

# Destination Queenstown Australia Consumer Campaign Launch & Sales Calls

Report – November 2019

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## 1. Introduction

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### Event background

Destination Queenstown's consumer marketing and communications team launched Destination Queenstown's "Welcome to Winter" campaign in Sydney this November ahead of the 2019 ski booking season.

The invite list included key media, influencers, lifestyle brands, three selected winter specific wholesalers and one online travel agent to premier the video and get them excited about the countdown to winter 2019.

### Sales Calls

In addition to hosting the Welcome to Winter premier with media and industry partners, meetings with Sydney's key partners including online travel agents, inbound tour operators/wholesalers, Air New Zealand and Tourism New Zealand.

## 2. Market Background

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Australia is New Zealand's largest international tourism market making up over 30% of our international arrivals into Queenstown. Winter.

### Winter insights

In July 2018 compared with July 2017, overall guest nights fell 1.5 percent to 317,813. International guest nights fell 1.8 percent and domestic guest nights fell 1.0 percent. Average length of stay rose from 3.01 to 3.17 nights and overall occupancy rate fell from 70.1 to 69.1. In July, total expenditure was up 7.7%. Domestic expenditure up 8.3% and international expenditure down 1% versus prior year.

Australia led the increase in holidaymakers, up 3,800 to 57,500. This coincided with the ski season in New Zealand, some big South Island ski fields opening earlier than usual, and their recent promotional efforts across the Tasman.

### 3. Objectives

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The main objective was to connect with key media, influencers, lifestyle brands, three selected winter specific wholesalers and one OTA to get them excited about the countdown to winter 2019. With increased competition for winter destinations, changing booking behaviour and reliance on snow conditions we need to maintain Queenstown's position as a desirable winter destination for our Australian visitors.

Our Ski wholesalers are the key to a successful 2019 winter. DQ Brand and Marketing Manager Diana Mendes and I had one-on-one catch ups to see how we can better work together to leverage each other's in-market activity.

In addition to this meet with our key Sydney buyers and partners, it was also valuable to spend one-on-one time with Tourism New Zealand and Air New Zealand to discuss upcoming events and activity.

### 5. Appointments

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#### Ski Wholesalers – Sno n Ski, Ski Express, Ski Max

- Overall wholesalers reported a strong 2018 season, only constrained by commercial accommodation allotments, and maintain a positive outlook for 2019 with New Zealand ski fields already releasing "Super Early bird" rates. Over all 2018 Ski wholesale revenue was up mainly due to high-end bookings.
- After a flat season for commercial accommodation providers, wholesalers reported hotels are starting to work closely with them for 2019 with some early activity already in market for the 2019 season.
- Reports confirmed that bookings for the spring shoulder season are booking now. The main driver for the late season arrival is the pricing proposition, which becomes weaker closer to the time due to airfare increases. This is also due to Ski areas releasing super early bird rates allowing wholesalers to print their Southern Hemisphere brochure two months ahead of schedule due to demand. Already they are seeing positive results.
- Reports indicate that with the Aussie Dollar not being great at the moment, last minute specials and extended early birds are making a huge difference for last minute Northern Hemisphere bookings.
- Queenstown continues to be seen as a desirable and sophisticated destination however competitor destinations are starting to increase in desirability. Mt Ruapehu is being used in a Ski Wholesalers November campaign, which is seen as a less expensive alternative to ski in New Zealand. Reportedly first time travellers have been satisfied with the experience there.

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- Wholesalers are also trying to work with TNZ to resume a stronger marketing focus on the Southern Lakes region as they don't believe other domestic destinations have a strong proposition.
- Discussion into a spring 2019 mega Famils. Wholesalers keen to work with Queenstown operators to show Queenstown at its best.
- Mountain Travel Symposium: With Sno n Ski and Skimax attending the Mountain Travel Symposium annually there is a chance to work closer together to close the gap and confirm bookings from trade and ski groups. Discussions around pre-packaged trips including ski focus, part ski focus and non-ski focus.
- Webinar series – working with national sales managers across Australian eastern seaboard to gain access to reservations and frontline agents for the DQ webinar series which will be launched in 2019.
- Ski Wholesale business generated through approx. 70% from trade agents, 30% direct bookings.

## Online Travel Agents

- All showing great growth. With New Zealand growing at a greater rate to rest of world.
- There has been a change from product focus to a destination focus. Focusing more on regional marketing.
- Expedia are partnering with Tourism Media. They are working on a project to house all content and media on one area on Expedia, and are creating theme and destination pages to launch early next year. The content is part of the regional marketing strategy and will be used to drive bookings.
- All received a product update. With e-introductions to new potential operators.

## Tourism New Zealand

- Sandra Etter (trade manager) and Lauren Kerr (trade executive) meeting.
- TNZ will be in market with their ski campaign on the 25 February 2019. The campaign format will be largely unchanged with the exception of some revision of the media strategy and focus on reviewing the trade ski pages to include more digestible ski information.
- TNZ is working with the bigger wholesalers rather than specialist wholesalers
- TNZ will be bringing 100 frontline travel agents to New Zealand on 10 Independent groups in March 2019 followed by a training day in Christchurch. Queenstown will receive two of these groups. It is great to see that the vetting criteria of these agents is thorough: agents must not have been to NZ on a famil for two years, have completed 10 online modules, sold an Air NZ trans-Tasman flight and pay a \$200 non-refundable deposit.
- The TNZ trade team were given a product and Queenstown update.

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### Air New Zealand

- Working with Air New Zealand BDMs across Australia to access frontline travel agents and our webinar series.

### Wholesalers

- Conducted reservation training for 13 pax on Queenstown.
- Feedback - accommodation has started to open up and rates are settling down.
- Over-all average stay is dropping with unsuccessful bookings being denied due to availability.

## 7. Summary

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Overall the trip was very successful. The Australian market is our key market which needs attention and nurturing. It is key to maintain relationships and be top of mind for a four season destination. With increased competition for winter destinations, changing booking behaviour and reliance on snow conditions we need to keep Queenstown as the desirable winter destination for our Australian visitors.



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