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## Tourism (Australia)

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Fun, effective or 'very bland'?  
Advertising experts split on Australia's  
tourism mascot Ruby the Roo

Some say the CGI kangaroo 'looks fantastic' and will cut through internationally, but critics believe Tourism Australia could have aimed higher

- Australia unveils new tourism ambassador Ruby the Roo
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Caitlin Cassidy

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Tourism Australia's new brand ambassador Ruby the Roo asks tourists to 'Come and say G'day'. Photograph: Tourism Australia

Very bland or a bit of much-needed fun? Advertising experts are divided on Tourism Australia's first unofficial brand ambassador since the pandemic, disputing whether the computer-generated kangaroo at the centre of the ads could help revive the country's ailing international tourism sector.

Andrew Hughes, a marketing lecturer at the Australian National University, said a bigger splash was needed to encourage international tourists to fork out the cash for a visit to Australia.

**Ruby the Roo**, a cartoon creature voiced by the Australian actor Rose Byrne, was unveiled to the world on a major digital billboard in Tokyo on Tuesday.

The kangaroo and her tagline "Come and say 'G'day'" are part of the next instalment of Tourism Australia's There's Nothing Like Australia brand platform, its first global campaign since 2016.



'The new Paul Hogan': Australia unveils new tourism ambassador Ruby the Roo

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"Nearly all successful global [Tourism Australia] campaigns have had global celebrities," Hughes said, citing [Chris Hemsworth's 2018 Super Bowl advert](#) and [Paul Hogan's much-loved "shrimp on the barbie" moment](#).

"Travel figures are down 50% in the US market, you don't just have to get the awareness up, you've got to get interest."

Hughes said he would have opted for a story campaign that wove a more complex narrative to sustain attention.

"If you just have Ruby the Roo and leave it at that ... I'm going to put myself in the very bland corner," he said.

"What's the campaign about, really? It seems to run true to form from previous campaigns that just use stereotypes. The audience is more mature."

Nathan Hodges, managing director at marketing consulting company TrinityP3, said Australians might have a "right old poke" at Ruby for failing to reflect how they saw themselves.

But he said the CGI kangaroo "looks fantastic" and was likely to cut through to an international audience.

"We have this collective madness every time these campaigns turn up," he said.

"It's not aimed at anyone in Australia or any of the advertising marketing experts in Australia. It's not a mirror to us, it's aimed at getting people here.

"There's advertising that makes Australia feel good but there's also advertising that works. It's not about representing our country - we have ambassadors and politicians to do that."

Hodges said the campaign "carries through a lot of messages already latent around Australia".

"We have kangaroos, we're friendly and it's telling us 'why don't you come on down and have a bit of fun?'"

Dee Madigan, a creative director and a panellist on the ABC's Gruen Transfer, agreed.

"I really like it," she said. "I think we've disappeared too far up our backside in some of our overseas ads - they've been too highbrow.

"This is just fun and people are looking for fun. We've wanted to talk about everything else but the things people want to see - which is kangaroos, the harbour bridge - why not lead on our best foot?"

Madigan said the buoyant optimism of the campaign was a "smart" move as tourists emerged from the pandemic, particularly as its message could be translated without audio and capture a bilingual audience.

"Nothing gets lost in translation," she said.

"Campaigns like '[where the bloody hell are you?](#)' were only going to work on Australian audiences. Overseas tourists think we say 'G'day'. Maybe we do, maybe we don't, it doesn't matter."



📷 Former Test cricketer and kangaroo advocate Jason Gillespie has criticised the campaign.  
Photograph: Hamish Blair/Getty Images

Meanwhile, kangaroo advocates have lashed out at Tourism Australia for using the national icon to drum up tourism amid concerns about the commercial killing of kangaroos.

The former Australian Test cricketer Jason Gillespie, who is an ambassador

for the advocacy group Kangaroos Alive, said it was hypocritical for Ruby the Roo to be touted on billboards around the world after revelations of the species' treatment.

A New South Wales parliamentary report into the management of the commercial kangaroo industry found evidence there was inadequate monitoring of how the animals were culled, and recommended greater transparency of management practices.

"Tourism Australia even said we're so lucky to have a globally recognisable and adorable icon in the kangaroo," Gillespie said.

"We need to learn to value these international icons and acknowledge that they are worth much more to Australia alive. Our tourist industry relies on them."





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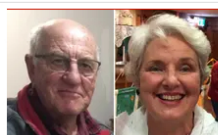


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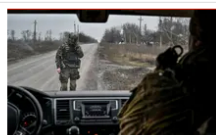
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