

The evolution of the tourism marketer in a world of EDAs



I recently made the move down south to join the tourism marketing team at ChristchurchNZ. As I am sure many of you are aware, ChristchurchNZ is in its first year as the city's economic development and city profile agency (EDA).

This structural change results in an immediate transformation to the role of the tourism marketer. Gone is the sole focus on tourism product and visitor attraction, now the lens is broadened to include a wider

view of the city. A destination is so much more than the sum of its attractions, free walks or cycle trails. Its identity can have just as much of an impact on a visitor's choice of travel as the number of activities or attractions do. Many visit Melbourne for the style, the food or just to be there – but couldn't tell you the name of a single tourism product; and in Tokyo, as well as shrine visits and taking part in tea ceremonies, tourists travel to be part of the incredible tech culture, visit the enormous shopping centres to pick up the latest gadgets and catch a glimpse into the future.

Cities compete more than ever for business conferences, talent in research and science, film productions, international students, cruise ships and new airline connections. Ultimately, it's all a battle for job growth, prosperity and quality of life. Being able to create a message that unifies the destination beyond the tourism product ensures we can compete strongly in these other arenas, but that is no mean feat. We all know what happens when you try to be something to everyone; and leading our followers along this new path with a wider view of the city is by no means a smooth ride.

Recent technological developments right here in Canterbury have, however, provided this tourism marketer with content I would have never dreamt of promoting through traditional tourism marketing channels with surprisingly positive results. Just check out these flying taxis and self-driving cars, helping us to shape our destination into something never seen in New Zealand.

There are also the measurable efficiencies of having complementary entities working smarter together. The most notable immediate wins have been with our Major Events team. The opportunity to leverage an event and harness the media spotlight, providing the call to action that all tourism marketing campaigns aim to create. Just look at our cousins down the road, DunEDin has taken New Zealand by storm. I may have been the only person in Christchurch to not make the trip down. Awesome job, Dunedin!

EDAs aside, one of the clear differences I have found in my move to Christchurch is the never-ending creation of new product, both hospitality and retail. The speed at which new businesses are opening can be daunting but at the same time incredibly heart-warming to see. My fellow tourism marketers out there, who may have also found creative ways to talk about 'new product' at trade shows in the past, will understand how truly exciting this really is.

ChristchurchNZ is following the pattern of change we see in this city every day. While ChristchurchNZ, as an EDA, and Christchurch, the city, still have a little moulding and shaping to do, you can see the incredible opportunities the future holds for us both.