Public relations

Advertising is what you pay for . . . editorial is what you pray for!

Trout & Rivkin (1995)

Aims

The aims of this chapter are to enhance understanding of:

- managing relationships with stakeholders
- the advantages of media publicity as a communication medium
- DMO publicity initiatives.

Perspective

For destinations, publicity represents market exposure, which might be favourable or unfavourable. A wit once suggested that any publicity is good publicity unless it is an obituary. In this philosophy the concern is not about what is being said about you but whether you are being talked about at all. Publicity can occur from many sources, with which the DMO may or may not have had any control, involvement, or even knowledge. The cost-effectiveness and relatively high credibility of media editorial coverage are attractive to destination marketers with limited resources. However, it is important to recognise that publicity is not the only aspect of public relations (PR). PR is more than publicity-seeking, in that it represents a concerted effort to develop favourable impressions of a destination. This involves both the generation of positive publicity by the DMO as well as the stimulation of positive relations between internal and external stakeholders. Since DMOs are essentially in the business of communication, the process of communication management should not be left to chance.

Communications management

Since DMOs are essentially in the business of communication, the process of communications management, otherwise known as public relations (PR), should not be left to chance. Barry (2002, p. 2) defined PR as:

The process of managing how, when, and in what way you communicate, so that you may ultimately influence the behaviour, attitude, and perceptions of those important to you.

Inherent in this description is the notion of stakeholders, in addition to consumers in target markets, who are important to the organisation. PR covers a wide spectrum of functions, including:

- achieving positive editorial media coverage
- engaging the public
- active management of communications
- application of strategy and creativity in reputation management
- networking with potential clients at seminars, exhibitions, and events
- wining and dining important customers

While PR is a communication process, publicity is a communication medium. Publics represent stakeholders. A stakeholder is anyone who can impact on or be impacted by the organisation. Some stakeholders will be quite active, while others are passive. The latter might only become

Table 16.1 PR hierarchy

Function	Philosophy
Press agentry	Striving for media publicity
Public information	Disseminating objective but positive information only
One-way asymmetrical	Utilising research to design messages that will stimulate stakeholders to behave the way the organisation desires
Two-way symmetrical	Using research and open communication to enhance relationships, where both the organisation and publics can be convinced of the need for change

active over a topical issue, or never at all. Academic models of PR use the hierarchy shown in Table 16.1. Effective PR then requires the organisation to (1) monitor stakeholders' perceptions, (2) reinforce the brand identity, and (3) be prepared to adjust to change.

Tourism has been relatively slow to adopt PR (Seaton, 1994). PR may be viewed as a two-pronged approach to communication management for DMOs. On one hand, the focus of most PR initiatives by DMOs will be attempting to generate editorial media publicity for the destination. Accordingly, the chapter does focus on this aspect of PR. On the other hand, there is a need to manage relations with stakeholders, who represent a much broader group than consumers in target markets. An important first step is prioritising groups of stakeholders, and identifying opportunities for dialogue. Seaton (1994) listed 20 common groups of tourism stakeholders. Particularly active stakeholders include:

- politicians and government policy-makers
- the host community, including local residents, taxpayers, and other industries

Political lobbying

Political lobbying is important for DMOs at all levels for two primary reasons, both of which have the wider tourism community interests at heart. The first is securing long-term funding security (see Research Snapshot 16.1), and the second is influencing policies that have the potential to impact on tourism development and destination competitiveness.

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Research snapshot 16.1   Tourism as a re-election vehicle for politicians

Pritchard (1982) reported an interesting PR initiative by Wisconsin's STO. For the constituency of every government representative, the STO had its research department prepare a break-down of the number of tourism businesses, tourism employees, tourism tax revenue, and the total value of tourism to the area. The STO then sent this information to each legislator to improve the case for tourism marketing funding. This initiative resulted in 240 press releases being generated by the legislators to their local media around the state. The end results were twofold. The first was an increased public awareness of the value of tourism, and the second was an increased awareness of tourism as a re-election vehicle for legislators.

Source: Pritchard, G. (1982). Tourism promotion: Big business for the states. *HRA Quarterly*, *23*(2), 48–57.

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McGehee et al. (2006) undertook a comparative analysis of the attitudes of state legislators in North Carolina (USA) towards tourism in 1990 and 2003. They found that while legislators viewed tourism more positively in 2003, their knowledge of it remained limited. This aspect was disappointing given the extent to which the STO had employed lobbying strategies. In the limited research related to such lobbying, McGehee et al. pointed to White's (1991) study that analysed four types of lobbying commonly used by non-profit organisations:

- Constituency-based lobbying, where initiatives include forming coalitions with other organisations and stimulating influential constituents to lobby.
- Classic direct techniques of lobbying, which include asking government officials to express an opinion on an issue, serving on advisory committees, and alerting legislators to the effect of a particular bill.
- Electronic lobbying by email.
- Schmoozing techniques of lobbying, which involve providing favours for political officials, filing lawsuits, attempts to influence public appointments, and making contributions to political campaigns.

It was suggested that the most effective technique was the constituency-based one. McGehee et al. (2006) concluded that while the North Carolina STO was employing classic direct techniques as well as constituency-based initiatives, a more aggressive approach was required.

Host community relations

The tourism industry should be seen as being part of the local community, and not some separate entity. Open and ongoing communication needs to

take place between the DMO and the host community, for a number of reasons. Examples of inclusiveness include:

- The destination brand should encapsulate local residents' sense of place, and so their views need to be canvassed at the brand identity development phase. Part of being a good neighbour is about understanding their situation.
- Residents need to be made aware of new tourism-related product and infrastructure developments as early as possible in the process.
- Residents interact with visitors in a variety of situations such as at gas stations, supermarkets, and beaches. Support for tourism will hopefully manifest itself in friendly encounters.
- Local taxpayers should be aware of the purpose of DMO funding by government in terms of the social and economic benefits for the community.
- Residents and other business sectors should have a forum for communicating tourism-related problems at an early stage.

In practice

From the onset of my tenure as CEO of Tourism Rotorua, it became glaringly obvious that local pride levels were appallingly low. The destination at the time was suffering an image crisis in the marketplace, and the negative media publicity had as much negative effect in the local community as it did in major tourism markets. Out of necessity, our team developed a local tourism awareness programme with two primary aims. The first was to help enhance local pride in the district, and the second was to increase awareness of the value of the tourism industry to the local economy. The campaign included:

- a district-wide open day of local tourism attractions – local residents had the opportunity to visit over 40 attractions free of charge during the day
- distribution of a *Good Host Kit* to all local households (see Figure 16.1) – the kit contained a passport of year-long special offers for locals who were hosting visitors – a copy of the *Rotorua Visitors Guide*, a calendar of events, and a fact file on tourism's contribution to the local economy
- a local media campaign including radio and print advertising and press releases
- he start of weekly tourism awareness columns in two newspapers and weekly spots on two radio stations
- research to benchmark and later track community perceptions of tourism.

Figure 16.1
Good Host Kit

DMOs therefore need to consider initiatives involving communication forums and research to track community acceptance of visitors. In terms of developing a community relations programme, the Centre for Regional Tourism Research in Australia developed an excellent kit for RTOs during 2000 (see Rosemann, Prosser, Hunt & Benecke, 2000). The authors highlighted common challenges in communicating tourism benefits to a community:

- A lack of leadership to take responsibility for this role
- Limited time and funds
- Lack of specific data
- Negative community perceptions
- Media attention towards negative impacts
- The time lag between implementation of tourism policies and resultant impact.

The kit provided suggested tactics, along with cases from practice around Australia. A brief selection of examples is shown in Table 16.2.

Local tourism operators

The underlying purpose of the DMO is not always obvious to some members of the host community, including some local tourism operators. In my experience many have been surprised to learn that the purpose, from the government funder perspective at least, is to enhance the economic prosperity of the district, usually with a focus on direct, indirect, and induced job creation. Rather, many have assumed that the DMO was there only to serve local tourism operators, which is the case in a minority of member-based associations that do not receive government funding. Clearly, there is a difference, but if the tourism community hasn't been informed, it is dangerous to assume they will automatically understand. The DMO should therefore initiate regular measures to identify the extent to which the community understands the organisation's purpose

Table 16.2   Communicating the benefits of tourism to the host community

Tactics	Examples
Community initiatives • Information expos • Programmes to engage the visitor interest in local culture • Targeting visiting friends and relatives (VRF) tourism • Encourage locals to experience local tours • Provide residents with familiarisations of businesses indirectly involved in tourism • Reduced admission prices for locals accompanying visitors • Local attraction loyalty cards • Encourage community involvement in the visitor information centre • Voluntary ambassador programmes • Direct mail initiatives • Regular visits to local services clubs • Visits to high schools	The small island state of Tasmania developed a 'Tourism awareness week' to overcome misconceptions and complacency in the community. Initiatives included an advertising campaign, a positioning slogan ('tourism means jobs') and logo targeting key opinion leaders, emails to businesses, news releases, and a question in parliament for the Tourism Minister about activities to boost tourism. The initial campaign won a 1999 Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Award. Similar campaigns have been organised in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.
Business initiatives • Promote information availability as a community resource • Service award programmes • Create a membership level for businesses indirectly involved in tourism	Members of the Capricorn Tourism & Development organisation were encouraged to stamp their cheque payments with 'It was only possible to pay this account because of tourism.' Recipients are also encouraged to join the organisation.
Local government initiatives • Lobby local government elected representatives • Educate local government	The Country Victoria Tourism Council produces two booklets for local governments in the state: 'Why should local government invest in tourism' and 'Local government and tourism: the partnerships'.
Media initiatives • Build strong media relationships • Find ways to make tourism newsworthy • Host media open days • Regular press releases and newspaper column • Invite media to local tourism meetings	Townsville Enterprise Limited developed a range of activities including: weekly staff meetings to develop story ideas, two newspaper columns sponsored by media members, an annual briefing for all media, and a two-weekly newsflash. Over $100,000 in airtime and space has been provided by media sponsors annually.
Research initiatives • Engage in local research fund by local government • Publish tourism statistics regularly • Survey tourism dependent workers to feed back to the community	

and role. To enhance credibility in the community, Gartrell (1994, p. 281) recommended a strategy of consistently using messages that repeat key terms: 'Telling the bureau's story may seem mundane or repetitious, but the message must be stated again and again.' Examples of key repetitive terms include those related to 'economic development' and 'tax benefits'.

Local business also need to be briefed on DMO strategies, such as the brand identity, and on tactics such as joint venture promotional opportunities. Again, a forum for two-way participative communication is necessary so that (1) opportunities are maximised, and (2) potential problems are handled before the issue is brought to the attention of the media. Initiatives include market briefings, networking functions, an annual conference, newsletters, and annual report. A dedicated website for members can also be used effectively to disseminate information and seek feedback.

Media relations

Journalists rely on interesting story angles, but they don't spend their lives waiting for us to call. For most tourism organisations, the balance of power in the journalist/PR relationship will be with the former. DMOs need a proactive approach to developing relations with local media. Such relationships develop through a mix of positive human traits such as trust, honesty, perseverance, humour, reliability, and consistency. Further, the relationship is not one-way only. That is, it is not always about sending story ideas to the journalist. There may be times when the journalist contacts the DMO for comment, possibly about a crisis the organisation might be facing. Clearly, the DMO needs to be prepared to handle such a cold call. One 'no comment' about a tricky situation might jeopardise how the same media will react to the DMO's next story release. Barry (2002, pp. 42–45) promoted the three Ws of media relations:

- **Why is what we have to say of interest?** Is it news? It is the job of the communicator to ensure the needs of the journalist are met. Is it relevant to their audience?
- **When is their deadline for accepting information?** Expecting the media to revolve around the communicator's timetable is arrogant.
- **What format does the media require?** The journalist's preference will dictate whether your message is actually noticed.

Handling negative publicity

Images held of a destination may be either positive or negative, although in reality will usually consist of both. Effective corrective marketing is difficult, and it has been suggested that once a negative image has become established, marketing activities will not be able to reverse it (Ahmed, 1991a). In the case of Ireland, Ehemann (1977) found an overwhelmingly negative image portrayed in both the hard news and general media. Ehemann was interested in the evaluative vocabulary used in the media about a destination, and the nature of the image that might be developed

by an individual with no direct experience of a destination. A number of case studies concerning this issue have been reported in the tourism literature:

- Bramwell and Rawding (1996) reported on the challenges involved in attempting to change the negative image of Bradford, an English industrial city.
- In Wales, Selby and Morgan (1996) found that even after considerable redevelopments, Barry Island still had an image of being dirty and tatty. This may have reflected the organic perceptions held prior to the redevelopment.
- Similarly, Amor, Calabug, Abellan and Montfort (1994) reported that the image held of Benidorm remained negative, despite consumer and trade awareness of attempts to change it.
- Meler and Ruzic (1999), discussing the negative image of post-war Croatia, suggested that one or a few negative attributes could stimulate the creation of a negative image of a destination.

At a local community level, negative media issues can relate to a diverse range of issues such as: crime against visitors, natural disasters, DMO funding, impacts of tourism growth, controversial building developments. As will be discussed in Chapter 18, the DMO should not leave a response to chance. Recovery from a disaster or negative issue requires planning.

Effective media relations is one of the most important aspect of a destination recovery response, since negative reporting in the mass media can affect the viability of a destination. The media has a propensity for relaying 'bad news' rather than positive coverage of a destination's recovery. Beirman (2003a, pp. 25–26) advised DMO media managers that they should be prepared for the following questions:

- What is being done to assist victims?
- What is the extent of the damage/casualties?
- What is being dome to reduce, minimise, or eliminate future risks?
- What can the government/destination authorities do to guarantee safety?
- Why did this event occur in the first place?
- Who is to blame?
- How long will the crisis last?

During a serious crisis all international marketing should cease, given that these will be worthless if consumers are bombarded with negative news images on their televisions (Mansfield, 1999). The focus of communications at this stage should be on providing accurate information dissemination. Strengthening of relations with the media will be necessary to generate greater positive publicity, since misinformation is one of the greatest challenges to tourism.

Quarantelli (1996, in Faulkner, 1999) observed four key characteristics in the role of the media in USA disasters. Interestingly, the first has been a lack of disaster preparedness planning by the mass media. Second, tensions have emerged between local media and national media over disaster

ownership. Third, the media have tended to selectively report activities of organisations with which they have an established relationship. Fourth, television has been prone to perpetuate disaster myths.

In practice

Misinformation in the USA about the 2001 outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the UK led to perceptions that the disease was a human condition, and that all of England was 'closed'. One of the greatest communication challenges was maintaining a positive outlook in destination promotion, while simultaneously promoting the negative impacts to government (Hopper, 2002. p. 83):

Frisby (2002) provided a detailed first-hand account of the PR activities undertaken by the BTA during the foot and mouth outbreak. Initiatives undertaken during the crisis included: media releases, fortnightly newsletters, sponsored overseas media visits, video news releases and background tapes, and development of a media extranet. At the peak of the outbreak the BTA's call centre in New York received an average of 700 calls each day about the crisis. Frisby (p. 90) claimed that media misinformation was such that enquiries included, for example, 'Should we bring our own food?' and 'Can we travel around safely?' At the height of the outbreak, the London Tourism Board was conducting around six broadcast interviews a week with media, which were focused heavily on the negative.

On a much smaller scale, comedian John Cleese caused great offence in Palmerston North in 2006, when he labelled the city 'the suicide capital of New Zealand' (NZPA, 2006). Cleese suggested 'if you want to kill yourself but lack the courage to, I think a visit to Palmerston North will do the trick'. The city increased exposure to the issue by developing a 'Passionate about Palmerston North' competition in New Zealand and Australia, which invited people to write about why they would like to visit. Palmerston North claimed to have had the last laugh by naming a local rubbish tip after Cleese.

However, attempts to place a positive spin on events led former magazine editor Warwick Roger to offer this reflection of the PR industry:

> *Journalists, for the most part, still work in the interests of the public. PR and advertising people . . . operate only in the interests of money and bullshit (Inside Tourism, p. 246).*

Case Study 16.1 discusses the political implications of a major event that attracts significant government support, but which has attracted negative publicity.

Case study 16.1   'Schoolies' week on Queensland's Gold Coast

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'Schoolies' week is a major annual tourism phenomenon in Australia involving students who have completed Year 12, the final year at high school (see www.schooliesweek.gov.au). Each year in November (traditionally a low season for Gold Coast tourism), some 30,000 such students travel to the Gold Coast to spend a week's holidays with their friends. 'Schoolies' week began when local students staying in their parents' Gold Coast beach houses held a series of parties around 1975–1978. 'Schoolies' subsequently became popular as a 'rite of passage' with increasing numbers of students attending and using commercial apartments and hotels. After 1991, a commercial company, Breakfree Holidays, began to advertise 'Schoolies' accommodation packages to interstate school leavers.

In 1995, 'Schoolies' week received significant negative publicity due to a civil disturbance in the main street, purportedly caused by drunken 'Schoolies'. Following this, the Gold Coast City Council (GCCC) became much more active in the planning and management of 'Schoolies' week. In 1996, the GCCC provided entertainment for 'Schoolies' week and in 1997 a GCCC 'Schoolies' week officer was appointed. Thereafter, 'Schoolies' week has been increasingly organised, with an official media spokesman provided by the GCCC and numerous innovations introduced to reduce harmful behaviour by 'Schoolies'. In 2001, 'Schoolies' week was estimated to be worth $12.5 million in direct expenditure. Similar celebrations have begun to be organised in several other locations around Australia.

Today, 'Schoolies' week is a 10-day-long festival supported by 500 volunteers, with a significant presence by both the police and private security, partly to avoid violence and public drunkenness, and partly to reduce predatory sexual behaviour by older males. The state Education, Health, and Police departments provide educational material about 'Schoolies' week in schools, and evening entertainment is provided on the beach.

The Gold Coast 'Schoolies' festival is hugely successful for the commercial companies who sell accommodation to the 'Schoolies', but costs the local and state governments millions of dollars. As the 'Schoolies' week festival takes place primarily on public land, such as the beach and streets of the Gold Coast, there is currently little possibility of recouping this money. Local businesses such as fine-dining restaurants, retail shops, and tourist attractions do little business from 'Schoolies', who spend on accommodation, food, and alcohol, and little else. The local community finds 'Schoolies' an imposition although accept that it is 'part of the Gold Coast scene'. The Destination Marketing Organisation (Gold Coast Tourism) is not significantly involved in the organisation of the 'Schoolies' week festival.

Discussion question

As the managing director of Gold Coast Tourism, a local journalist has asked your opinion of 'Schoolies' week for a story she is preparing. What are you going to tell her?

Further reading

Scott, N. (2006). Management of tourism: Conformation to whose standards? In B. Prideaux, G. Moscardo & E. Laws (eds), *Managing Tourism and Hospitality Services: Theory and International Applications*. Wallingford: CABI.

Importantly, remember there is no obligation for the media to use your story ideas. As discussed in Chapter 3, at the 2005 Tourism & Travel Research Association conference in New Orleans (just prior to Hurricane Katrina), keynote speaker Peter Greenberg, well known to Americans as 'the travel detective' on one of the national television networks, challenged the audience with the same question he poses to destination promoters who lobby him to film a segment at their place: 'Tell me what experience you offer me that I cant find anywhere else.'

Publicity

There has been a lack of research reported in the literature on the use of publicity as a promotional tool by DMOs (Dore & Crouch, 2003). However, undertaking campaigns to generate publicity is the most visible aspect of PR. Editorial media coverage offers DMOs two key benefits. Firstly, publicity campaigns are far more economical and cost-effective than paid advertising. Secondly, news generally has higher credibility than paid advertising. Trout (1995) suggested that six times as many people read an average news article as read the average advertisement. Trout attributed this to editors being better communicators than advertising agencies. Consumer suspicion about paid advertising is not a new phenomenon, as evidenced by the view of Wahab et al. (1976, p. 73) three decades ago:

> *To obtain a buying decision means overcoming the buyer's resistance to yet one more sales message. There are so many, and life has taught him that they promise so much more than they achieve, that the buyer acquires a built-in suspicion and hostility, which we know as sales resistance.*

The publicity programme should integrate the brand messages being used in other marketing communications. To do so requires similar planning with clear objectives, target audience, message proposition, and tactics. A DMO's publicity programme commonly focuses on the following tactics:

- Visiting journalists programme
- Capitalising on movies, television, and literary figures
- Capitalising on icons.

Visiting journalists programme

In a survey of the publicity practice of 10 NTOs from Europe, Africa, and Asia/Pacific, Dore and Crouch (2003) found that the largest budget item within the PR budget was the visiting journalists programme (VJP). This is also often referred to as a visiting media programme (VMP). While the PR allocation was the third highest in the promotional budget, behind advertising and personal selling, it was rated as the highest in importance by NTO respondents due to the cost-effectiveness. Key problems with VJPs identified by NTOs include: limited funds and staff resources, lack of

industry support, short notice arrival of media, quality control of ensuing publicity, and results not meeting expectations.

While much publicity about places occurs in the general news and entertainment media without the influence of DMOs or the travel industry, travel writers are a primary target of DMO PR managers. For example, in 2003 the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) launched a website specifically for travel media (see www.gomediacanada.com). The site contains travel stories, CTC media releases, links to the tourism industry, information on media tours, market research results, and a photo/video library.

Courtenay (2005) cited research estimating that around one-third of travellers stated the travel media influenced their travel plans. Travel articles in newspaper and magazine travel columns are commonly positive about destinations, given the writer has usually been sponsored by the DMO, airline, accommodation, and attractions. For this reason, Lundburg (1990) reported that travel writers from the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post* were not permitted to accept 'freebies'. While other newspapers, such as the *Los Angeles Times* and *Dallas News*, also did not allow staff to travel free, stories could be purchased from freelance writers who may have done so. However, many travel writers tell it as they find it, so hosting the media is not without some risk.

In practice

Travelwriters.com (www.travelwriters.com) is an example of one of the many resources available to current and aspiring travel writers, and provides advice for PR agents, DMOs, and tourism operators, such as: a writer database, travel publications directory, and press release forum. A community of 10,000+ professional travel writers, Travelwriters.com, is based on a simple principle: to connect top-tier travel writers with editors, PR agencies, tourism professionals, CVBs, and tour operators, nurturing the important link that so heavily influences the travel media.

Media database

An essential element of any publicity programme is a database of travel writers and other news media. For larger DMOs such databases are becoming more sophisticated, and capture individual journalists' previous articles, travel preferences, and personal information. The Society of American Travel Writers (www.satw.org) was established 50 years ago as a professional association to raise standards in the travel writers profession. The British Guild of Travel Writers (see www.bgtw.metronet.co.uk) was established in 1960. The Guild's 220 mostly freelance members contribute to 38 national and provincial daily newspapers, 56 magazines, 86 general interest publications, 37 trade journals, 42 in-flight magazines, and travel guidebooks.

In practice

To more effectively assist journalists, the Orlando/Orange County CVB developed a Journalist VIP Passport (Courtenay, 2005). CVB members offer pre-qualified journalists complimentary services, accommodation, and meals. The passports permit visiting journalists to plan flexible itineraries, to which the CVB can tailor specific information and other items to fit a particular story angle.

David Hickie, head of Gadfly Media and publisher of *Luxury Travel* magazine suggested that wealthy travellers don't have the time or desire to scour the internet (Cincotta, 2006). Hickie argued that luxury travellers want all the work done for them, and prefer the credibility of glossy magazines over internet content: 'Most of what you'll find online is just what the hotel or resort has written about itself.' Cincotta provided similar sentiments by publishers of *Gourmet Traveller*, *Travel & Leisure*, and *Cruise*, who argued that such publications are trusted and authoritative sources of information for discerning travellers. Sandra Hook, publisher of *Vogue Entertaining & Travel*, argued that magazines' point of difference is an obvious one:

> *Magazines provide inspiration with their editorial and pictorial coverage of destinations. Readers are presented with new destinations and travel opportunities. The net basically provides up-to-date information on destinations that the potential traveller has already selected.*

In practice

One small Australian LTA with a small limited budget that has been successful in attracting national publicity for a destination is Queensland's Burnett Shire Council. The Burnett Shire is the headquarters for the Coral Coast region (www.coralcoast.org), which is a small coastal community located 350 kilometres north of Brisbane, the state capital. The region is classified as an 'emerging' destination by Tourism Queensland, and the local council provides a relatively modest financial allocation to destination promotion. However, council staff, who have other roles but work part-time on tourism initiatives, have been very proactive in terms of targeting high-profile media, and coordinating industry support for the visits through their work with a Tourism Industry Advisory Committee (TIAC).

In October 2003 the shire hosted the weather segment of Australia's leading national breakfast television programme. Presenter Sami Lucas broadcast a series of 12 five-minute segments live from Bargara Beach, Moore Park Beach, and Bundaberg over three days. Equivalent advertising value of the airtime was estimated at A$600,000.

The total cost of hosting the film crew was approximately A$20,000, of which almost all was provided by tourism industry sponsorship. The previous year the council successfully hosted the television programme *Destinations*, which produced a half-hour segment on the Coral Coast's attractions. The cost of hosting the programme was A$17,000, which was shared between council and local tourism interests. In a local media release (6/2/03), Mayor Ray Duffy enthused:

> *This is an exciting time for Council and the Coral Coast. Through this programme we have the potential to reach over 4 million viewers nationally.*

The *Destinations* programme was credited locally as being a major force in the 'discovery' of the Coral Coast as a new tourism destination by Australians, and coincided with the council's million-dollar redevelopment of the Bargara Beach foreshore. The months following these events represented a new era of tourism development in the area by interstate property developers and investors. The council used the programme to launch a brief television advertising campaign promoting the region. These examples help to demonstrate how significant national publicity can be for a small destination without a large advertising budget. The examples also demonstrate how PR can be cost-effective for a small destination community through council coordination and in-kind contributions spread between industry in the form of accommodation, rental cars, and meals.

Resource library

It is good practice for DMOs to maintain a resource library to service the needs of the media and trade. Resources typically include photos, brand imagery, and video clips of local attractions. These are useful, for example, for travel writers who are not equipped to replicate professional images that may have been obtained in perfect weather conditions and by special means such as a helicopter. Limited time, resources, and inclement weather can inhibit the travel writer's ability to record suitable images during a brief visit. In recent years resource libraries have become digital. In 2002, for example, the Canadian Tourism Commission launched a photo CD, which contained 100 images as well as links to a searchable database on a website with over 800 photos (see www.canadatourism.com). The images are free to use in publicity for Canada, within guidelines on the conditions of use included with the CD. In New Zealand, Tourism Rotorua outsources the image bank to an organisation specialising in the online management of brand image integrity:

> *The storage, maintenance and effective distribution of brand standards and brand identity artwork is often complex, repetitive, slow and expensive, especially when distributing internationally. Incorrect*

> *artwork can be used or corners cut as lead times evaporate. These lapses can jeopardise the success of a brand. The arrival of the internet as a reliable communications tool has made obsolete the traditional hard copy manual, bromides, couriered disks, etc. (www. e-see.com/marketing/aboutesee2.htm, 29/3/04).*

Requests for destination imagery by media and tourism operators, including photos and brand logos, are vetted to ensure appropriate representation.

Movies, television programmes and literary figures

As well as opportunities in the general and travel media, readers will be aware of television programmes that have generated publicity in various parts of the world for destinations such as in the cases of *Coronation Street* and *Queer as Folk* (Manchester), *Sea Change* (Australia, see Beeton, 2001), *Neighbours* (Australia), *Bergerac* (Jersey, see Tooke & Baker, 1996), and *Cheers* (Boston) to name but a few. Movie- and television-induced tourism is not a new phenomenon. Davidson and Maitland (1997) reported how the West Yorkshire village of Holmfirth became a tourism destination overnight in 1972 following the airing of the BBC TV series *The Last of the Summer Wine*. Similarly, Bradford made use of its television and film history to promote short-break packages based on *Wuthering Heights*, *Emmerdale Farm*, and *The Last of the Summer Wine* (Buckley & Witt, 1985). Voase (2002) cited research indicating that the main reason for visiting Austria for three out of every four international visitors was the film *The Sound of Music*. A year after the 1977 movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* was released, the level of visitors to the Devil's Tower National Monument increased by 74% (Riley & Van Doren, 1992). Other examples of movie-induced tourism discussed by Riley and Van Doren included: *Deliverance* (Rayburn County, Georgia), *Dances with Wolves* (Fort Hayes, Kansas), *Thelma and Louise* (Arches National Monument, Georgia), *Field of Dreams* (Iowa), *The Piano* (New Zealand), *Steel Magnolias* (Natchitoches, Louisiana), and *Crocodile Dundee* (Australia).

Many DMOs have been proactive in maximising movie and television exposure. Petersburg in Virginia took advantage of the 2003 release of the movie *Cold Mountain* to promote tours of the Battle of the Crater scene of the 1864 civil war, which is relived in the opening scenes of the movie (Bergman, 2004). The New Zealand government allocated a special fund of $10.4 million in 2001/2002 and NZ$4.4 million in 2002/2003 towards promotion of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (Foreman, 2003). The state of North Carolina provides a website discussing the importance of the movie industry (see www.ncinformation.com/nc_movie_industry.htm). Since 1980, North Carolina has attracted over 600 feature films. A number of case studies of movie-induced tourism have been reported in the tourism literature, including: Nottingham and *Robin Hood – Prince of Thieves* (see Holloway & Robinson, 1995), New Zealand and the

Lord of the Rings trilogy (see Croy, 2004), Australia and *Ned Kelly* (see Frost, 2003).

While there is evidence that movies do increase visitors to the location (Tooke & Baker, 1996), movie-induced tourism does have its critics. For example, the director of *Natural History New Zealand*, a documentary owned by Fox Television Studios, described the tourism focus on *Lord of the Rings* as 'tacky': '. . . it's just extraordinary to listen to boring little people trying to quantify it in value (to) tourism. It is sickening' (*Inside Tourism*, IT488, 5/3/04). There has also been criticism in Wales that it was the landscape there that country inspired Tolkein's Middle Earth, and not New Zealand. In examining the tourism impact of the Australian TV series *Sea Change* on the seaside village of Barwon, Beeton (2001) lamented a change in the visitor mix, which may have long-term impacts on the destination's traditional holiday market. DMOs interested in this emerging area of research will find a rich resource of examples of the positive and negative impacts of film locations in the papers of Riley and Van Doren (1992), Tooke and Baker (1996), and Riley et al. (1998).

Stein (2006) suggested that a large part of the success of the controversial film *Borat* was inadvertently created by the government of Kazakhstan by firstly threatening legal action and then taking out an unsuccessful four-page tourism ad in the *New York Times*.

Movies and intellectual property ● ● ●

While the *Lord of the Rings* movie trilogy generated enormous publicity for New Zealand, there was initial resistance from the producers to permit Tourism New Zealand to promote areas where filming took place. Producers were reluctant to have Middle Earth associated with New Zealand for fear of damaging the first film's mystery. Ultimately, Tourism New Zealand was able to demonstrate that an association between New Zealand and the movies would be beneficial. Tourism New Zealand was required to seek the producers' permission before any aspect of the movie could be used in promotions.

Literary figures ● ● ●

The topic of literary tourism is not widely reported in the academic literature, even though there is evidence of novels as promotional tools dating back to the 19th century. For example, *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* by Fergus Hume is said to have attracted many tourists to Melbourne, Australia, where the murder-mystery was set (Richardson, 1999). There exists a tourism industry based on visits to the areas where famous literary figures once lived. This is particularly evident in the UK, where the NTO actively promotes sites that offer a glimpse of the lives of Britain's authors, playwrights, and poets (see www.visitbritain.com). Examples of

regional destinations that are laying claims as the home of Britain's finest wordsmiths include (Brace, 2007):

- Thomas Hardy's Wessex
- Emily Bronte's West Yorkshire (www.brontecountry.info)
- William Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon (www.shakespeare-country.co.uk)
- Jane Austen's Hampshire
- William Wordsworth's Lake District (www.lake-district.gov.uk)
- Charles Dickens' London (www.hiddenlondon.com)

Theme parks also take advantage of literary figures. May 2007 saw the opening of Dickens World in the UK, themed around the life, times, and books of the author, and there was an announcement that Universal Studios and Warner Brothers were to develop a *Harry Potter* theme park in Orlando, Florida, based on the writings of author J.K. Rowling.

Capitalising on icons

Another popular form of publicity for destinations is the stimulation of 'big things'. One of the most spectacular of these, and possibly from the only-in America category, (see Schofield comment, 2002) is the eight-storey office building that is built in the shape of a basket, the headquarters of the Longaberger Basket Company. Icon development is particularly popular in small towns, where eye-catching roadside icons can become 'must see' photo opportunities for some travellers. Morley (2003) reported on the proposal in Augathella, 660 kilometres west of Queensland's state capital Brisbane, to build a giant monument in honour of the prolific meat ant. The Augathella and District Tourist and Progress Association proposed the idea after the town of 430 residents was bypassed by the Matilda Highway. Some Australian examples are shown in Table 16.3. In 2007, five of the icons were featured in a special set of Australian postage stamps, entitled *Big Things*.

Other initiatives

Other DMO initiatives that fall under the label publicity include:

- stimulation of the use of locations in corporate brochures, such as by Canada in Porsche's magazine (*Marketing Magazine*, 17/3/03).
- contra prizes for game shows
- contra prizes for consumer goods retail competitions
- sponsorship of media competitions
- encouraging department stores to use destination themes
- public 'film' evenings
- use of celebrities as tourism ambassadors, such as the Tourism Australia's use of world surfing champion Lane Beachley, model Megan Gale, and swimmer Ian Thorpe. Maison France used actor Woody Allen

Table 16.3 Examples of Australian small town icons

Icon	Town
The Big Apple	Stanthorpe
The Big Avocado	Byron Bay
The Big Banana	Coffs Harbour
The Big Cheese	Bega
The Big Cow	Nambour
The Big Guitar	Tamworth
The Big Lobster	Kingston
The Big Merino	Gouldburn
The Big Oyster	Taree
The Big Peanut	North Tolga
The Big Pineapple	Nambour
The Big Pie	Yatala
The Big Prawn	Ballina

in the trade promotion video *Lets Fall in Love Again*. The Queen and royal family participated in the promotion of British Tourism Day 2003 (www.travelmole.com, 10/6/03).

Key points

1. Managing relationships with stakeholders

Public relations is more than publicity-seeking, in that it represents a concerted effort to develop favourable impressions of a destination. This involves both the generation of positive publicity by the DMO as well as the stimulation of positive relations between internal and external stakeholders. Since DMOs are essentially in the business of communication, the process of communication management should not be left to chance.

2. Advantages of media publicity as a communications medium

Editorial media exposure holds a number of advantages for destination marketers, in relation to above-the-line advertising. In particular, the medium is cost-effective and has higher credibility. Establishing an open working relationship with general news media and travel writers is critical.

3. DMO publicity initiatives

As well as stimulating media editorial through media releases and visiting media programmes, other popular approaches include stimulating publicity based on the locations of movies, television and literary figures.

Review questions

- Imagine you have been asked by a television network to provide a photo of an icon that best represents your local destination. This photo will be used, alongside those from other centres, briefly during the evening weather update. Explain why. Share your views with others and gauge the level of agreement.
- Brainstorm ideas for a release to the general media. Select one idea and prepare a release.