Themed Section: Rethinking Advertising: Histories, Practices and Interpretations

Brand Australia: half-truths for a hard sell

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 66 Cite this article   ↗ https://doi.org/10.1080/14443058.2011.646284

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Abstract

In May 2010 the Australian government launched "Australia Unlimited", a four-year
Austrade campaign to sell Brand Australia. Logistically and politically, Brand Australia is
a delicate proposition, since it calls for consistency and coherence, as well as
consensus. Given that nations are already "messy", politically, culturally and socially,
any symbolic representation designed to resolve or mask this mess would be
contentious. Brand Australia thus constitutes a fragile, highly contingent but, according
to government bureaus, economically necessary strategy: globalisation compels
nations to flag their strengths with clarity and in competition. Brand logic entails that
these strengths are folded into a single and stable message. In the case of Australia,
though, certain images have contributed to perceptions of the nation that clash with
those of "Australia Unlimited". The history of Australia's tourism campaigns has played
a part in this, as have specific events in Australia's recent history. As an idealised
national narrative, then, there is a fundamental problem with this campaign: it speaks
of a cosmopolitan multiculturalism that is absent from other, more dominant

representations of the nation, a disjuncture that undermines the premise and potential of effective brand management.

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