position with a distinctive brand; and
• Strengthen South Australia's appeal as a destination.

The South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC) Secrets campaign was developed in 1998 to specifically address the lack of awareness about the State in the key interstate markets of New South Wales and Victoria, where more than 90% of respondents agreed with the statement: "I'm unsure if South Australia has a host of hidden treasures it can offer tourists, but if so, I'd like to know about them" (Marketing Insights 1997). Consumers on the eastern seaboard not only had little knowledge about the State as a tourism destination, they also thought "there was not enough to see and do."

A State Government economic strategy study (Little 1992) concluded that, compared with other States, South Australia's tourism market share was relatively small because:

• The State did not have the attributes required to be a leading tourism destination;
• South Australia suffered from a lack of awareness among the potential visitors; and
• Its location was relatively isolated, making access both time-consuming and expensive.

Internal SATC research (1994a) showed that while South Australia was unlikely to be a mass tourism destination, it could position itself successfully as a specialty destination, based on its inherent natural and cultural strengths. This same research showed that the secondary market inevitably had no strong images of the State apart from Adelaide and the Barossa.

Marketing for Change (SATC 1994b) went further: "The main reason South Australia is not considered as a destination is that many people have absolutely no images or impressions of it. There are no foundations in their headspace on which to build to attract them ... while this situation is less than desirable it should be noted that 'vacant' is better than rejected."

The Creation of an Eidetic Identity

The proposed solution to this problem of lack of awareness was to establish an eidetic identity for the State and more particularly Adelaide. "The capital, in most people's minds, in these and previous studies, dominates the thoughts and visions of the State, if not as a venue in itself, then as a base from which to explore and experiment" (Kelly et al 1990).

An eidetic identity is one that consists of a vivid and persistent type of imagery or memory that is usually established in childhood. Some of the world's strongest eidetic identities include built forms such as the Statue of Liberty as a symbol of New York, the Eiffel Tower for Paris and the Opera House for Sydney.

The strategic implications of not having an eidetic image (SATC 1994c) were that:

• South Australia is not positioned in the minds of the travel market as any kind of tourism destination.
• South Australia has established very few clear images or associations, no separate identity or story and suffers from a total lack of awareness of its history and historic places; in addition the overall experience it offers is not understood or able to be articulated even by those who 'loved' it.
• South Australia's tourism promotion would be strengthened if there were a recognizable and credible image, or images, which could be readily brought to mind.

South Australia as a destination, though, is the road less travelled. International visitors to the State are usually repeat visitors to Australia who are seeking an authentic experience (SATC 2002b). The marketing challenge has been how to depict the range of authentic holiday experiences without an icon or single image that immediately conjures up South Australia.

Photography and tourism are inextricably linked, as described by Gregory (1999) in the example of tourism in the late nineteenth-century in Egypt. In a process referred to as Kodakisation: "Egypt became scripted as a place of constructed visibility, with multiple, enframed theatrical scenes set up for the edification, entertainment and visual consumption of 'European' visitors."

The Marketing Challenge

The marketing challenge was, using a limited advertising budget, to put South Australia on the holiday shopping list of consumers who knew little about the State's tourism experiences. To maximise the impact of the campaign and gain a competitive advantage, the SATC had to focus on differentiating its tourism experiences and use innovative
communication, media and distribution channels. The selection of iconic images to represent the State’s tourism product and experiences played a significant role in the success of the campaign.

Additional market research (Sweeney and Associates 1992) concluded that successful travel destinations would be those that recognised the importance of exploration and discovery as motivations for domestic travel, and could emotionalise their hidden secrets.

The Secrets brand was developed by the SATC in conjunction with advertising agency kwp! and drew on a variety of research studies including the Taking Tourism to 2000 SATC Marketing Plan (1994c), which identified that travellers were interested in authentic experiences and the key attributes of South Australia, namely nature, festivals, food and wine. The Secrets brand was the marketing response to the interest of potential holidaymakers in exploration and discovery. The brand also implied a sense of mystery, intrigue and an undiscovered holiday destination.

Developing the Brand

Before Secrets, the SATC had predominately adopted mass-media advertising, using television for branding and print for tactical product offers and holiday brochure fulfillment. Analysis showed that, due to the nature of the campaigns and the relatively small advertising budget, they did little to shift the awareness or perceptions of South Australia as a holiday destination. Some of the images selected to represent the State and its capital of Adelaide, also failed to capture the spirit of the place and held little appeal to would-be holidaymakers. In some instances, the campaign slogans, themes and images used could have represented any number of tourist destinations.

For example, previous campaigns for South Australia, developed in the 1990’s, used the slogans “Out of the Ordinary” and “Come to Your Senses”, both of which could be negatively construed. Indeed, the “Come to Your Senses” slogan was intended to be used nationally and internationally until the translation in Japanese turned out to be, “Don’t be Stupid”.

Additionally, images selected for the “Out of the Ordinary” campaign featured a rotunda from the Victorian era on the banks of the Torrens River in the heart of Adelaide. An image selected for the “Come to Your Senses” campaign featured two people in a city restaurant. These images could have been taken anywhere in the world.

Competitor analysis showed that other Australian State tourism organisations were making bold statements about their destinations and using dynamic images and music. In contrast, the “Out of Ordinary” and “Come to Your Senses” campaigns developed for South Australia were deliberately restrained, refined and quiet. The rationale behind these campaigns was to stand out in a crowded advertising market by being significantly different (SATC 1994a).

Importantly, the campaigns did contain some images that were distinctly South Australian, including shots of the Murray River and the coastline of Kangaroo Island. They were also the first to promote a holiday experience that was intrinsically linked to the destination and most likely to appeal to the target markets. However, in addition to the deficits of the campaigns outlined above, advertising budgets were relatively small. The marketing strategies relied heavily on television advertising which didn’t have the required frequency or longevity to have a lasting impact on South Australia’s brand position in the loud and crowded advertising markets of Sydney and Melbourne.

An evaluation of the “Come to Your Senses” research (Kelly et al 1990) quoted in South Australia’s Tourism Image and Positioning: An Analysis of the Research findings, 1986-1993 campaign, concluded that the danger for South Australia in a competitive environment was that it would be swamped and forgotten. While the “Senses” campaign started promisingly it was not supported with enough time or media weight (Di Marzio, 1995).

The images (moving and still) selected for Secrets built on the strengths of the previous campaigns. They captured the attractions and experiences of the State, including the vineyards of the Barossa, Remarkable Rocks and Seal Bay on Kangaroo Island and the Flinders Ranges in the Outback, described as Australia’s last frontier (SATC 1994b). One of the significant differences in the 1998 Secrets campaign is that it featured people interacting in, and with, the landscape. It also had the media weight to create a momentum that helped to change the State’s image.

In developing the campaign, a thorough analysis of previous work and research was
conducted. *Taking Tourism to 2000* (SATC 1994c) stated that it would be a poor strategy for South Australia to compete head to head with the power or commodity brands of Queensland and New South Wales, because it lacked the high profile "landmarks" of these brands.

This research suggested that it would be an equally poor strategy for the State to compete on the basis that it has a bit of everything or has it all, and recommended that to compete successfully in tourism, South Australia had to move from the fringe brand position to become a specialty brand. A specialty brand is the market’s first choice for a particular type of holiday based on clearly defined benefits, or a core benefit proposition that a destination consistently delivers better than other destinations.

**Matching the Holiday Benefits to SA Tourism Product**

**The Experiential Tourist**

Experiential tourists want to discover new places and learn something of value as part of their travelling (McKercher and du Cros 2002). They are attracted to places that are significant, important and of special interest. They want an experience that shows them an authentic sense of place (Boorstin 1964).

Over the past 10 years the Australian Tourist Commission has developed a marketing campaign aimed at branding Australia, using iconic images and film footage to illustrate the arts, culture and environmental assets of the country. Over a five-year period between 1994 and 1998, it mounted a campaign that had a different special interest focus each year. For example 1994 was the year to Discover the Great Australian Outdoors, and 1996 was the year to Experience the Festivals of Oz (Australian Tourist Commission 1993 - 1998). Each film sequence created an ‘ensemble’ (Osborne 2000). Each showed the experiential tourist collecting memories and images (Taylor 1994) to be taken home. The campaigns positioned Australia as an experiential destination, with activities suitable for people from a range of age groups and cultural backgrounds.

*Travellers' Tales* (AFTA 1993) identified that people select a destination on the basis of the perceived benefit it offers, with those benefits including:

- **Change** – seeing or doing something different from home
- **Escape** – getting away from the humdrum of the daily routine
- **Relaxation** – opportunity to unwind and be oneself
- **Indulgence** – being waited on and pampered
- **Learning** – understanding different places and cultures
- **Adventure** – doing things that are exciting, daring and challenging
- **Socialising** – meeting people and making new contacts and friends
- **Experience** – feeling of belonging to a “club” of experienced travellers

It was important that South Australia’s marketing position met the needs of the market in a way that acknowledged the inherent strengths of the State’s tourism product, identified as food, wine, festivals and an unspoilt natural environment with an emphasis on ecotourism and soft adventure (SATC 1997). To achieve the advertising industry’s Holy Grail of “cut through”, and successfully reposition the State’s image, a compelling brand and innovative communication strategy was required.

**Developing the New Brand by Telling the Secrets**

The 1998 *Secrets* campaign changed the focus and promoted authentic experiences that positioned South Australia as a compelling holiday destination. It involved extensive use of cinema, magazine and print advertising and the nation’s largest direct mail tourism campaign. It was a strategic marketing campaign that derived much of its impact from the use of iconic vision and images.

The SATC invested in a series of images – print and film – that were distinctively South Australian and reinforced all that was surprising about the State. Extensive research was conducted into the types of holiday experiences sought by our markets, plus the media they watched and read. Cinema advertising (as opposed to television) and direct mail were selected as the primary means of communicating, because South Australia needed stronger branding and better positioning; television was an expensive and fleeting medium; and the State was competing in a crowded advertising market and against more powerful brands with greater media budgets. South Australia also needed an innovative mechanism to communicate to the market and differentiate its tourism product.
Research (SATC 1994b) showed the campaign had to simultaneously develop a stronger brand and identity and improve the knowledge of the State to overcome the perception that there was not enough to see or do.

Cinema v Television

Cinema was selected over television as a primary communications channel for three reasons:
- It was a highly emotional medium that enabled an evocative story to be told in 90 seconds as opposed to 30 or 60;
- The target markets were heavy cinema users; and
- The relatively low cost of cinema meant the campaign could run for a full 12 months, as opposed to six weeks on television, in the key markets of Melbourne and Sydney.

Two new cinema commercials featuring iconic images of South Australia’s tourism attractions and set to the music of Van Morrison’s Days Like This emotionalised the State’s tourism product. Strategic media buying also enabled the SATC to obtain an exclusivity agreement, precluding all other State tourism organisations from advertising on cinema, which effectively meant that South Australia owned the medium in the tourism category. The cinema “call to action” was a website and free call telephone number which encouraged consumers to obtain the Book of Best Kept Secrets.

Direct Marketing

Another aspect of the marketing campaign was the direct mail distribution of a high-quality, magazine-style motivational brochure, the Book of Best Kept Secrets, which was delivered to more than 1.4 million households in Victoria, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia. It was one of the largest direct mail campaigns ever conducted in Australia. The quality and size of the 148-page publication, along with the volume of books distributed had a major impact on the market’s awareness of South Australia as a holiday destination. Unlike most other tourism collateral it had a black cover which also helped to generate interest in the publication, and it became known as ‘The Black Book’. This single piece of collateral helped differentiate the State and delivered a great deal of information about a range of iconic holiday experiences.

Role of Interpretation in Tourism and Marketing

The Secrets campaign aimed to interpret the attractions and destinations of South Australia in a way that appealed to the target market. The campaign told some of the stories of the State, interpreting the culture, landscape and people to demonstrate what South Australia and its lifestyle had to offer. Tilden (1977) recognised that interpretation of sites and attractions was integral to people’s understanding of places, and hence to the experience of visitors. Interpretation, based on information, presents a range of materials and aims to stimulate, inspire, and tell a story that captures the imagination of the visitor.

The marketing materials used in the Secrets campaign have become the educators, with the ability to influence views, thoughts and actions (Tilden 1977), and provide information in an enjoyable and stimulating format to encourage visitation. The campaign focused on events, people and places that could be directly associated with South Australia. Some of the images were better known, particularly among certain potential client groups, such as the Adelaide Oval (sports tourists) or Kangaroo Island (ecotourists). This decision is in line with the State emphasis on cultural or heritage tourism on people, places and artefacts (Leader-Elliott 1996), and with a nature-based focus for ecotourists.

The campaign took many different forms; those that were well designed attracted attention and those that were well written sustained interest. Information booklets, like the first edition Book of Best Kept Secrets and subsequent regional area books were appealing and presented in an entertaining manner. This, according to Ham, (1992) almost guarantees client attention. Introductions written for all the booklets foreshadowed what was available in the State, providing readers with an overview and ‘setting the scene’ (Ham 1992), another key factor in the principles of interpretation. Colour and appealing images are particularly effective in attracting attention. Text and content have the potential to engage interest, especially when it is unexpected, secret or even controversial. The covers of the regional guides portrayed the place, which
established interest and conveyed relevance to the reader (Snooks and Co 2002).

The on-going Secrets campaign complements the South Australian Tourism Plan 2003-2008 (2002b), particularly Objective 1.7: Celebrate the State’s art and culture and Objective 1.8: Tell the Story of the State’s history and heritage. The Adelaide City Council’s City Arts and Living Culture Strategy 2003-2007 (2003) similarly supports the philosophies of the campaign.

Distribution

Distribution of the Book of Best Kept Secrets was highly targeted, using sophisticated socio-economic demographic mapping. The comprehensive direct mail campaign targeted consumers in key markets who most wanted to travel to South Australia (Roy Morgan, 1994). The values segments identified included: visible achievers, socially aware and traditional family life (Dickman 1997). People in these categories have a high propensity to read magazines/catalogues and the Book of Best Kept Secrets provided a vehicle to brand and convey greater knowledge of SA at the same time. Significantly it provided information and the vehicle for conversion. It was backed by a major web-site initiative (also high target market use) and followed by a specific call to action.

A substantial national print and magazine advertising campaign backed up the cinema and direct mail activities, and used the Book of Best Kept Secrets as the primary fulfilment vehicle.

Secrets of Campaign Results

Topline

The Secrets campaign has proved an overwhelming success, with SATC tracking research showing that it has attracted an additional 93,000 people from Victoria and New South Wales alone in the first four years (see Figure 1) and has generated $64 million for the State’s tourism economy (SATC 2001).

Book of Best Kept Secrets

Qualitative research undertaken on behalf of the SATC (Roy Morgan, 1999), including focus group consultation, conducted as part of the evaluation of Book of Best Kept Secrets, showed that people’s reaction and use was consistent and striking – they usually looked at it immediately and kept it in a prominent place (Roy Morgan, 1999). It was also not uncommon for them to share the publication outside of their households. Some people in the focus groups had already booked a holiday and, more importantly, others who had been to South Australia before planned to go again as the Book of Best Kept Secrets had shown them new holiday experiences they did not know about. The catalogues were retained for up to 12 months and used as a reference. Roy Morgan (1999) also noted that “the findings that so many keep the Book of Best Kept Secrets for reference and research, and the examples of sharing it or passing it on, indicate that this campaign is very different to the usual tourism campaign”. Most significantly, the research concluded that, the Book of Best Kept Secrets had been very successful in giving people a new view or image of South Australia and Adelaide – it moved people to reconsider South Australia as a tourist destination.

In 2000, the Australian Marketing Institute (AMI) awarded the Secrets campaign the “Tourism and Leisure Campaign of the Year”. The AMI National Awards for Marketing Excellence recognises vision, strategy, commitment, achievement and excellence. One of the hallmarks of the campaign was that it focused on images of the events, people and places that were directly associated with South Australia. The Secrets campaign has evolved in the past four years, but has always featured catalogues and direct mail that is designed to attract attention. It is also well written – often by journalists and travel writers – to sustain interest. The material was informative (like the first black Book of Best Kept Secrets and subsequent regional guides) and presented in an appealing and entertaining manner.

Other evidence relating to the success of the Secrets campaign includes data from the SATC’s Tourism Index Survey, in which tourism business operators are surveyed each quarter and asked what impact they feel the campaign has had on their business. This Index has indicated that Secrets has had a positive impact on their business performance, increasing from 22% at the September quarter 1999, to 43% at the September quarter 2001 survey. Operator’s comments also suggested that the Secret’s campaign has substantially improved word of mouth advertising for South Australia within interstate markets.
Another significant marketing outcome of the campaign is the development of a database of customers with a stated preference to holiday in South Australia. In the first four years of the campaign, more than 45,000 customers have been registered on the database. The subsequent Drive Secrets campaign, introduced in November 2002, dramatically increased the number of people prepared to provide their names, address, and holiday preference details to a database (SATC 2002a).

The real success of the Secrets campaign, however, has been a significant increase in the number of visitors to the State. Interstate holiday visitor numbers to the State have increased by 17% while the numbers of locals holidaying at home have grown by 25% since 1996 (Roy Morgan 1999).

Repositing the Brand

In November 2002, the SATC launched a fresh and compelling message targeted at a rich source of visitors nationally – that is, people who have a preference for a South Australian holiday and spend more time (more than three nights) and money (more than $2,500) than other visitors. These people have a preference for planning their drive and fly/drive holidays, and have expressed preferences for the State’s key attributes. There are 270,000 of these people living in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide alone and last year they spent a collective $1.5 billion on holidays in Australia. The SATC (2002b) refers to them as “most profitable prospects” or MPP’s, people who on average spend more on holidays than do other visitors (SATC 2002b). Seventy per cent of South Australia’s most profitable prospects are from NSW and Victoria.

National research shows that touring holiday styles account for 41% of Australia’s domestic holiday spend almost double any other specific holiday type (Brian Dermott and Associates 2002). In South Australia, touring holiday types account for more than 52% of domestic holiday spend, attracting 358,000 interstate touring visitors each year who stay, on average, seven nights.

The $5 million Unwinding Roads of South Australia campaign aims to position South Australia as the nation’s premier drive touring destination. By building on the four-year Secrets branding strategy, it continues to underpin the tourism positioning of the State to the national marketplace. Featuring new cinema, print and pay television advertising components, the reinvigorated Secrets campaign aims to inspire those people most likely to take a drive or fly/drive holiday in South Australia. It also includes the most comprehensive Secrets book ever produced – a 152-page drive and fly/drive touring guide, the Unwinding Roads of South Australia, designed specifically for the target market.

Creative Execution

The creative execution of the campaign, developed by the SATC Creative Unit in conjunction with Adelaide advertising agency kwpl, aims to recapture the romance of the road by recognising the needs, desires and behaviours of couples that constitute the core target market.

The campaign underlines the advantages of being away from everyday urban pressures, having time to think and communicate with your partner, setting your own pace and itinerary and discovering the secrets of both South Australia and each other.

The use of cinema and pay TV create strong audio and visual mediums, which enable the SATC to stimulate the target audience emotionally through music and images.

The music selected to accompany the ads was specifically designed to rekindle the thoughts and feelings of the target market when they were young. Groovin by the Young Rascals and Dock of the Bay by Otis Redding were chosen because of the mood and tone that they set.

Because cinema and pay TV commercials delivered such an emotional message, it was crucial that the print and magazine component of the campaign didn’t simply show nice pictures of South Australia, but powerfully reinforced the emotional connection with the audience. The print and magazine advertising components also had to reflect the romance of the road. While the SATC has a significant visual library, with more than 30,000 images, they are typically of the picture postcard type. They don’t predominantly feature people and when they do, they don’t depict the couple as having an emotional or romantic involvement. New images were needed that reflected the aims of the campaign.

The Photographer’s Brief

While many photographers were capable of capturing South Australia’s landscapes, it was more challenging to find one able to capture people emotionally within a
landscape, and interacting with one another naturally.

As the images would be critical in positioning South Australia as a premier drive destination, the selection of an appropriate photographer was crucial. The brief to the photographer, Tim Hixon, was to shoot a couple interacting – almost candidly – within the South Australian landscape, with their relationship, and the romance of the road, paramount.

Hixon used a special ‘plastic lensing’ effect to add intrigue to the images, giving them a darkened cameo effect around the edges which reinforced the mystery, intrigue and undiscovered aspects of South Australia as a holiday destination. Hixon’s style, tone and execution complemented the campaign.

Five key journeys are featured in The Unwinding Roads of South Australia, covering a mix of coastal, winery, Outback, river and Adelaide metropolitan images. A series of 12 print and magazine advertising concepts was developed using stock images to give the photographer a strong sense of the type of images required, long before the actual film shoot was conducted.

The selection of actors used to portray the couple was also important, if the target market were to identify with them. The couple selected for the week-long shoot were married, which meant they had a natural chemistry.

Campaign Execution

At 152 pages, The Unwinding Roads of South Australia is both the newest and largest Secrets publication. Detailing five iconic journeys to and through South Australia and 18 self-drive routes from Adelaide, the full colour glossy publication included suggested routes, maps, accommodation and information on attractions. Again, travel writers wrote the text and the images used focused on iconic South Australian tourism experiences.

Two new cinema commercials promoting the campaign were shown on 995 cinema screens in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. They also screened nationally through selected channels on Pay TV networks Foxtel and Auster. A comprehensive magazine and print advertising campaign included more than 30 titles with a focus on travel, wine, Outback, ecotourism and motoring.

More than 110,000 Drive books were sent to existing and potential members of the SATC’s Secrets database during the launch phase. A further 500,000 promotional direct mail fliers promoting the free publication to consumers in key postcodes in New South Wales, Victoria, Canberra and South Australia were sent in November 2002. A new website drive.southaustralia.com dedicated to the new campaign is accessible through www.southaustralia.com.

Drive Campaign Results

Early response to the campaign indicates that 79% of all requests for the new Secrets Drive publication are from potential interstate visitors and over 27% of the response is through the www.drive.southaustralia.com website (SATC internal research 2003).

More than 178,300 books have been distributed in a four-month period with an estimated 79.7% of these books being sent to interstate consumers – a ratio that is in line with the distribution of the most profitable prospects target market, which is approximately 80% interstate and 20% intrastate. An additional 30,758 consumer records have been added to the SATC Secrets database, which represents an increase of 51% in four months of campaign activity.

Direct Mail Teaser

Total specific response to the direct mail teaser is estimated at 26,350 from a total of 500,000 pieces sent to targeted postcodes of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Canberra and regional NSW and Victoria. This is a response rate of 5.3%, a good result considering the following:

- Industry benchmarks for this campaign style (distribution to postcodes via unaddressed letterbox delivery) is usually within the 2-3% range;
- It is the SATC’s best response rate to direct marketing in a campaign, surpassing the 4.7% achieved with the March 2001 Secrets campaign; and
- All of the “drive market” customers on the SATC’s database received a copy of the Secrets book in the initial distribution of 110,000 copies, which means that these additional inquiries are from new customers.

The response method has also changed when compared to past campaigns, with the difference being the use of the web. Online response to the latest campaign is almost four times greater than that of previous campaigns. This is due to a significant effort.
to promote www.drive.southaustralia.com linked to southaustralia.com as a preferred method of ordering the book. The reasons for this increased push toward the web include: increased brand experience, greater cost effectiveness and increasing importance in the Internet as a media tool (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Levels of response to the Unwinding Roads of South Australia campaign.

Response by State has also significantly changed compared with previous campaigns. An increase of more than 258% has been achieved in New South Wales. This campaign specifically re-directed resources and collateral from the South East Queensland market towards New South Wales - the home State of South Australia’s largest MPP target market (see Figure 3). A response share of 69% from the interstate market is relatively steady compared to previous campaigns.

Figure 3: State Levels of response to the Unwinding Roads of South Australia campaign

Advertising and Media

Reports from the Secrets call centre suggest that an estimated 8,606 responses were generated from advertising and editorial placed during the campaign launch. This positive response illustrates the ability of advertising to both build brand and stimulate response, given the right creative executions.

Online Activity

The online response to this campaign has exceeded previous results. The www.drive.southaustralia.com website has received 18,146 visits since its November launch from over 10,600 visitors. Key outcomes from the website statistics include:

- 9346 requests for the Book of Best Kept Secrets online – 88% of all visitors;
- 2474 downloaded maps – 23% of all visitors; and
- An estimated 68% of all visitors to this website were from the interstate market, 19% more than the www.southaustralia.com master site.

The SATC’s database of customers wishing to travel to South Australia for a holiday is now more than 90,000. The new Drive campaign is creating a relationship with them.

Much of this success is attributed to the new image of South Australia. Despite the overwhelming success of the Secrets campaign to date, the SATC and advertising agency kwp! are reviewing the Secrets domestic tourism brand. The primary purpose of the review is to ensure that the campaign remains relevant to consumers, that the images and style accurately depicts the State’s range of holiday experiences and continues to deliver increases in visitor numbers, nights and yield.

Conclusion

Marketing the Secrets of South Australia with pictures of iconic experiences – moving and still – in a specifically designed cinema, direct mail ad print campaign has repositioned the image of the State with the target market. The campaign built on the knowledge that domestic visitors to the State enjoyed the experience, but there was clearly a lack of both product and experience knowledge amongst much of the target market. The Secrets marketing and promotion, particularly with the Book of Best Kept Secrets and the customised cinema advertising, succeeded on meeting the needs of the key interstate markets, including New South Wales and Victoria, with a specific focus on the most profitable prospects. The “Black Book” has become almost a collectors item.

The results to date of the new Secrets Drive campaign have been impressive and reinforce the Government’s decision to invest in domestic tourism marketing and the re-invention of a compelling image for South Australia. By more accurately targeting the domestic market, South Australia has the potential to increase both visitation and economic impact.
International events like September 11, the attack on Australians in Bali, the war in Iraq and the outbreak of SARS, have had a devastating impact on tourism globally. The strongest tourism trend since these events is for travellers to increasingly holiday at home (SATC 2004). The State’s domestic marketing push with an emphasis on self-drive is perfectly timed and our reputation as the Secret destination, with compelling images and experiences, may prove to be a very real advantage.

References


Branding Research, South Australian Tourism Commission, Adelaide.