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There's nothing like Australia: From social advocacy to social media populism

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The advent and popularization of social media networks in the last decade have produced considerable changes in Australia's tourism advertising, supposedly opening spaces for social advocacy in the promotion of the country. Based on a historical revision of the campaigns created by the brand Australia from 2003 to 2012, this paper analyses the adoption of social media by Tourism Australia in campaigns to promote the country. In particular, it outlines some of the changes that this adoption has generated in the production of tourism advertising. It focuses on "There's nothing like Australia", a crowdsourcing campaign based on promotional materials that use the holiday experiences of Australian people. Launched in 2012, the campaign was presented to citizens as an invitation to "change stereotypes" about the country and to "show the real Australia to the world" by sharing their holiday pictures in social media networks.

The paper finds that the incorporation of social media technologies in the promotional strategies of brand Australia has generated a transition from traditional advertising campaigns broadcasted on television, based on memorable jingles and starred by celebrities, to new ones publicized in digital media and based on user generated content. This transition has been applauded in marketing spheres for its empowering of audiences, commended in the news media for democratizing tourism promotion, and celebrated by Tourism Australia for rediscovering the "real Australia". The paper, however, questions the democratic character of the campaign, the supposed empowerment of citizens to change stereotypes, and the "realness" of the holiday pictures chosen to advertise the country. While it is true that social media networks can be used for opening spaces for social inclusion and civic engagement, the corporatization of these platforms can also lead to "social media populism" under the guise of empowerment, democratic participation and authenticity.

In the last two decades, nation-states around the world have developed commercial forms of nationalism creating a "brand-image" for their countries. This has been done using branding and design principles to improve the reputation and economic performance of their countries, for example, by inviting tourists, attracting investors and increasing exports (Aronczyk, 2013). It has been argued that nation-branding has brought previous ignored countries increasingly into the spotlight (e.g. Anholt, 2005), by creating colourful logos and catchy slogans that reinvigorate the national pride of citizens and reposition these countries on the global economic map. However, despite economic success, nation-branding campaigns are criticised for being top-down initiatives in which governments and marketers fabricate commoditised versions of national identity that are then imposed onto the population and used to sell the nation to international audiences (e.g. Aronczyk, 2008; Jansen, 2008; Volcic and Andrejevic, 2011). Recently, however, nation-branding campaigns have started to incorporate social media networks and user-generated-content in their development, claiming that this movement to the internet is making their initiatives more inclusive. By integrating digital technologies these new campaigns promise to be different to the earlier ones, in particular, to empower citizens by creating spaces for democratic participation in the construction of more real images of national identity.

This paper looks at these new forms of commercial nationalism that engage with the internet. It aims to investigate the impact of social media in the commercial construction of nations, analysing the incorporation of these networks in the kinds of nation-branding campaigns that call citizens to "crowdsource" the promotional materials that represent their national identities. As its examples this paper takes the first phase of "There's nothing like Australia" (TNLA hereafter) a nation-branding campaign aimed at promoting tourism. The first phase of this campaign, was developed through the co-creation of an interactive map of Australia using 30000 holiday pictures shared by citizens on social media (see: www.nothinglikeaustralia.com).

The TNLA campaign is relevant when assessing the claims that nation-branding campaigns developed in social media are socially inclusive for different reasons. To begin with, the first phase of TNLA attracted more than 30000 entries, being considered at that time as the most successful user generated promotion developed in the country. Since then, the strategy behind TNLA has moved across to Web 2.0, where every day millions of brand Australia's advocates co-create promotional materials by sharing their holiday pictures. From this perspective, a study of TNLA makes a good case for demonstrating some of the critiques made by media scholars about the corporatization of social media and more exactly about the transformation of social interactions into monetary value. Apart from that, TNLA represents an interesting case for expanding the scope of critical studies on nation-branding. Generally, scholars interested in this matter have looked at campaigns based on television and printed materials (e.g. Aronczyk, 2013; Kaneva, 2011) and little attention has been paid to campaigns developed in the internet (though see: Volcic, 2008). In this sense, this paper aims to contribute to this field, analysing a nation-branding campaign developed on the internet and based on the participation of citizens through social media networks.

Drawing on the analysis of TNLA, the paper finds that the incorporation of social media in the promotional strategies of brand Australia has generated a transition from traditional advertising campaigns broadcasted on television, based on memorable slogans and starring celebrities, to new ones publicized in digital media and based on user-generated-content. This transition has been celebrated by the government, in marketing spheres and news media, as "real", empowering, and democratic. The paper argues that these claims should not be taken for granted as they presuppose optimistic outcomes of digital technologies and reproduce the suspicious logic of "market populism" according to which markets are democratic systems where citizens can vote with their dollar (Frank, 2000a).

The paper is divided into two parts. The first section examines the background of tourism promotion in Australia, analysing the marketing formula used since the 1980s until today. This background explains some of the changes that the incorporation of social media has brought to this strategy. In particular, this will include the new "social media advocacy" label that is claimed to be more inclusive than previous forms of promotion. The second part of this paper situates these claims about inclusivity in current discussions about social participation in the marketplace and the internet, and from there it assesses the development and results of TNLA. Overall, the paper finds that while it is true that social media networks can be used to open spaces for social inclusion and civic engagement, the corporatization of these platforms can also lead to "social media populism" under the guise of empowerment, democratic participation and authenticity.

Brand Australia: From television celebrities to social media advocacy

Since it was created in 1996 by the Australian government, "Brand Australia" has helped to attract millions of tourists to the country, representing an important contribution to national economy. As a brand, Australia has an outstanding reputation in the global market, and the country is usually ranked in the top positions of the so-called nation or country brand indexes created each year by think tanks and marketing agencies. The success of Brand Australia can be partially explained as the result of an advertising formula that has been in use for about three decades. Its origins can be traced back to the iconic television advertisements created by the Australian Tourism Commission in the mid-1980s. In these advertisements, Paul Hogan uses expressions such as "Throw another shrimp on the barbie" or "Come and say G'day" to convince Americans to visit the country (David, 2004). These advertisements developed a marketing formula that was grounded in televised advertising campaigns based on catchy slogans and celebrities.

In 2004, when Brand Australia was revamped and Tourism Australia replaced the Tourism Australia Commission, this formula of television campaigns with celebrities and catchy slogans started to be replicated in all the global marketing campaigns of the new brand. The first of these campaigns, *See Australia in a different light*, was released in 2005. Its central unit was a television commercial starring Delta Goodrem singing *I can sing a rainbow*. In 2006, Tourism Australia launched *A uniquely Australian Invitation*, a controversial campaign that became best known by the tagline of its centrepiece, a television commercial that closed with Lara Bingle asking "So where the bloody hell are you?". In 2008, two advertisements were created by Baz Luhrmann for the campaign *Walkabout* which starred Brandon

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Walters – the Indigenous Australian child who is best known for his performance with Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman in Luhrmann's film *Australia.* Every year since the first of these campaigns was released Tourism Australia has reported increases in numbers of visitors to Australia and these visitors' spending. Simultaneously, Australia was frequently ranked in the top position of the Country Brand Index.

Despite the economic success of the celebrity, slogan and TV formula all these tourism campaigns have been criticised for the stereotypes they have both created and reinforced, and for the simplistic image of the country they portray. For example, in 2010, when acclaimed nation branding consultant Simon Anholt was asked for his opinion about Brand Australia, he criticized the country for being too reliant on logos and slogans and asserted that Australia had an "unbalanced" image as a country that was "attractive but shallow and unintelligent" (Harrison, 2010). The same year, Brand Australia took a new approach in its campaign TNLA. "Tourism Australia's latest consumer campaign" – said the presentation of the new initiative – "involves the participation of the whole country" (Tourism Australia, 2010a: 2). This time, instead of television commercials with idealised images of Australia and starring well-known personalities, the campaign would take place on the internet, where using social media technologies citizens would be allowed to share their own holiday pictures to show the "real Australia" to the world. Using the notion of "digital advocacy" to define the new strategy, Tourism Australia argued they were giving a voice to the people in the construction and promotion of the brand image of their country.

Through its so-called "digital advocacy", Tourism Australia draws on "crowdsourcing", a strategy based around engaging social media users in the creation of content for a particular enterprise. The term was coined by Jeff Howe in *Wired Magazine* in 2006, defining a co-creative strategy facilitated by digital technologies in which "a company or institution [takes] a function once performed by employees and outsourcing it to an undefined (and generally large) network of people in the form of an open call", breaking down the barriers that have traditionally separated amateurs from professionals (Howe, 2006a). The first stage of "TNLA" was developed in three phases: "inspire", "invite", "engage". First, Tourism Australia invited citizens to participate uploading photos of their holidays and a description of 25 words to the website www.nothinglikeaustralia.com. "Over 28 days – Tourism Australia reported – nearly 30,000 photos and inspiring personal stories were uploaded, making it one of Australia's most successful consumer-generated promotions ever" (Tourism Australia, 2010a: 3). Afterwards, these pictures were used to build an interactive map of Australia that classified all the entries using 1000 keywords. Then, Tourism Australia expanded its "digital advocacy" across their corporate social media networks. Today, the brand has almost 6 million fans on Facebook, 100 thousand followers in Twitter and 650 thousand on Instagram. Quoting these figures Tourism Australia claims to have a brand that is democratic because it is constructed by its "advocates", and authentic because through social media networks such as "Facebook [they] can get real stories about what people are currently thinking about Australia" (Tourism Australia, 2012).

The campaign TNLA marked the introduction of social media networks in the promotional strategies of Brand Australia. The integration of social media through crowdsourcing is creating a new formula of tourism promotion. This new formula is characterized by a transition from traditional advertising campaigns broadcasted on television, based on catchy slogans and starring celebrities, to new ones publicized in digital media and based on user-generated content. Although Australia is still publicised using advertisements that are broadcasted in traditional media, a significant component of tourism promotion is now based on crowdsourcing, more exactly on the use of photographs and scripts shared by people in social media. The use of crowdsourcing – or "social media advocacy", as the strategy has been recently relabelled – has been applauded in marketing spheres for its empowerment of audiences, commended in the news media for democratizing tourism promotion, and celebrated with fanfare by Tourism Australia for rediscovering the "real Australia".

How should such claims be analysed when they come from a marketing campaign aimed at branding the nation? To what extent can marketing campaigns developed in social media be more socially inclusive?

From social media advocacy to social media populism

Assertions of empowerment, democracy and authenticity implied in the notion of "social media advocacy" should not be taken for granted. It is prudent to be suspicious of these claims because they reproduce the

dubious optimism surrounding the emergence of digital technologies that has claimed both the internet and now social media networks as a solution to many problems in society, including the increasing corporatization of public goods and the commoditisation of social relations. Apart from that, the claims of "authenticity" made as part of the campaign, should not be taken for granted, since "realness" and "authenticity" are some of the most powerful narratives used in the tourism industry to persuade travellers to visit a place (Schnell, 2011). I propose to question these claims and the whole idea of "social media advocacy", arguing that they replicate the logics of what Thomas Frank (2000a) calls "market populism", but in the new realm of Web 2.0.

During the late 1990s Frank wrote a series of pieces analysing what he defined as the takeover of culture by the world of business (Frank, 1997) and the rise of market populism (Frank, 2000a, 2000b). According to Frank, market populism is a belief that emerged during the 1990s, according to which markets are a far more democratic form of organization than democratically elected governments. Market populism insists that citizens and consumers are equivalent categories and that the rights and duties of the citizenry are best exercised through shopping. As Frank explains, listening to "the people" became a premise of political leaders and businesses. And the best way for knowing and understanding the popular will was through market research in the form of polls, focus groups and the internet (Frank, 2000a: 29). The formula of "one dollar = one vote" became equalled to universal suffrage (Frank, 2000a: 86), and shopping a democratic act.

Similarly, I would argue that TNLA, and other emergent forms of participation based on crowdsourcing, are evidence of the ongoing takeover of Web 2.0 by the world of business and the emergence of something that I call "social media populism": the conviction that social media networks are democratic sites where people can exercise their rights as citizens through the generation of content. According to this view, digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter or blogs, are able to express – in the form of likes, tweets, tags or pictures – the popular will of the people. Citizenship is being equated to the generation of content by internet users, and the best form to exercise cultural citizenship and social participation. Moreover, this belief is progressively transforming "thumbs up" into political action, establishing the suspicious logic "one like = one vote". This takeover is not new; it can be traced back to the origins of the Web 2.0 revolution in the mid-2000s. In 2006, when *Time Magazine* chose "You" as person of the year some articles claimed that Web 2.0 was empowering people and enabling them to create content (Grossman, 2006). Simultaneously, in the same issue Jeff Howe (the same author who coined the term crowdsourcing) expressed surprised delight at the fact that "[b]ig businesses [were] embracing this new world … tapping the expertise of everyone out there to enhance their products" (Howe, 2006b).

Beyond Frank's cultural critique the concept of "social media populism" echoes the critical positions of some prominent media scholars who are questioning the supposed democratic character of the internet and social media, pointing out that it is practically impossible to think about democratic social participation in platforms controlled by corporate interests. Curran (2012) refutes the optimism surrounding digital technologies, arguing that the commercialization and privatization of these platforms, and the censorship of social interactions according to market and state interests, impedes the possibility of social change, including democratic participation (see also: McChesney, 2013). More recently, and in the specific context of social media, Christian Fuchs has critically analysed the extent to which claims of democratic participation in these networks is real. Drawing on neo-Marxist critique (as Thomas Frank does), Fuchs demonstrates that forms of participation in social media are based on unequal relations of power between producers and consumers. In particular, he shows how not only the ownership of these platforms, but also the generation of contents are governed by corporations, while the ownership of citizens is minimal.

Several key critics agree with these criticisms of the democratic potential of Web 2.0, practices of co-creation and the emancipatory figure of the prosumer. Dijck and Nieborg (2009) have shown that most of the claims made in Web 2.0 manifestos combine principles of grass roots collectivism with mainstream capitalism. They have stressed the need for a critical analysis of the socioeconomic implications of this paradoxical convergence able to uncover the interests of the key players. Scholars have also been critical of the practices of co-creation, associating them with forms of consumer exploitation and free-labour

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(Humphreys and Grayson, 2008). Critics have demonstrated that since the co-creation of contents is always regulated according to market interests (Zwick, et al, 2008) and commoditised (Freedman, 2012). these strategies have been useful for market institutions in that it helps them to develop new business models based on collaborative or participatory media. The figure of the fantastic prosumer has also been questioned by research showing that the co-creators of content are just an "elite" set of internet users, and that the claims that prosumption is empowering people are just strategies for the commoditisation of social relations (Comor, 2011).

In the context of nation-branding campaigns social media populism can be associated with the incorporation of "wikinomics" (see: Dijck and Nieborg 2009) and other business models based on grassroots collaboration in the cultural economy of commercial nationalism. As in other fields, this incorporation is characterized by a populist discourse that promises change and a new beginning. For nation-branding campaigns this discourse revolves around promising a more inclusive version of "the nation". The majority of criticisms of nation-branding are that this practice allows marketers and designers to transform national culture into an economic asset, and that national identity becomes a commercial construction through this process. But according to the discourses of social media populism, however, this process is changing for the better as Web 2.0 and crowdsourcing initiatives such as TNLA will empower citizens as prosumers of the images used to represent their national identities. Nevertheless, as the case study below examining TNLA shows, it is actually just business as usual.

Thumbs up! From marketing strategy to civic project

TNLA was presented to the public through a populist discourse that transformed the marketing campaign into a civic project whereby citizens were to be empowered by social media to fight the national stereotypes created by previous tourism campaigns. A television and internet advertisement announcing the initiative explained the image of Australia in other countries in this way:

> Everybody knows Australia is a rugged country where blokes in stubbies and cork hats get beer out of oil cans, wrestle crocs with their bare hands and say things like 'bonza', and 'sheila' and blonde-haired surfer types hang out at the beach all day and shrimp on the barbie with their koala, kangaroo and cockatoo friends – right?

Immediately after this provocation, the advertisement explained that TNLA was "your chance to set the history straight" and change the national image by sharing holiday pictures on the internet. The supposed civic character of the campaign was reinforced by a marketing discourse that depicted TNLA as separated from state and corporate interests and instead described it as in hands of "the people". The Minister for Tourism, for example, explained in a radio interview that TNLA "is not about the Australian Government in partnership with Tourism Australia and state and territory organizations nor with the private sector actually picking winners. It is about us as a nation giving the Australian community and opportunity to actually promote their local regions"[1].

Sticking to the populist conviction that opinion polls and surveys are the best ways to find the will of "the people" (Frank, 2000a); the civic character of the campaign was justified saying that market research suggested it would be the best strategy. According to Tourism Australia (2010b), research carried out by Roy Morgan Research found that Australians wanted to get involved in the promotion of the country. These findings were rapidly incorporated in the marketing discourse of the campaign through statements claiming that the campaign will empower ordinary Australians. The script used to present it in the media explained that Australians are "very passionate about how [their] country is promoted overseas", and that 80% would like to participate in the promotion of the country. Quoting the research, the Minister for Tourism explained that "Australians want to tell the world passionately and proudly about our great country'', and that for this reason Tourism Australia was inviting them to share their pictures and testimonials; "now is their change to get involved" (Canning and Saurine 2010).

[1] Podcast available at: http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2010/s2861241.htm

The news media celebrated the development of the initiative using the same populist tone. Newspaper articles discussed the innovative use of social media for citizen participation in tourism promotion with admiration and saw the movement from traditional marketing to social media as highly democratic. *The Australian* examined Tourism Australia's decision to move away from traditional advertising and was enthusiastic about the use of the "latest social media techniques to collect the opinions of the nation" (Canning, 2010). "For the first time" – celebrated the newspaper – "Australia's $89 billion tourism industry will not hang on the impact of a 30-second TV commercial, but will rely on the phenomenon of social networking". The campaign, it concluded, "has been created to allow people to express their pride in their country" and "unlike the Bingle campaign" and its polarising message, TNLA "has been created to allow people to express their pride in their country" (Canning and Saurine, 2010). Another article in *The Age* optimistically commented that "rather than impose a view of Australia from above" the Federal organization "has explicitly asked Australians to get behind a new advertising campaign", tapping "into what they see as an innate quality in Australians – their willingness to shout about why Australia is unique" (Lee, 2010a).

The claims of empowerment and democratic intention of TNLA, and other co-creative campaigns, are overstated. Firstly, these claims do not take into account the digital divides that exist in the country in terms of age, income and location (Ewing and Thomas, 2012), which would keep elderly and rural Australians almost out of the campaign. Secondly, as Dijck and Niegboor clarify, studies mapping internet activity have shown that majority of internet users are consumers of content and looking for entertainment, while a small percentage are creators of content (2009: 861-862). Further, the claims that TNLA is both empowering and democratic are overstated because it is in essence a marketing strategy and any form of participation is regulated according to market interests. Although practices of co-creation might seem relatively spontaneous, Zwick et al. explain that they are controlled and channelled in ways desired by marketers (2008: 165), who implement all kind of strategies to "ensure that consumer freedom evolves in the "right" way (2008: 184). For instance, the tourist minister "acknowledged there was only so much control he was prepared to secede to social media", and emphasised that "First and foremost [Tourism Australia was a] marketing organisation and [wanted] to put the best possible image of Australia forward..." and for that reason, they were "absolutely … controlling that". To ensure "photos and text [were] not profane, do not contain nudity or are politically incorrect" each entry was vetted three times and Tourism Australia reserved "the right to take [entries] down as and when it sees fit" (Lee, 2010b).

Picture this! Putting citizens to work

Far from being civic projects, nation-branding campaigns based on co-creation are complex marketing strategies in which citizens are "put to work" in the production of tourism-friendly images to sell the nation. Crowdsourcing can be associated with a shift from the factory to society, defined by Terranova (2000) as representative of free-labour in the digital economy. Indeed, when Jeff Howe coined the term "crowdsourcing" he claimed to have found a new source of "cheap labour" that was not in India or China, but in "everyday people", who were using their spare time to create contents solve problems and even do corporate R&D (Howe, 2006a: 177). An article published in *Advertising Age* during the same year the term was coined praised the idea as one "where businesses faced with tough challenges don't try to come up with all of the answers themselves. They tap into the collective wisdom of millions of amateurs around the world to come up with a solution" (Rubel, 2006). In this sense, TNLA is a clear example of how tourism promotion has moved from the factory of Tourism Australia to Australian society. Further, this move was celebrated in the media as costing much less than the extremely expensive former campaigns as the first phase of TNLA was going to cost taxpayers just 4 million dollars (Canning and Saurine, 2010).

A key characteristic of the co-creative economy is "the expropriation of free cultural, technological, social, and affective labor of the consumer masses" (Zwick, et al, 2008: 166). In digital economies it occurs when user-generated websites such as Facebook, YouTube or Second Life, "each in their own specific way", "expropriate the cultural labor of the masses and convert it into monetary value" (Zwick, et al, 2008: 180). In crowdsourcing campaigns prosumers are expropriated of their creative work through terms and conditions they agree to in order to participate. The same day that TNLA was announced, clauses of its "Terms and Conditions" unleashed a debate in which bloggers and photographers

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denounced Tourism Australia for insisting on being granted copyright for all entries (Redman, 2010; Walls, 2010a). Some days later the ACMP (Australian Commercial Media and Photographers) published a media statement expressing concern and announcing that they had contacted Tourism Australia about this issue (Watt, 2010). In response to questioning, Tourism Australia changed the wording style of one of the clauses but the meaning remained the same, something considered abusive by the community of professional photographers (Walls, 2010b).

Web 2.0 is not only a social space, as Freedman (2012) explains, it is also the platform for a new economy. In this new economy of abundance, co-creative initiatives are the new digital factories where user-generated content (and also other forms of social interaction) are transformed into new sources of monetary value. TNLA is not an exception, and it is clear that the campaign is focused on transforming holiday pictures into promotional materials in order to sell Australia. Since the late 1990s the global economy has moved from traditional commodities to "experiences", and brands are focusing on providing consumers with "memorable moments" in which they can engage in either contemplative or active performances (Pine and Gilmore, 1999a, 1999b). This is exactly the type of immaterial commodity that Brand Australia has offered since 2006, when it created the "Australian Experience Framework" – a set of seven topics created to sell Australia as a holiday experience in international and domestic markets (Tourism Australia, 2007, 2008). In fact, the more than 30000 pictures shared by Australian citizens during the first phase of the campaign were rapidly used to create a vast catalogue of holiday experiences in the form of an interactive map of Australia. It becomes clear then, that TNLA's objective was to sell "holiday experiences".

One week before the end of the first phase, Tourism Australia declared TNLA a success and the organization announced its target had been met beyond its expectations: "It is terrific to see these levels of support from communities across the country" (Tourism Australia, 2010c). Tourism Australia also celebrated the fact the entries received were able to show the "real Australia". Tourism Australia commented that the pictures captured "the essence of Australia – both the people and the places – and the diversity of the country from the well-known icons and big cities to the hidden gems that only locals know about" (Tourism Australia, 2010c). The results of the campaign, however, are far from an accurate representation of Australia. This is not only because social participation was manipulated according to market interests, but because studies on tourism have shown that "tourist praxis" is a contingent process, in which the creative consumption of tourists – including the taking of pictures – is framed by scripts that have been set up by the industry in order to create an anticipation for the places that are consumed (c.f. Edensor, 2000; Larsen, 2005; Urry and Larsen, 2012). Apart from that, "authenticity" has come to be a problematic concept when studying cultural representations, and especially, in the context of the tourism industry. Steven Schnell, for example, argues that social constructs revolving around the idea of "realness" and "authenticity" have come to be one of the major attractions sold to tourists. He explains how these concepts are used in tourism promotion to convince visitors that the places they visit have a true essence, which can be experienced getting engaged with particular consumption rituals (Schnell, 2011). Therefore, what the interactive map resulted from TNLA shows, are the ahistorical and depoliticised geographies of Brand Australia, still inhabited by Aussie "blokes on stubbies and cork hats" and "blonde-haired surfers hanging out in the beach the whole day". As one of the pictures sent explained it "[C]an't get any better than beers and a bbq at the beach :-) [it is] the lucky country".

Conclusion

This paper has shown that the incorporation of social media in Australia's tourism promotion has generated interesting changes to the way the country is advertised. These new strategies are seen to be making tourist promotion more inclusive: empowering citizens in the construction of a more democratic and authentic image of their country. Such alterations are evident in the production of promotional materials and the topics used to represent Australia. For more than three decades tourism promotion has been focused on television advertisements starring celebrities and presenting idealized images of Australia. But the progressive incorporation of social media has changed this strategy, and although these television commercials are still common, a considerable portion of promotional efforts has moved to social media with its focus on user-generated content employed to present the "real" Australia.

This new strategy, however, cannot be considered as more inclusive. The claims that user-generated content results in empowerment, democracy and authenticity are overstated and can be understood as manifestations of what I call social media populism. As this paper has argued, such claims reproduce the discourse of "market populism" and the belief that social media is a democratic system, where citizens can "vote" through the generation of content. In addition, such strategies employ the logic of wikinomics, applied to commercial nationalism, to transform the collective construction of national identities by internet users into a business. This paper has shown how social media populism is used to present campaigns based on crowdsourcing as forms of citizen empowerment, when actually forms of social participation are regulated according to marketing agendas. It has also proved that claims of democracy are complicated, because they do not take into account the digital divides, practices and motivations of internet users and the censorship imposed by state and corporate interests. Rather, the discourse of social media populism is part of complex marketing strategies in which citizens are literally "put to work", in this case in the co-creation of tourist-friendly images of Australia. Although these images are co-created by citizens, they cannot be regarded as more authentic than those produced by Tourism Australia itself. Indeed, such images only reproduce the national stereotypes created by traditional media; they simply do so in new digital environments.

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