

CASE HISTORY

Synopsis: Strategic and tactical advertising combine to create maximum impact and exceed sales expectations

Client: **THOMSON/APPLE VACATIONS**

Situation: Thomson Vacations (now Apple Vacations) began as a charter tour operator to the Bahamas, Caribbean and Mexico from three Midwestern gateways. In its second full year, summer season sales to sun destinations (Jamaica, Bahamas, Mexico, Florida) and Europe were up more than 40 percent. This pattern was repeated again the following summer. Thomson historically had been a regular advertiser, but had never coordinated strategies and tactics to allow the strengths of each medium or each commercial/advertisement to build on each other.

Action: When I began working with Thomson, I saw a need to establish and coordinate four distinct strategic phases of the marketing program: (1) Continued brand name identification and destination selling, for which television and radio were utilized; (2) Target audience impact emphasizing the range, price and value of Thomson products, for which magazines were utilized; (3) Hard-sell retail activity designed to generate immediate action, and (4) On-going continuity with tactical emphasis on needs specified by load factors, hotel commitments, etc.

Results: Because of the beginning of a turn-around in the economy and the strength of the dollar abroad, Thomson believed that summer sales would be up 55 percent versus the prior year – outpacing previous summer increases by 15 points. However, as we moved from phase to phase of the new campaign, summer sales started earlier than in previous years, gained momentum faster, and by September 1 were up 150 percent – or 2½ times more than the previous year. Expressed differently, the new strategy for Thomson helped the company sell more vacations in one summer than in all three previous summers combined!

