

**DESTINATION ADVERTISING
AS A FUEL FOR CRISIS RECOVERY**

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THE IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The global Travel & Tourism industry has emerged as one of the 21st Century's most powerful segments of economic and social growth and development. Importantly the Travel and Tourism sector has made it possible for nations entering into and emerging within the global economy to proudly and confidently play a part as a tourism destination. In addition to the sector's ability to generate significant, sustainable revenues, employment and investment for nations across the globe, Travel & Tourism has provided a framework for aligning and inspiring national purpose, pride and profile.

The approach taken towards building destination awareness and image is critical to the destination's ultimate appeal and competitiveness. Destination Branding – *a clear, compelling and competitive proposition combined with a unique, creative identity and a strong communications strategy* – acts as a fuel for establishing and embedding a destination as a serious offering for travellers. And when married to the right media partners the advertising messages of the destination are able to be carried through messengers skilled with reaching the right audiences in the right environments at the right time.

The role of advertising is critical to destination success at many levels. Media has a powerful influence on the destination's Brand and greater industry building efforts. Support of the media as an advertising partner is not, however, simply for when the destination is managing the business of Tourism.

MEDIA – A CRITICAL PARTNER IN DESTINATION RECOVERY

What is often overlooked is the important role which the media plays when crisis occurs and a destination's tourism sector is brought to a standstill. When faced with disaster, be it acts of God or acts of man, travellers make assumptions about the state of the tourism industry – its ability to offer travellers a local experience both in terms of infrastructure and spirit. Safety and security, as well as experience satisfaction, become doubted. When things go horribly wrong the natural assumption is that it will take some time before things are right again.

The ability for a destination to recover and rebuild its infrastructure *and its image* becomes heavily dependent on the destination's ability to communicate to the world that it is '*open for business*'.

Over the past decade an array of disasters – natural and manmade - have hit the world and its tourism sector. From SARS to the Tsunami, 9-11 and H1N1, destinations across the globe have had their tourism industry thrown into periods of paralysis. Destinations have had to fight through these challenges to re-mobilise the industry and encourage travellers to return. Similarly a number of nations have emerged into a new liberation. The end of wars, the redefinition of borders, the beginning of new political eras, and the advancement of societies have all played a part in shifting nations from states of destruction to states of peaceful security.

As destinations have (re)emerged and evolved as new geographies, new societies, new economies and centres of new opportunity the ability for the world to understand and embrace their new ethos has had much to do with the way in which the nation has expressed itself to internal and external audiences from a communications perspective.

For many nations the Travel & Tourism sector has been identified as a powerful means of mobilising national employment, earnings and investment as levers for greater national growth and development, Equally important the Travel & Tourism

sector allows the nation to re-present itself to the world with a new face, new spirit, new identity – one built on belief in the future, not challenges of the past.

During times of crisis when the destination is in the headlines, in-the-moment communication conveys the story of the situation. Once the crisis has concluded, however, the communications silence coming from the destination creates assumptions in the minds of travellers around the state of the destination in terms of ability to reopen the tourism industry. These assumptions more often than not are far worse than the reality, causing dangerous delays to destination recovery. Consequently the destination is stunted in its ability to get back on its feet again, operationally and emotionally, as there are no tourists to welcome, to go back to work for, to become excited about.

Destination advertising is, therefore, vital to national profiling and perception change – shifts in mindset critical to attracting travellers and investors and thereby creating a sustainable, equitable tourism industry.

MEDIA AS A DRIVER OF DESTINATION RECOVERY

Recognising the need to assist nations in building their tourism destination offering as a prelude to prelude to the stimulation of the greater societal and economic wellbeing of the nation CNN International has over the past decade played a vital role as a partner to nations emerging into a new era of freedom and identity. Through cooperative efforts with national Ministries of Tourism and Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs / NTOs / NTAs) the world's most trusted new network, CNN, has been able to apply its unprecedented reach, credibility and creativity to drive destination awareness, acceptance, appeal, differentiation and competitiveness.

Two powerful examples of the power of communications partnership between CNN and destinations (re)emerging onto the global Travel & Tourism stage - one post-war, one post epidemic.

CROATIA: POST WAR REDEFINITION OF A NATION

Croatia, a nation devastated by war in the early 1990s, faced the immense challenge of rebuilding not only the essential infrastructure ripped apart by violent bombings and clashes, it also faced the challenge of rebuilding the core strength of the of spirit of its people.

Having identified the Travel & Tourism sector as a force for positive change, the government of Croatia approached CNN to assist it in the development of a destination marketing campaign which sought to:

- Redefine the image of Croatia
- Confidently position Croatia as one of the Mediterranean's finest travel destinations,
- Showcase the scope (and levels of development) of the tourism industry,
- Reflect the spirit, character, warmth and invitation of the people of Croatia,
- Inspire the world, and Croatians, to believe in Croatia's future.

Together CNN and the Croatian National Tourism Board created the highly successful, highly engaging “*A Journey Into the Heart of Croatia*” campaign as the predominant destination communication for Croatia.

Showcasing Croatia's rich array of travel experiences through initially a series of three vignettes:

1. Food,
2. Wine
3. Arts & Culture,

the campaign spoke globally to the world supported by a strong investment into high frequency, high reach media strategy. With focus, creativity and determination Croatia shifted its national identity:

from...

to:



By implication, the established and highly respected CNN Brand provided additional profile and credibility to Croatia's destination messaging.

Now into its 4th year the CNN : Croatia National Tourism Board has succeeded in establishing Croatia as not only one of the world's leading examples of national recovery and redefinition in terms of social and economic development, but also one of the region's most compelling and competitive tourism offerings.

ASIA: POST-SARS RECOVERY AND VISITOR RETURN

In 2003 the Asia-pacific region crippled by the negative impact of the SARS epidemic. CNN International took a bold, innovative, and for many onlookers, *unnatural* step for a member of the media community to support Tourism sector recovery through leading a collective communications effort to restimulate travel to the region. Proactively CNN approached the leadership of PATA - the Asia Pacific regions' Travel & Tourism association, with the breakthrough idea of running a joint regional campaign aimed at:

- Restoring traveler confidence in travel to the region
- Re-stimulating regional Travel & Tourism industry activity
- Re-exciting the regional Travel & Tourism community around the imminent return of travellers

Activated through TV and print advertising the "WELCOME BACK" campaign proved both revolutionary and exemplary for destinations across the globe.

The PATA 'Phoenix' campaign with the CNN-inspired 60 sec. TV advertising campaign at its heart, reached 216 million households in 30 markets across the region including Australia, China (PRC), Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Macau, India, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Korea (ROK) and Vietnam between August and December 2003, re-stimulating hotel and airline demand to "extremely high" levels over the peak holiday period of November 2003 to February 2004.



As in the case with Croatia's campaign development, the Brand of CNN provided added valuable profile and credibility to PATA's regional destination messaging.

The impact and appreciation of CNN's visionary, collaborative approach to driving the Asia Pacific region's recovery of the Travel & Tourism sector's collapse from the SARS epidemic is seen not only in the sector statistics of the region in the post-SARS period, but also in the documenting of the initiative in industry textbooks on media strategies for the Tourism industry facing crisis.

The message was clear – destination advertising is vital to destination recovery. Not only does it put out the 'welcome mat' for travellers, it reignites the spirit and sense of determination of the people of the destination to unite as proud, productive, ready hosts.

Today, as always, across the world when destinations need to reach out and connect with travellers to advance the future possibilities of the nation, CNN is there as the industry's partner in Travel & Tourism sector building and recovery.

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