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Marketer of the Year

A PROVINCE PUTS IT OUT THERE AND KEEPS IT REAL



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Know thyself

Good tourism advertising, like travel, gives us a window on other places—and on the multifaceted landscapes and cultures that make up our remarkable country

BY KATHLEEN MARTIN



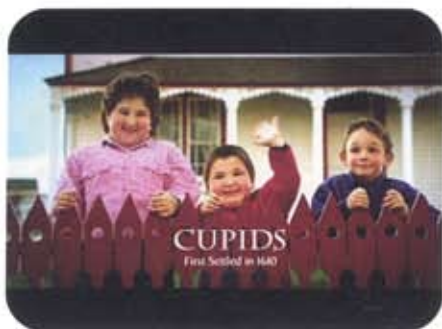
Newfoundland and Labrador has rewritten the book on tourism marketing in Canada by asking one simple question: Why would anyone want to visit the province? No doubt similar lines of thinking have come up in creative meetings across the country, as the advertising agencies holding coveted tourism accounts hammered out strategies. But Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism and its agency partner, Target Marketing and Communications Inc. of St. John's, have dared to answer the question not just with their heads but also with their hearts.

The resulting Find Yourself Here advertising campaign pushes tourism marketing beyond presenting a product inventory of a region—lobsters, whales, golf courses, beaches, cityscapes, ocean views—to identifying what Target president Noel O'Dea describes as “the DNA of the brand.” Lots of provinces have whales. Lots have golf courses and cities. Identifying the DNA requires digging deeper to find the key brand attribute. For Newfoundland and Labrador, it was creativity.

“Creativity is expressed by our people—the characters, their attitude, their humour and storytelling, their ingenuity. It is expressed in our culture—everything from the houses painted different colours to the music, art, and texture of the place,” says O'Dea. “And it's expressed in the fierce beauty of our natural landscape.”

A far cry from a slide show of images set to jaunty music, the compelling television spots include a long and thoughtful look at laundry blowing on clotheslines, a light-hearted consideration of the province's unusual town names, a game of “counting whales,” and a somewhat mysterious walk to a cliff's edge, where the voiceover tells us that “The people from the Flat Earth Society believe that this place is one of the four corners of the world. The very edge of the Earth.”

Although the ads are clearly branded, and therefore are obvious pieces of the overall campaign, they are as different from one another as the stories they tell. In the official overview of the creative platform, they are described as working together “collectively, like chapters of a book [to paint a] complete picture of the unusual, unexpected, and compelling differences [that] make Newfoundland and Labrador a distinctive and attractive tourism destination.”



The campaign includes several playful elements as well, and many television ads were skewed specifically to the Ontario market, one of Newfoundland and Labrador's primary targets. In a print ad, small type underneath the \$216 price of airfare from Toronto reads, "That's one way, of course, and doesn't include taxes and stuff. It's closer to \$432 should you choose to return home."

In Toronto they took the clothesline concept to new heights, erecting an actual clothesline as part of a billboard on the Gardiner Expressway. Above the white sheets blowing in the wind against the backdrop of the province's cliffs, sea, and sky is the copy: "No. I'd rather sit in traffic." And in a stroke of creative genius, the province sponsored smog reports on Greater Toronto Area radio stations throughout the summer that said, "Today's air-quality advisory is brought to you by Newfoundland and Labrador. Where there is no need for smog reports."

Around here, when the sun goes down, the place goes up.

Why not drop in? From Toronto, all low at \$216*

*Based on Newfound and Labrador's lowest fares with Air Canada. \$216 includes taxes and fees.

Why do summer days seem that much longer here? It's the fun of comparing with your usual, comparing you to yourself your days, an extra like here, an antique shop visit. A few more related and ratings, or a glass of porting they go to fetch off a town that's been going on since breakfast. And keep this in mind - just if it will amount to your yourself for a short time in. So have a look at the long list of great things, and be on your way. Call Toronto at 1 800 567 4322 for more info. Or visit newfoundlandlabrador.com **WESTJET**

Newfoundland
Labrador

John Burghardt is the president and creative director of Geodentity, an international tourism consultancy based in Toronto. "Tourism, an industry with high consumer interest and great products, does a huge amount of advertising that is formulaic, cookie-cutter, and, worst of all, fails to make its clients distinctive," he says. "Happily, there is another kind of tourism work that does things right. Target presents its homeland with affection, empathy, and a complete refusal to dip into tourism's vast supply of phoniness."

Refusing to follow standard tourism-campaign tropes



The Target team (pictured here) presents its homeland with affection, empathy, and a complete refusal to dip into tourism's vast supply of phoniness.

requires a brave client. "There has been a huge amount of courage and trust along the way on the part of the team at Tourism, Culture, and Recreation and the tourism industry," says O'Dea. Unlike the private sector, government departments are beholden to a wide variety of stakeholders, particularly in a portfolio as economically important as tourism. But as Minister of Tourism, Culture, and

Recreation Tom Hedderson explains, Newfoundland and Labrador doesn't have the luxury of resting on its laurels.


"We have always seen accessibility as a big challenge to getting people beyond the Maritimes, so we have to be on the edge," says Hedderson. "We have to be aggressive, and we have to continually build on what we already have. What's come out of this—and it hasn't

happened overnight—is the realization of how important it is that we stand out, that we take the risks necessary to get the return."

In 2006 Newfoundland and Labrador poured \$10 million into its annual tourism-marketing budget, and in 2007 it upped that figure to \$11 million. In the past four years, the province has almost doubled its tourism budget. According to Hedderson, in 2006 trips by non-resident visitors increased by 6% over 2005, and tourism pumped more than \$850 million into the province's economy. Inquiries made in 2007 for travel guides and related material were up almost 20% year over year by early June, and by the end of May ferry traffic had increased 6%.

"That's fantastic in one year," says Hedderson. "Those ads are something else. Tourism ministers from across the nation ask me about them. My deputy minister gets calls from other deputy ministers asking for specific details about the campaign. People who are expatriates of Newfoundland and Labrador and who are now out West somewhere e-mail to say that they sit down at the television, not to look at the sitcoms but to watch for the ads, and while they're watching the tears roll down their cheeks."

"In every part of this campaign, we've tried to give people the feeling you get when you're in Newfoundland and Labrador," says O'Dea, "and the feeling you have when you leave that you carry with you back to your home. We wanted to evoke a response inside people at a subconscious level that is true to the richness of our people, place, and culture."

The ripples from the campaign are already apparent. Clotheslines have mysteriously popped up in advertising for other regions, and the Saskatchewan government just launched a \$320,000 advertising campaign, part of which includes sponsoring traffic reports that tout Saskatchewan's lack of a rush hour in Calgary, Edmonton, and several Ontario cities. We can hope that more than just imitating elements of the Newfoundland and Labrador campaign, these provinces will dig deep into their own DNA to show us the essence of who they are, because the beauty of the Newfoundland and Labrador tourism campaign is, ultimately, Newfoundland and Labrador itself. 

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