



Audiences London

Wish you were here... Cultural Tourism Symposium

for the Arts and Heritage in London, 25 May 2010, Tate Modern

Case Study: The Merlin Entertainments London Eye – Key markets, marketing and PR campaigns, product development and 2012 plans

Sahrette Saayman, Communications Manager, Merlin Entertainments London Attractions (London Eye, SEA LIFE London Aquarium, London Dungeons)

Maria Gonzalez, Marketing Manager, Merlin Entertainments London Eye and SEA LIFE London Aquarium

About the product offering and product development

The London Eye is the world's tallest cantilevered observation wheel, and the UK's number one visitor attraction. Having launched 10 years ago, the attraction is now looking to consolidate its offering, to focus on promoting its most successful products, and eliminating those which are less successful.

Over the last decade, ownership of the attraction has changed, and the range of products has developed. In addition to the standard flight ticket, customers can also choose from several higher yield packages such as:

- fast track ticketing
- champagne flights
- seasonal offers such as mulled wine/Pimm's flights, Valentine's and Halloween themed flights
- combination tickets for entry to other Merlin attractions
- river cruise packages
- corporate packages
- hiring a whole capsule
- 4D experience

All new products are rigorously market tested and refined or eliminated from the offering if they are unsuccessful.

Target Audiences and Key Markets

Target audiences for The London Eye include:

- Individuals and couples
- Families
- Corporate
- Celebrations and special occasions

Unit 7G1 · The Leathermarket · Weston Street · London SE1 3ER · T 020 7407 4625 · info@audienceslondon.org · www.audienceslondon.org

Audiences London Limited · Company Registration 3972634 · VAT Registration 805203669 · Charity Registration 1099256

- Tourists
- Film location managers

Key markets breakdown as follows:

- Schools
- Consumer vs Corporate
- Groups
- Travel trade
- Domestic vs International

Previously overseas visitors have been more numerous than domestic, with a 60:40 split. However, over the past year this has shifted to a more balanced 50:50 spread, as the recession has encouraged more people to holiday at home.

The London Eye runs domestic campaigns targeted at visitors from within London and the South East and others targeted at the rest of the UK.

International markets breakdown into: Western Europe (mostly France, Spain, Italy and Germany), USA, and the rest of the world.

PR

While you might assume that it would be easy to raise profile for The London Eye, actually this is not necessarily the case – they have to work hard to secure coverage. As it has been around for a while now, and has already gained a great deal of exposure, it can be tricky to get journalists to profile and feature the attraction. They are always seeking new angles, and hooks such as the 10th birthday celebrations, one-off and seasonal events and working to ensure consistent coverage, by running off-peak campaigns. Other opportunities to promote The Eye in different ways, include using it as a unique location for product launches and filming.

Successes

The London Eye has found that these things worked really well for them:

- High Yield products for London and South East markets
- Seasonal products and activities
- Hospitality packages for the corporate market
- Combination tickets for tourists (International vs Domestic)
- 4D Experience (all press coverage has been overwhelmingly positive)

These activities have:

- Increased the return rate by about 10%. 26% of visitors return
- Increased the high yield revenue with double digits year on year

Top tips from The London Eye:

- Constant investment into product range is crucial. They have invested:
 - £1,5 million on the river cruise
 - £5 million on the 4D
 - £12.5 million on the capsule upgrade
 - Marketing and PR budgets to support products
- Listening to customers by undertaking continuous audience monitoring and regular research
- Keep it simple

- Quality rather than quantity
- Excellent customer service is key

How The London Eye are planning to capitalise on the 2012 opportunity

- How to get involved is the million dollar question!
- They are working with VL, VB, LOCOG, GLA – key factors have been:
 - Making themselves available
 - Welcoming the sponsors on the eye in 2009
 - Showcasing best of London – 6000 unaccredited media
 - Fair pricing charters
- Plan for activity and have ideas ready
- Try to learn from other cities – keep an ear to the ground
- No idea what to expect re visitor numbers (only a six week period)

The London Eye is currently investing in a major capsule upgrade programme that will see new technology being fitted to each capsule in time for 2012.

Merlin Entertainments London Eye
County Hall
Riverside Building
Westminster Bridge Road
London
SE1 7PB

www.londoneye.com (click through on website to twitter, facebook, youtube and flickr)

Tel 0870 990 8881 Bookings 0871 781 3000

Want more help reaching cultural tourists?

If cultural tourists are a priority target audience for your organisation, Audiences London can offer a surgery session to support your organisation to define its objectives, refine your messages for target groups and use your resources effectively.

For more information about Audiences London's resources or services please contact:

Email: info@audienceslondon.org

Tel: 0207 407 4625

Or visit the services section on the website www.audienceslondon.org