



Melbourne's Great Indoors

A decade ago, changing the market perception of Melbourne during deep winter was seen as either a tourism marketer's ultimate challenge or a nightmare.

The Racing Carnival filled rooms during spring, the Australian Open helped during summer, and a wealth of March-April events - including the Grand Prix - made sure that hotels' autumn bed night numbers were healthy. This left the June to September period as an annual patronage trough.

The Australian Hotels Association and Tourism Victoria combined forces to tackle Melbourne's biggest tourism challenge or opportunity, as it became increasingly viewed.

All parties realised that advertising alone would not overcome the perception that Melbourne's winters were wet, windy and mostly closed.



However, generations of Melburnians had flocked to the CBD for Australia's best musical theatre, shopping and public art exhibitions.

The planning committee and their advertising agency wanted to embrace all those 'feel good' winter elements, then also add the pizzazz of the city's great eateries, fashion outlets, book shops and emerging café culture.

That was the 'sizzle' taken care of, but a better 'sausage' was still needed. Melbourne's large hotels stepped-in with price incentives for visitors to stay and dine with them during the June to September period.



This gave the campaign a strong tactical element and, at least in its early days, made it very price-driven in order to get people aware of Melbourne's colder season delights.

The icing on the cake was the Victorian Major Events Committee's collaboration with the National Gallery of Victoria to bring block bluster art exhibitions to the city every winter. Exhibitions such as The Great Impressionists and The Guggenheim Collection generate about 80,000 interstate winter visitors to the city.

Every year the campaign committee develops a new theme to underpin the offering and the marketing. This year's theme of 'Creative Melbourne' capitalises on the city's booming reputation for artistic and technical creativity. This also complements Tourism Victoria's current big brand campaign, which highlights the city's arcades and laneways, as well as the City of Melbourne's 'hidden secrets' promotion.

All parties maintain that the Melbourne Great Indoors campaign has achieved everything it set out to do, and probably more.

From an image point of view, it has achieved a major turn-around in perception about what Melbourne can offer the visitor during winter.



From a hotelier's perspective, the previously large June to September occupancy trough has been levelled so effectively that the current campaigns are now much less price-driven.

Tourism Victoria's Director of Marketing, Don Richter, says that even if the winter campaigns stopped, the trough probably wouldn't reappear to the same depth, because people are now more conscious of what Melbourne has to offer during that period.

With a much more modest budget than some of its other campaigns, Tourism Victoria makes heavy use of the internet to back-up the brand work, including encouraging people to come online to contribute their own impressions and stories about holidaying in Melbourne.

Key findings:

Partnerships are often the key to marketing success; the combination of more minds and greater resources.

Price-driven marketing may be needed, at least in the initial stages, to overcome people's resistance to the product.

The combination of being able to deliver a high quality product (ie experience) and some strategic planning and creative thinking, will help to move consumer thinking beyond simple price comparisons.