

Champion campaign

Tracking the marketing blitz that revived the tourism industry in the wake of the 9/11 crisis

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Till 2001, India's efforts to promote tourism lacked focus. Everyone knew it, but with visitors arriving anyway, there were no initiatives to promote the country as an exciting destination. Then 9/11 happened, followed by the terrorist attack on Parliament and rising tension along the Indo-Pak border. Travel advisories the world over branded India unsafe. Tourist traffic thinned dangerously and the sector began to suffer. It was in such a time of collective crisis that it was decided to build a brand new Brand India.

It was a tall order and required planning. We devised a strategy based on a well-defined and unique brand personality, chose the right positioning and concentrated on theme-based product development. This was to be followed up with consistent and appropriate advertising and promotion, and careful brand guardianship.

The result was the Incredible India campaign — an

effort to gain global recognition by standing out from the crowd. In the last two years, we have set out the vision, values, personality and positioning for the India tourism brand. But establishing a clear identity for a diverse country like India, which is bigger than all of Europe (and there's still 23,416 km to spare) was extremely difficult. To top that, every single state has its own unique product offering. We decided, therefore, to make Incredible India the mother brand, with states establishing their own identity and emerging as sub-brands.

We based our pitch on four distinct subjects that made India stand out from all other destinations on the planet: the eternal magic of yoga, ayurveda, wildlife, and festivals and fairs. Even in style, we remained Indian, employing what's currently called kitsch, that vibrant Indian school of expressionism.

Based on consumer research, India Tourism repositioned the country as a premier destination in the global market. The cornerstone of the strategy was a partnership between government and industry. To ensure delivery of the marketing promise, infrastructure development and partnership with state governments were made part of the strategy.

The campaign was launched in key markets. India Tourism rolled out a powerful television commercial on many prestigious channels, including CNN, the BBC and Discovery. The print campaign followed, appearing in *Cond Nast Traveler*, *Vogue*, *Tatler*, *Financial Times*

India is a continent in a country. That is what makes it incredible, and that is what the campaign showcases

— Piyush Pandey, head of O&M, the agency that executed the Incredible India idea



and leading in-flight magazines. This was supplemented by aggressive online promotions.

The word 'Indian' stands for an incredible smorgasbord of experiences and flavours, people and places, legends and myths. Our 'incredible' campaign tried to — and succeeded in — capturing this wonderful mosaic.

India Tourism and its stakeholders have only just begun to tap into this country's potential as a tourist destination. Travel and tourism will become bigger in the years to come and provide huge economic and social benefits in terms of revenue generation and job creation.

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