

COMM 1172- Social Context of Professional Practice

Major Research Project

‘An investigation into the Public Relations Strategies and Techniques currently being employed by the major resort destinations of the Victorian Ski Fields’

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Definitions

Public Relations: For the purpose of this research, public relations is defined as ‘a management function concerned with communication. It includes understanding issues and analysing public attitudes which may have an impact on an organisation, and planning and implementing communication initiatives. (Tymson & Lazar, 2002, p.22). Therefore, public relations strategies and techniques can be defined as communications initiatives.

Major resort destinations: Mt Buller, Mt Hotham and Falls Creek.

RMB: Resort Management Board

BART- Board Alpine & Resort Tourism. In charge of distributing funds from Tourism Victoria to all of the resorts in the ski fields.

Little BART- Working Group which analyses the market and conducts statistical analysis in order to determine how the funds are distributed.

1.0 Abstract

This research report attempts to identify the public relations strategies and techniques currently being employed by the major resort destinations of the Victorian ski fields. Research was conducted in the form of semi-structured qualitative interviews and also via desktop research. The research was conducted during September and October 2002, and the findings are outlined in section 5 of this report. The research uncovered what sort of PR activities the resorts undertake, the media which they target for coverage, as well as their reliance on the internet as a communications tool. Analysis of these key findings enabled conclusions to be drawn in order to answer the research question and suggest recommendations for further research.

2.0 Introduction

The Victorian Ski Fields have played a major role in the development of Victoria as a tourist destination for both local and international holiday-makers. Located in the thriving north-east region of the state, Mt Hotham, Mt Buller and Falls Creek are home to the largest 'alpine resorts' of the ski fields (Sunderland, 2001). This report has been compiled from research specific to these three major resort destinations. The research was undertaken in order to investigate the public relations strategies and techniques which are currently being employed by these major resort destinations.

2.1 Background

Each resort is overseen by a Resort Management Board. The RMB is the government body representing the resort as a whole. They oversee aspects such as water irrigation, sewerage and parking, acting like a council. The largest commercial operator at each resort is the ski lift company. Being the major stakeholder at the resort, the lift companies conduct extensive marketing, advertising and public relations campaigns to ensure high visitor rates at the resorts.

2.2 Rationale

A quick glance at the resorts websites during the snow season, which runs from June through to September, and the diverse nature of these destinations is immediately obvious. Now offering more than just accommodation close to the slopes, these multi-functional locations are self-contained villages comprising restaurants, bars, shops, nightclubs, eco-tours, cinemas and health spas, as well as snow-related activities other than skiing. These include snow tubing, snowshoeing, tobogganing, snowboarding, an on-snow adventure park (Falls Creek) and a snowsport school (Mt Hotham). In addition, 'Victoria's snowfields play host to events and festivals all season long' (Moreski, 2002). The rationale for this research is based on the need for an investigation to be conducted into what public relations strategies and techniques these resort destinations are employing in order to promote themselves to the public and gain media coverage. 'Resort-goers want a more well-rounded vacation for all members of their family...so PR representatives of resorts and even towns- for

example a ski town- might want to present themselves as ‘We’re not just for skiing anymore.’ (Dickey, cited in Andruss, 2000, p.6) The isolated geographical location of these resorts has further prompted the need to uncover how these organisations use public relations as a communications tool.

2.3 Problem/ Opportunity Statement

An opportunity exists to explore the different communications strategies which are at work within the Victorian ski-fields, and how effective these strategies are. This opportunity stems from the need for further research in this area in order to understand why communications campaigns and activities are implemented by these organisations.

3.0 Research Objectives

The main objectives for the research are;

- To conduct qualitative semi-structured interviews with the public relations specialists at Mt Buller, Mt Hotham and Falls Creek.
- To conduct relevant desktop research in order to understand the extent that each resort relies on the internet as a communications tool.
- To draw conclusions as to the exact role of the communications specialist within these resorts
- Identify how public relations practices contribute to the overall success of each resort as an organisation
- To be able to make educated suggestions for further research into this area based on the findings of my research

3.1 Research Subject Areas

In order to answer the research question, the following specific areas will be investigated during the research;

- The importance of public relations within the ski resorts of Mt Buller, Mt Hotham and Falls Creek
- The interviewee's role within their organization
- The PR strategies and techniques which the resorts employ
- How this compares to advertising and marketing within the organisation
- The forms of written communication that the resort produces
- Specific targeting to markets
- The relationships which exist between the resorts and the media
- The specific media which the resorts target for coverage
- How the resort promotes itself during the summer season
- How important the internet is as a communications tool for these resorts
- Competition between resorts
- The crisis management plan of each resort

3.2 Ethical Implications

The consideration of ethics is a vital component of any research project. As Wimmer and Dominick state, 'mass communication research depends upon the continued goodwill and cooperation of respondents, therefore it is important to shield them from unethical research practices.' (1994, p.67) On conducting the research for this project, ethical considerations were considered for both the individuals who were interviewed, and the organisations for which they work. Due to the un-controversial nature of the research, the ethical implications which needed be considered were minimal. The subjects were appropriately informed of the nature of the research, its purpose and who would be conducting the research. Based on informed consent, the subjects voluntarily agreed to participate in the research with the knowledge that their rights, values and decisions would be respected (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994). The main

ethical implication to consider was ensuring that information sensitive to the organisation was treated in the appropriate manner, and kept confidential if requested.

During the research, no significant ethical problems were encountered which could have altered the credibility of the research.

3.3 Literature Review

No professional literature has previously been produced about the exact nature of the research topic, however some literature was found on topics *relating* to the research, particularly suggestions for good communication practice for tourist destinations. Professional journals such as *Marketing News*, *Journal of Vacation Marketing* and the *Journal of Travel Research* have covered similar topics, or topics which are of relevance to the research. The issues are mainly concerned with marketing strategies, which can directly influence public relations strategies.

An article titled 'The effect of market access on destination choice' (McKercher, 1998) was published in the *Journal of Travel Research*. Its content outlines the results of a research study which explored the concept that destinations which enjoy greater market access, as measured in terms of lower travel time, effort or financial costs, should be more attractive to consumers (McKercher, 1998). The study was conducted on the visitor mix at a series of destinations along the Princes Highway in southeast Australia. 'Market access' is defined as being a term used to 'assess the attractiveness of similar destinations based on a comparison of their relative proximity to their markets.' (McKercher, 1998, p.39) Research was conducted in order to identify if destination choice is influenced by convenience and that, if given a choice between similar destinations, the tourist will tend to choose the more convenient one. The results of the research proved this theory incorrect, and it was found that destinations with 'ostensibly poorer market access do not necessarily have an inherent competitive disadvantage when compared to destinations with stronger market access.' (McKercher, 1998, p.39).

The results of McKercher's study are significant for the research being undertaken into the Victorian ski fields because one of the main issues the resorts have to consider is competition from similar destinations. Although Mt Buller, Mt Hotham and Falls Creek are considered to be located in close proximity to one another, Mt Buller is significantly closer to Melbourne. This means that the resort has greater market access to the ski fields largest target market; Melbourne residents. However, McKercher's findings suggest that this does not give Mt Buller an advantage.

The article 'PR gets adventurous with travel industry' (Andruss, 2000) published in Marketing News, suggests that public relations practitioners in the travel and tourism industry need to put more emphasis on experiences and adventure, not just amenities and attractions. (p.4) Andruss explores one of the biggest trends in the modern travel industry, the so-called 'adventure travel'. Apparently many travellers are now choosing a holiday destination based on what they can do there, not just what they can see. Experts attribute the trend to a variety of factors and expect the market to continue expanding on the wake of the healthy lifestyle many people are trying to achieve today. Lou Hammond, president of a New York based PR firm which has a number of clients that are travel destinations, believes that the adventure travel trend also 'appeals to editors of travel publications, the travel editors of newspapers and staffers at lifestyle publications' (cited in Andruss, 2000, p. 5). To address this desire, Hammond creates entire media kits, including press releases, photos and background information focused on adventure travel and the kinds of activities available to her clients' destinations.

These are interesting points to consider whilst exploring the use of public relations techniques being utilised by adventure travel destinations in Victoria, such as the Victorian ski fields. Are they effectively harnessing this opportunity to use the media for coverage and publicity about their destination? Andruss states that 'public relations is particularly effective for promoting adventure travel on an ongoing basis.' Do the resort management boards and key stakeholders at Mt Buller, Hotham and Falls Creek think along similar lines? This was investigated during the research.

Another journal article with relevance to the research was published in the Journal of Vacation Marketing. 'Destination marketing organisations: Connecting the experience

rather than promoting the place' (King, 2002) suggests that nowadays customers are particularly empowered by the internet. King states with reference to consumers interested in travel and tourism that 'customers are no longer a static target at which marketers aim promotional messages and enticements, but are as never before in a position to dictate what and how they receive their information and how they respond to it.' (2002, 105). King believes that to be successful, destination marketers will need to engage the customer as never before, moving away from mass marketing techniques which promote what the destination has to offer. These attract passive customers, which are not the ideal market to be targeting. Other changes will need to include 'the establishment of ongoing direct two-way and networking consumer communication channels and key customer relationship strategies.' (King, 2002, p.106) This highlights the need for public relations professionals in this industry.

The communications strategies being employed by the ski fields can be compared to King's suggested communication practices for destination marketers.

4.0 Research Procedures

The research was conducted via semi-structured qualitative interviews and relevant desktop research (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994) The research commenced on the 16th of September and concluded on the 10th of October, 2002. Five interviews were conducted in total, four via telephone and one face-to-face. The interviews lasted approximately 25-30 minutes each. They were conducted with people working in a communications role for both the resort management boards and the primary stakeholders (lift companies) of each resort.

Desktop research was conducted in order to obtain basic information about the organisations being researched. This research consisted mainly of web-page content analysis in order to ascertain how reliant the organisations are on the internet as a communications tool.

4.1 Justification of Research Method (advantages)

The interview method was selected as it was the most appropriate method for addressing the subjects to be researched. In order to answer the research question, a discussion with the communication's manager of each resort was required. In-depth answers could be obtained by utilising this method. Semi-structured interviews were selected to allow for the exploration of new subject areas which could possibly have arisen during the course of the interviews. Having a basic structure of questions allowed the interview to sustain its course without getting off track. By conducting the interviews via telephone it enabled the respondents tone of voice and emotion to be heard, which is beneficial to the research because it offers a clearer description of the topic.

4.2 Limitations of Research (disadvantages)

The main disadvantage to the research procedure was conducting the interview via phone. Note-taking was difficult during the conversation, yet because of time and budget limitations, face-to-face interviews were not possible with all subjects.

4.3 Sampling method

The sampling method chosen was *purposive* (Brody & Stone, 1989). The subjects were chosen specifically because they 'possess a certain characteristic or some knowledge the researcher is interested in.' (Brody & Stone, 1989, p. 149). In this case, a purposive sample of five subjects were selected to interview, based upon their knowledge of the use of public relations in their organisation or company.

4.4 Subjects

Name	Title	Company/ Organisation
Jade Miles	Marketing Manager	Mt Hotham Skiing Company
Tracey Mahoney	Marketing Co-ordinator	Mt Buller Ski Lifts
Bianca Speller	Marketing Manager	Mt Buller Resort Management Board
Debbie Howie	Promotions and Media Manager	Falls Creek Ski Lifts
Kelli Martin	Manager, Marketing and Business Development	Falls Creek Resort Management Board

These individuals were approached for interviews. These subjects were chosen as it was found during preliminary research that a major part of their role within their respective organisations is handling communication.

4.5 Research Methodology

The semi-structured interviews consisted of 18 questions which addressed the subject areas of the investigation (refer to section 3.1). The questions were designed to highlight and identify what, if any, specific public relations techniques the resorts are employing (refer to appendix 2).

Initial contact with the subjects was made via email. The email was constructed specifically to the subject and their organisation, and explained why the research was being conducted, and how their involvement could greatly contribute to the investigative process. Email was chosen because it is a quick, cheap and effective form of communication. Initial contact via email was also less obtrusive than a direct phone call, which could come at an inconvenient time for the interviewee. As Holtz states, 'email has become so efficient as a means of contact that it has replaced the telephone as the principal method of communication for many public relations practitioners' (1999 , p. 42). 100% of the subjects approached agreed to participate in the research. Follow up contact was made via telephone, and four of the five

interviews conducted were via telephone. This was the most convenient method of conducting the interview due to the geographical location of the subjects. The one face-to-face interview was conducted in Melbourne and recorded on tape. The other interviews were recorded by note-taking and were typed up immediately afterwards. The interviews were conducted from September 16- October 5, and lasted approximately 30 minutes each.

4.6 Additional Research

Web-based research was also conducted during the period August 2 – October 10. This was necessary to investigate one of the key subject areas- how the resort uses the internet as a communications tool. Background information about the resorts was also obtained during this additional research.

5.0 Results and Analysis

The results of the research will be presented according to the subject areas identified in section 3.1.

- ***The importance of public relations within the ski resorts of Mt Buller, Mt Hotham and Falls Creek***

Public Relations plays a large role within the marketing department of each resort. However it was found that currently the lift companies have more resources and money to dedicate to PR than the resort management boards. Mt Buller RMB is wishing to develop a position for a public relations specialist in order to address an increased organisational need (Speller, October, 2002). PR strategies were vital to the ongoing success of each resort, and are used to maintain good relationships with their consumers and gain extensive media coverage during the ski season. Each organisation engages in traditional PR methods in order to better communicate with their publics. For the lift companies the main objective for utilising PR techniques is to increase the amount of people who come to the resort and use the ski lifts, as it is the product which they are marketing. Representing all the stakeholders on the

mountains, the resort management board's use of PR strategies was more concerned with promoting the resort as a whole, not just the skiing aspect.

At Mt Buller the RMB and Buller Ski Lifts work very close together in developing their marketing strategies. When developing strategies to market the resort using PR, marketing and advertising, their money is pooled to develop one branding strategy for the whole resort (Speller, October, 2002). Mt Hotham Skiing Company and Mt Hotham RMB have separate branding strategies, and this is also the case for Falls Creek.

- ***The interviewee's role within their organisation***

Jade Miles is responsible for developing and implementing the Marketing Plan for Mount Hotham Skiing Company. Her role encompasses all marketing communications activities including developing written pieces of communication such as brochures and promotional items, as well as handling all PR and media. She is also directly involved in the management of events at Mt Hotham. Public Relations is a key component to Mt Hotham's marketing strategy, and a large chunk of their budget is allocated to PR and media communication each year. The company also contracts the services of a communications consultancy to conduct public relations activities. A creative company (Frontier Marketing) was also employed to conduct retail promotional activity targeting the company's primary markets (Miles, October, 2002).

Mt Buller Ski Lifts also play a hands-on role in the implementation of their public relations and marketing strategies. Tracey Mahoney, the Marketing Coordinator, is responsible for sponsorship, advertising, media and PR, web design, snow reporting, internet communications and event management. They do employ the services of a printer, designer and advertising agency, but most PR activity is conducted themselves. Tracey is directly involved in public relations and media activities, stating that this is the most important aspect of her job. Mt Buller RMB spends a lot less time conducting direct PR activity, however this is one of the changes which Bianca Speller, Marketing Manager, would implement. Bianca's key duties include communicating with all the organisations which affect Mt Buller. This includes

stakeholder's such as hotels, restaurants, and other business operators on the mountain (the largest being Buller Ski Lifts), as well as those companies which are involved in services such as water waste, irrigation, sewerage, road maintenance and property development. Bianca develops and implements the Marketing Strategy for the RMB, yet public relations activities are limited due to budget restraints (Speller, October, 2002).

Falls Creek Ski Lifts develops and undertakes a comprehensive PR and promotional strategy. Deb Howie, the Promotions and Media Manager, describes her role as 'generating editorial about Falls Creek through any medium possible' (October, 2002). Falls Creek RMB spend less time conducting specific PR and media relations activities as they do not play a major role in meeting organisational objectives. Kelli Martin, the Manager of Marketing and Business Development, is responsible for undertaking the PR activities that are implemented, but more focus is applied to business and product development (Martin, October, 2002). Martin believes that PR would amount to less than 15% of her overall duties, and this is usually in conjunction with external partners such as governing bodies and tourism authorities.

- ***The Public Relations strategies and techniques which the resorts employ***

A compilation media kit containing information about each resort is launched prior to the ski season each year. The kit contains information on every aspect of the ski fields; travelling times, costs, accommodation, activities available, event schedules, where to eat out and tips for enjoying the snow experience. The kit is launched by Tourism Victoria and is part of an overall campaign to generate interest in the ski fields. In 2002 the campaign was titled 'Moreski'. (Watt, 2002). The Moreski media kit was distributed to around 200 key media contacts from television, radio, newspapers and specialist magazines. The information included in the kit is supplied to Tourism Victoria by the specific resorts. The resorts also create their own media kit which is supplied to key media.

The lift companies, who rely on PR more than the RMB, conduct most of their PR related activities during the ski season. For each resort the main PR activities include producing written material to supply to the media to gain editorial coverage,

maintaining detailed and up-to-date websites, providing daily snow reports to various media and organising and publicising events. Newsletters, both print and electronic are also produced and distributed to communicate with the resorts publics.

- *PR activities specific to each resort include;*

Mt Buller

Tracey Mahoney conducts live radio interviews everyday about snow cover and activities occurring at Buller. The marketing team at Buller Ski Lifts invite journalists up to the mountain and provides them with free accommodation, lift tickets and food. This is done with the aim of getting journalists to report on Mt Buller. Tracey may take them for coffee or out to dinner at Mt Buller so they get a chance to ask any questions. The marketing department at Buller Ski Lifts will issue frequent media releases on anything that might be news-worthy (Mahoney, October, 2002) A comprehensive media kit is produced in conjunction with the RMB and distributed to media.

Mt Hotham

Jade Miles, in conjunction with Maloney Communications, develops and distributes the resort's media kit. Attempts are made to be included in the production schedules of major commercial TV lifestyle and recreational programmes, news and lifestyle stories are produced for radio and the media is monitored for coverage. Mt Hotham also invites the media up to the mountain, with 'media family trips being organised for journalists' (Miles, October, 2002). Photographic CD's are also supplied to the media.

Falls Creek

Deb Howie and the marketing department at Falls Creek produce a detailed media kit, as well as constantly attempting to generate media coverage during the ski season by writing media releases on any news-worthy material. Ongoing communication with key media including radio, TV, magazines and newspapers is conducted in order to sustain good relationships and generate publicity about every aspect of the resort (Howie, October, 2002).

- ***A comparison with marketing and advertising activities***

Comprehensive marketing and advertising campaigns are conducted by each resort to ensure specific media coverage is obtained. These campaigns are central to the success of the resorts, as PR activities only serve to substantiate the marketing and advertising campaigns employed by the resorts. Specific marketing and advertising techniques include television and radio advertisements, the production and distribution of brochures to travel agents and the production of promotional material such as stickers, posters and show bags are produced and distributed at trade shows, universities, schools and sporting clubs. The resorts logos and branding are put on all promotional material. The resorts employ photographers to shoot scenes at the resorts, which are then included in advertising and promotional material. The resorts also sponsor events, providing another outlet in which to advertise. Competitions are organised in conjunction with other companies, for example Mt Hotham ran a competition with Coca Cola Amatil in which contestants could win prizes to Mt Hotham for purchasing cans of Lift Plus (Miles, October, 2002). Extensive marketing and advertising activities are undertaken by the resorts, mainly the lift companies, each winter. This is necessary to ensure the resorts receive media exposure to their key markets. Public Relations activities serve to support the marketing and advertising campaigns employed, to generate as much free exposure as possible.

- ***Written material the resort produces for public relations purposes***

The resorts produce media kits, media releases, backgrounders, fact sheets, feature stories and newsletters (both print and electronic) to communicate to their publics. Marketing plans and evaluation reports of activities are also produced for the resorts personal use.

- ***Targeting Specific Publics***

Certain markets are targeted by the resorts, and usually alter seasonally according to market need. These publics are targeted specifically through promotional activities, marketing and advertising. This season Mt Buller Ski Lifts targeted University students (Mahoney, October, 2002), Mt Hotham Skiing Company targeted 'Buddies', which are excitement-seeking 18-30 year olds, and families (Miles, 2002), Falls Creek Ski Lifts targeted juniors, new parents and families. Segmenting the markets which the resorts aim to communicate to allows them to tailor their promotional activities accordingly.

The RMB are less likely to depend on structured market segments for promotional activity as they are promoting the location as a whole. Broad categories are identified during the summer months when the RMB's are more involved in promoting the destinations (Speller, October, 2002)

- ***Targeting Specific Media***

Coverage is attempted for all media on a national level by the resorts, but specific media are also targeted. Mt Buller Ski Lifts has an affiliation with Network Seven, so a lot of promotion for the resort is done via the network's outlets (Mahoney, 2002). Falls Creek Ski Lifts do not target any specific media for publicity. As Deb Howie states, 'I try to generate publicity through any medium possible. This includes TV, radio, magazines, newspapers, the internet and so on.' (October, 2002). This year, Mt Hotham Skiing Company targeted Networks Seven and Ten for coverage on snow reports, and Melbourne's 3AW radio network. The main daily newspapers in Sydney and Melbourne are specifically targeted, as well as major 'glossy' magazines (Miles, October, 2002).

- ***Summer Season Promotion***

The lift companies conduct virtually no promotion or advertising during the warmer months. This is because the product which they are marketing, the ski lifts, does not operate during summer. Instead, the communications specialists are involved in developing marketing strategies, research, evaluation, visiting trade shows, developing brochures and so on. 'All my work in winter is basically reactive, such as

handling whatever issues or opportunities come up on a day to day basis. My summer work is pro-active, preparing for snow season. My responsibilities include developing pricing lists, the 2003 media kit and image CD, brochures, the marketing plan, organising key promotions, securing all advertising, liaising with sponsors, and re-designing the website.' (Mahoney, October, 2002)

The RMB's are more involved in summer season promotion. Activities such as mountain biking, bushwalking, fishing and horse-riding are promoted. 'Summer gives us the opportunity to promote the destination as a whole, not just for snow-related activities.' (Speller, October, 2002) Media interest is a lot lower in summer, but summer media kits and information is still supplied to the media from the RMB's.

- ***Importance of the internet as a communications tool***

Each resort relies very heavily on the internet as a communications tool. Due to their geographical location, the internet is a fast, cheap, and effective way for them to communicate. Each resort's website is dynamic, interactive, and full of information. The media are accessing the websites for information, and people can organise their snow trip. 'Nowadays, many people are booking their holidays online rather than through a travel agent.' (Howie, October, 2002). 'We want people to organise everything online, and this has been reflected in our budget. Funds for other booking methods have been cut and given to the website.' (Mahoney, October, 2002) One of the benefits of the internet is that it is current, and people know they are receiving up-to-date information. 'Having a daily snow report with live web-cams gives credibility to what we are saying. People can actually see if there is 15cm of snow or not. People in Melbourne can wake up in the morning, check the website and decide to come up for the day if there's been snowfall.' (Mahoney, October, 2002)

- ***Crisis Management Plans***

None of the resorts really had a strategic plan in place for dealing with crises. What plans of actions would be taken seemed to depend largely on the crisis that occurred, and because there is a numerous variety of circumstances which the organisations could be faced with, apparently it is dealt with when it occurs. The Marketing Manager for Mt Hotham stated that ‘on a couple of occasions this year it would have been fabulous to have had a crisis management plan in place. However, neither the Skiing Company nor the RMB have an official plan, although a number of us are specifically media trained.’ (Miles, October, 2002) The consensus was that each organisation would know how to respond to a crisis, and that formal crisis management plans would be ineffective in the time of a crisis. Basic outlines for assessing operational and safety issues and dealing with the media are in place, and are general knowledge amongst most of the staff. (Speller; Mahoney; October, 2002)

- ***Competition between the resorts***

The resorts are all competing for business, yet at the strategic level a large amount of co-operation exists. Organisations such as B.A.R.T (Board of Alpine and Resort Tourism) are in charge of distributing funding from Tourism Victoria, and Little B.A.R.T is a working group which analyses the market in order to determine how the funds should be distributed. It also oversees the strategic direction of the resorts, ensuring that one won’t cannibalise the other (Watt, October, 2002) The resorts are competing for customers, yet it is a healthy competition which ensures that each resort is aware of providing consumers with good service.

6.0 Key Findings/ Conclusion

The investigation has identified the public relations strategies and techniques being employed by the major resort destinations of the Victorian ski fields. The results of this research are significant for the major resort destinations of the Victorian ski fields and the public relations industry. The results add to the PR body of knowledge, and further research can be based upon these findings. Significant finding include of the research include;

- Each resort is very reliant on the internet as a communications tool

- Public Relations strategies and techniques are frequently employed by the resorts, and are an essential component to each resorts marketing plan
- The privately owned lift companies utilise PR tools more often in the winter seasons, and the RMB utilise PR tools more during the summer months
- PR strategies support the advertising and marketing campaigns conducted by the resorts
- The resorts decide how to respond to a crisis when it occurs. Some formal procedures exist, but plans of action are specific to the crisis and determined when it occurs.

7.0 Suggestions for further research

This research highlights the need for further research in areas including, but not restricted to; the dollar value of public relations coverage generated through certain strategies; how essential public relations related activities are for meeting organisational objectives; exactly how much media coverage is generated through public relations, and through which mediums; how the media responds to information supplied to them by the resorts; and comparative analyses could also be made on other tourist destinations.

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Interviews

Jade Miles, Marketing Manager, Mt Hotham Skiing Company

Bianca Speller, Marketing Manager, Mt Buller Resort Management Board

Tracey Mahoney, Marketing Co-ordinator, Mt Buller Ski Lifts

Debbie Howie, Media and Promotions Manager, Falls Creek Ski Lifts

Kelli Martin, Manager Business and Product Development, Falls Creek Resort Management Board

Kirsty Watt, Tourism Victoria (spoke briefly)

9.0 Appendices

Appendix 1- Timeline

	August	September	October
1	Possible research topics explored		
2	Initial research commences	Research Design Presentation	
3			
4			
5			Interviews completed
6			
7			
8			
9		Research Design Written Submission Due	
10			Desktop research completed
11			Analysis of findings commences
12			
13			
14			
15			
16		Interviews commence	
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28			Research Project Due
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30			

Appendix 2- Interview questions

1) Please describe the organisation that you work for.

- 2) What is the organisation's mission statement/ what does your organisation strive for?
- 3) What is your role within the organisation?
- 4) What do you believe is the most important aspect of your job?
- 5) What activities do you undertake on a daily basis?
- 6) Who are your target publics and why?
- 7) What specific public relations activities do you undertake?
- 8) What publications/ newspapers/ magazines do you target?
- 9) Please describe how your role changes seasonally
- 10) Does the organisation have a crisis management plan in place?
- 11) How would you go about responding to a crisis?
- 12) What other organisations do you deal with on a regular basis?
- 13) What events are you involved in organising?
- 14) Does your organisation conduct many fundraising events? If yes, who for and why?
- 15) Does your organisation produce any written pieces of communication?
- 16) Do you contribute directly to the content of your organisation's website?
- 17) How reliant is your organisation on the internet as a communications tool?
- 18) Is there anything which your organisation does not currently do which you think should be implemented?