

# CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIA

## 1. Selling Australia

Sara Cousins

**From the Monash University National Centre for Australian Studies course, developed with Open Learning Australia**

In the first week of the course, Sara Cousins asks: How does the world see Australia? Is the image of Australia abroad shaped by popular culture? How have major events, such as the Sydney Olympic Games, been used to market Australia to the world?

Sara Cousins is a research fellow with the National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.

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### 1.1 Brand Australia

A new brand proposition has been developed to help communicate Australia's positioning to the world...*Life in a Different Light*, which draws on the powerful link between the light, the land, and the life in Australia. Tourism Australia, 2004.

What image does Australia portray to the world through its media, advertising campaigns and tourism strategies?

The *Brand Australia* campaign was launched in the mid-1990s by the Australian Government's tourism agency, [Tourism Australia](#) (formerly known as the Australian Tourism Commission). Its aim was to promote Australia's magnificent natural environment, but also the Australian people and their lifestyle. Tourism Australia, just like any advertising executive, has to constantly find something distinctive about its product, Australia, in order to compete in a global market. Over time, the 'branding' of Australia has moved away from a narrow focus on the outback with its unique flora and fauna.

In 2004, [Brand Australia](#) was reinvented and relaunched as 'Life in a Different Light'. This new branding is based on the idea that the light is different in Australia. Australia is a bright place, 'where colours are true, skies are tall and the light shifts perspectives wherever it shines'. Australia's people are imbued with an infectious 'candour and optimism'. *Brand Australia's* logo however remains the kangaroo, which is seen to be Australia's most distinctive and instantly recognisable icon overseas. In keeping with the relaunched campaign, 'Australia, a different light', the kangaroo symbolises 'warmth, boundless energy and forward looking optimism'. Tourism strategies are now firmly

focused on encouraging visitors to rural and regional Australia as well as the better known destinations. See the Australian Government's [White Paper on Tourism](#).

*Brand Australia* contrasts with earlier tourism campaigns that were often linked with strategies to encourage immigration to Australia. It was important in the years following Federation in 1900, for example, to promote parts of Australia as a 'little piece of England' or 'the Riviera' rather than to emphasise the distinctiveness of the travel experience. By contrast, Paul Keating's *Creative Nation* initiative in the 1990s emphasised cultural tourism and international marketing strategies that were more in line with his vision of Australia as integral to Asia. The 'mass market' tourist industry took advantage of reforms in the post World War II period, which opened up Australia to foreign investment as well as greater economic and diplomatic ties beyond Britain, in particular with the United States and Asia. A revolution in air travel, with the introduction of jet aircraft in the 1960s and 1970s, further encouraged tourists to seek out the 'exotic' destination.

## 1.2 Imagining Australia

Some of the most dominant images of Australia marketed overseas include the Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge, Uluru or Ayers Rock, and the Great Barrier Reef along with cuddly koalas and kangaroos. Actor and comedian, [Paul Hogan](#) gave Australia an international profile in the mid-1980s, promoting these images through the launch of advertising campaigns. Across North America, Asia and the United Kingdom, Hogan popularised Aussie slang, such as 'G'day' and 'throw another shrimp on the barbie'. His character of Mick Dundee in the *Crocodile Dundee* films typified the easy-going bush larrikin. The image of Australia abroad is widely shaped by popular culture. Television shows like the [Flying Doctors](#), [Neighbours](#) and [The Crocodile Hunter](#) are very popular overseas today. *Neighbours* has just recently run to 4000 episodes and has a daily audience of over 120 million in 57 countries.

What are the consequences of 'branding' a country? What sort of images, experiences and impressions might overseas visitors miss out on if their knowledge and expectations are guided by popular culture? Does Tourism Australia's *Brand Australia* reflect the diversity of Australian culture today? If not, should it and what marketing strategy would be effective to attract the international tourist?

## 1.3 Trading in tourism

Australia attracts nearly five million overseas tourists a year. Predominantly, these visitors flock to the Queensland coast and Sydney. In 2002, there were approximately 4.8 million international tourists visiting Australia. The majority of overseas visitors come from New Zealand, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. While still only 4% of tourists, the numbers of Chinese visitors travelling to Australia increased by 20% over 2001. Australian Bureau of Statistics, [AusStats: International Inbound Tourism](#).

Tourism's contribution to Australia's export economy and employment domestically is significant. In 2000-2001, tourism products earned more than exports of coal or petroleum and gas, and international visitors spent \$17.1 billion dollars worth of goods and services. This equates to 11.2% of Australia's total exports and 4.7% of gross domestic product. In the same year, the tourism industry was responsible for 6% of total

employment. Domestic tourism is also a burgeoning industry with Australians enjoying nearly 295 million nights away from home in the year ending 30 September 2002, spending \$51.7 billion. [Read 'Throw another shrimp on the trade balance'](#)

Tourism statistics reveal a trend of steadily increasing overseas visitor numbers, but still numbers have not reached the levels of 2000 and 2001. The impact of terrorism, global economic conditions, conflict in the Middle East and health scares like the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) continue to have severe impact on international tourism. [Search for 'Impact' Fact Sheets and Tourism.](#)

#### **1.4 Backpackers in Australia**

[Backpackers](#) have been identified by Tourism Australia as one of the key growth areas in the overseas tourism market. The vast majority of backpackers to Australia are between the ages of 18 and 30, equally divided between male and female, and most come from England and Western Europe. ['Backpackers Uncovered' January 2003](#) (research by TNT Magazine and Student University Travel) found that four out of every ten visitors would spend more than \$10,000 on their visit in Australia.

'Must see' destinations for backpackers include Sydney, Cairns, the Great Barrier Reef, Byron Bay, Fraser Island, the Whitsundays and Uluru. To capitalise on this trend, Tourism Australia is marketing Australia as a 'backpacker's heaven'. Some of the drawcards include: welcoming locals; easy-going atmosphere; great climate; the exchange rate, and the diversity of experience.

#### **1.5 Sydney Olympic Games 2000**

The [Sydney Olympic Games 2000](#) was possibly the most significant and effective global event ever available to market Australia to the world. With a television audience of approximately 3 1/2 billion people of nearly 40 billion viewing hours, the Australian Tourism Commission argued that Australia's international tourism brand had been advanced by the Games by ten years. Events such as the Olympic Torch Relay which reached Uluru from Greece, and then toured around Australia for 100 days generated publicity and interest in the nation as a whole.

What were the images of Australia and its people beamed to the world during the Olympics? How were these images constructed by the media?

The Opening Ceremony showcased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture with 900 Indigenous people performing 'Awakenings' and a traditional smoking ceremony. The lighting of the Olympic cauldron by Indigenous athlete, Cathy Freeman, sought to send a keen message of reconciliation to the global audience. Read about [Indigenous protest at the Games](#). The 'Welcome' sequence incorporated an Australian stock horse bursting into the arena, an arid red landscape, to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's rendition of the 'Man from Snowy River'. Images of Australia's coastline and beach lifestyle were then conjured up by 13 year old Nikki Webster, who lay on her beach towel dreaming of the ocean. 'Tin Symphony' featured galvanised iron, water tanks, and other iconic elements of the bush landscape. Other elements included Victa lawnmowers, giant thongs and dancing Ned Kellys, all presented in a dazzling if at times bewildering display. [Online discovery of Sydney 2000 Olympic Games Collection.](#)

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One underrated cultural export, but a hugely successful one, was the nightly television program called *The Dream*. A satirical round-up of the day's events by [Rampaging Roy Slaven & H.G. Nelson](#) (aka John Doyle and Greig Pickhaver), the prime time television show generated great interest from overseas visitors, many intrigued by the irreverence shown to official Olympic merchandise. In the lead up to the Sydney 2000 Olympics, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's *The Games* series lampooned those in charge, and during the Melbourne 1956 Olympics athletes marched informally rather than in team formation in the Closing Ceremony for the first time.

To what extent were 'informality' and 'irreverence' a cultural export during the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games? Did perceptions of Australia change overseas following the massive media coverage and tourism campaigns?

## **1.6 The next wave**

The challenge post-Olympic Games is to evaluate how successful Australians have been so far in 'selling' Australia in all its diversity to an international audience. Can the tourism industry afford to market 'cultural tourism' more actively in a competitive global market? [Read article, 'Tourism rethink urged'](#). New trends within the tourism industry include developing new and niche markets, and regional and events tourism. See the [See Tourism Futures conference](#). What might be the consequences of failing to promote a more diversified mix of tourist experiences and travel to areas of Australia outside the Sydney, Barrier Reef, Uluru triangle?

## **1.7 Further reading**

### **About Australia**

Search, 'Australia in Brief' and 'Australia Now'  
*Commonwealth Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*  
<http://www.dfat.gov.au>

Guide to Australia  
*Lonely Planet*  
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com>

Welcome to 'About Australia'  
*Cardline Pty Ltd*  
<http://www.about-australia.com>

Guide to Australia  
*Charles Sturt University*  
<http://www.csu.edu.au/australia/tourism.html>

## **Australian government tourism**

Tourism Australia  
*Commonwealth Australia*  
<http://atc.australia.com/>

Australia's National Capital  
*Australian Capital Territory Government*  
<http://www.canberratourism.com.au>

Australia's Outback  
*Northern Territory Government*  
<http://www.australiasoutback.com/home/>

Tourism Victoria  
*Victorian State Government*  
<http://www.tourismvictoria.com.au/>

South Australia Tourism Commission  
*South Australian State Government*  
<http://www.southaustralia.com/>

Tourism Queensland  
*Queensland State Government*  
<http://www.qttc.com.au/>

Great Barrier Reef Tourism  
*Queensland State Government*  
<http://www.barrierreefaustralia.com/>

Tourism Tasmania  
*Tasmanian State Government*  
<http://www.tourismtasmania.com.au/>

Experience Western Australia  
*Western Australian State Government*  
<http://www.westernaustralia.net/>

## **Cultural tourism**

Aboriginal Tourism Australia  
*Aboriginal Tourism Association*  
<http://www.ataust.org.au/>

National Aboriginal Tour Operators Directory  
*100% Aboriginal Owned Community Enterprise*  
<http://www.aboriginalaustralia.com>

## **Tourism statistics and research**

Bureau of Tourism Research  
*Commonwealth Government*  
<http://www.btr.gov.au/>

Search 'Tourism'  
*Commonwealth Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources*  
<http://www.industry.gov.au/>

Wish you were here, Australian Tourism Studies  
*Open Learning Australia and ABC Radio National*  
<http://www.abc.net.au/ola/tourism>

Parliament of Australia  
*Parliamentary Library, Internet Guide on Tourism Resources*  
<http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/econ/ectourism.htm>

Intelligent Tourism Distribution  
*Australian Tourism Data Warehouse*  
<http://www.atdw.com.au>

Tourism and Transport Forum Australia  
<http://www.ttf.org.au/>

Travel Biz, online venture of Media Group  
*Reed Business Information*  
<http://www.travelbiz.com.au/>

Travel Trade Magazines  
*BMI Publications*  
[www.sellingaustralia.com](http://www.sellingaustralia.com)

See Australia  
*Ninemsn 'Travel'*  
<http://www.seeaustralia.com.au>

Showing Australia to the World  
*Travel Australia, Internet*  
<http://www.travelaustralia.com.au/>

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