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**USING TOURISM BROCHURES AS A TOOL TO
MANAGE APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR AMONGST
TOURISTS**

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Abstract

Tourism brochures and the glossy photographic images which dominate them, are usually seen as a major form of marketing a region. However, they may additionally be seen as a management tool. They may be used as a way of encouraging tourists to engage in what I have termed 'appropriate behaviour'. This could include behaviour which is safe, facilitates the enjoyment of others or protects the natural environment. On the other hand, poor choice of photos may encourage inappropriate behaviour.

In this paper the photos from eight glossy Australian regional brochures were analysed. Two groups of behaviour were considered. The first was that affecting safety and included swimming, use of helmets for cycling or horse-riding, avoidance of sunburn or skin cancer and use of lifevests in water activities. The second was that affecting others or the environment and consisted of interaction with wildlife, parking and use of motor vehicles, activities on beaches, consumption of alcohol and the use of hardened surfaces to protect natural environments.

The results indicated a mixed message for tourists. While the images often encouraged tourists to behave in an appropriate way, there were a number of photos which could encourage wrong, even dangerous, behaviour.

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INTRODUCTION

A golden beach. Crashing surf. A young attractive couple run down the beach towards the ocean. An image used time and time again in marketing Australia's coastal resorts.

Another golden beach with pounding surf. A similar happy couple. What is different is that there is a third figure in the picture. Looking on is an attractive bronzed lifeguard and the beach has flags marking out a patrolled area. Not a common image in tourism brochures, but it does occur (for an example giving primary attention to the lifeguard and flags see South Gippsland Shire 1999).

After a decade of *Baywatch* the second brochure may be seen as a piece of clever marketing, associating this beach with other world-famous beaches and their gorgeous lifeguards. However, it also can be seen as a management tool, sending three clear messages. The first is that swimming in the surf may be dangerous. The second is that the appropriate way to safely enjoy the surf is to swim between flags at patrolled beaches. The third is that this particular beach has lifeguards and is therefore safe. In contrast the first image sends an inappropriate message, that ordinary tourists can safely swim on any surf beach.

The purpose of this paper is to consider how pictures in tourism brochures may encourage appropriate or inappropriate behaviour. It has long been recognised that visual images in brochures often have a far stronger impact on potential tourists than does the text. While the power of the visual is usually harnessed for marketing purposes, it may also be used for managing visitors. By creating expectations or knowledge of what is appropriate behaviour, it may change tourists' behaviour. The end result may be a combination of increased enjoyment, higher safety, or less negative social or environmental impact.

In order to analyse the ways in which visual images encourage appropriate or inappropriate behaviour, the photos in eight Australian regional tourism brochures (or booklets) were surveyed. The brochures and the abbreviations used in references are listed at the end of this paper. The focus of the survey was how tourist behaviour in natural settings or nature-based activities was depicted.

Such methodology has been used previously for a variety of purposes. Some examples include studies by Dann, Zeppell and Davies and Bradbery. Graham Dann used photos in brochures for the British outbound market to consider how people from host communities and their interaction with tourists were presented (Dann 1996). Heather Zeppell looked at how NSW regional brochures tended to portray Aborigines and their culture (Zeppell 1999). Jenny Davies and Patrick Barbery examined images of the roles of males and females in Australian state tourism brochures (Davies & Barbery 1999). Such studies have tended to consider how people are portrayed. In this study I am applying the same methodology to how behaviour is presented (and therefore encouraged).

The brochures were collected in late 1998 and early 1999 and were high quality glossy regional publications. As I was focussing on nature-based tourism, I tended to choose brochures from regions with a range of popular natural attractions. It was not a random sample, but apart from the general location there was no attempt to choose brochures which might yield good examples for the study.

The study considered photos of people in natural settings, including against landscapes, interacting with animals in the wild (not zoos) or participating in nature-based activities. My emphasis was on safety (ranging

from avoiding death to discomfort), environmental degradation and impacts on the enjoyment of others. My judgements were primarily subjective, though apparent breaches of laws were noted. In addition, I included only instances which might encourage a tourist to behave a certain way. Thus, for example, it was common to see photos of 4WD vehicles parked in the middle of roads or on bridges, but it would be highly unlikely that these pictures would lead to a tourist thinking that this was a safe practice.

The survey identified nine types of appropriate or inappropriate behaviour encouraged by brochures. In turn these were divided into two groupings: behaviour affecting safety and behaviour affecting others or the environment. The first grouping included swimming, use of helmets for cycling or horse-riding, avoidance of sunburn or skin cancer and use of lifevests in water activities. The second grouping consisted of interaction with wildlife, parking and use of motor vehicles, activities on beaches, consumption of alcohol and the use of hardened surfaces to protect natural environments.

BEHAVIOUR AFFECTING SAFETY

Swimming

None of the eight brochures depicted tourists at beaches with surf life-saving flags. One showed an attractive looking beach with the caption, 'great looks [looks great?] but unsuitable for swimming' (Great Ocean Rd, 38). On the other hand there were no photos of dangerous activities such as fresh water swimming or diving off banks or rocks.

Helmet Protection

Helmets are highly advisable safety protection for cyclists and horse riders. This is especially so if tourists do not usually engage in these activities but are trying them as part of their holiday. In some cases cyclists were shown with helmets (Fraser, 11; Tasmania, 9), but in others without (SA, 22). Horse riding, a more unfamiliar activity where safety should be more important, was sometimes shown with helmets (Tasmania, 3) and without (Tropics1, 22; Tropics2, 13). In one brochure there were riders with helmets (SA, 46), without (SA, 48) and a group of some with and some without (SA, 51). Such inconsistency probably reinforces the view that helmets are unnecessary options, only to be used by the timid or children.

Avoidance of Sunburn or Skin Cancer

In Australia for at least a decade there has been a strong awareness of the health risks from even short exposure to the sun. However, this message is only inconsistently reinforced by the brochures. Only one showed people clearly using sunscreen (Tropics2, 23). Unfortunately as this was a photo of three young children in vividly coloured sunscreen it may be dismissed by some as merely a cute picture.

There were numerous pictures of tourists protected by hats (for example SA, 39; Outback, 7 & 12; Tropics2, 5 & 6). However, there were also many in full sun without hats (SA, 43, 45 & 47; Tropics1, 83; Great Ocean Rd, 37; Fraser, inside front cover, 2, 8, 11, 12, 13, 15 & 20). Usually tour guides were shown in hats, a sort of badge of office (for example, Fraser Island, inside front cover & 19 - about the only people in this brochure wearing hats), but in some cases guides were bare-headed (Outback, 7; Tasmania, cover).

Davies and Barbery argued that there was a strong gender bias in brochures with women often shown as protective and sensible and men as brave and aggressive. I expected to find evidence of this in photos of women with hats and men without. However, while there were photos depicting such stereotypes (SA, 103;

Tropics1, 3 & 84; Phillip Island, back cover), there were others that showed men with hats and women without (SA, 126; Outback, 1 & 17; Tasmania, 1).

Lifeworlds in Water Activities

Most of the regions covered offered water activities. Assuming that most tourists would not be regular participants, should they wear lifeworlds? The overall message was mixed, very much similar to that regarding helmets.

Some activities could be considered high risk, for example jet boating or white water rafting. Often participants were shown with vests (Tropics1, 23, 24 & 25; Tropics2, 4 & 22; Phillip Island, 14). However, in one instance a Tully River Rafting boat contained tourists without lifeworlds (Tropics1, 24).

Some canoeists were shown with lifeworlds (Great Ocean Rd, 9; Outback, inside front cover), whereas other canoeists and sea kayakers were shown without (Tropics1, 25, Tropics2, 15 & 27).

In one case participants and the guide on a seal viewing boat were shown with lifeworlds (Great Ocean Rd, 39), however in all other cases tourists on wildlife viewing craft were not wearing them.

BEHAVIOUR AFFECTING THE ENVIRONMENT OR OTHER TOURISTS

Cars

People do strange things in cars (or is it that cars make people do strange things). This certainly seems the case in South Australia. Not only was there a photo of a 4WD in the outback without any water or supplies (SA, 17), but there was a clear message that one can park anywhere. In one photo a couple picnicked on a grassy slope overlooking the coast at the Deep Creek Conservation Park on the Fleurieu Peninsula and the caption read, 'This is where real people go to quietly luxuriate in an unpolluted natural paradise' (SA, 52-3). However these real people have driven their ordinary car onto the grass slope (and there is no sign of a road) in the unpolluted natural paradise of the Conservation Park. In another photo there was a 4WD parked on Beachport beach surrounded by four sunbathers (SA, 54, see also 30 for more car on beach photos).

For Fraser Island there were a number of photos of 4WD vehicles driving on beaches or parked next to spectacular dune formations or shipwrecks (Fraser, 5, 8-9). It also contained another couple parked in a field in the Bunya Mountains - though this was farmland not a Conservation Park (Fraser, 20). Near Wilsons Promontory a tour minibus and its passengers were depicted off-road in the bush (Phillip Island, 49).

Alcohol

Generally tourists in natural settings were not shown as consuming alcohol and there was not one instance showing smoking. The only exceptions with alcohol were that sometimes picnickers were shown with a bottle of wine - never beer (SA, 43 & 52; Fraser, 11).

Behaviour on Beaches

Activities on beaches are regulated by local authorities and there is a high degree of variability across Australia. For example driving on beaches is legal on Fraser Island, but not on my local beach. Such variations may be very confusing for tourists.

As noted above, there were a number of instances of motor vehicles on beaches. There were also other activities depicted which might be illegal in some areas. These were driving and camping on a beach (Fraser, 8-9), having a campfire on a beach (SA, 30) and camping and having a campfire on a beach (Tasmania, 17).

Interaction with Wildlife

Photos of wildlife without humans, or of people patting animals at zoos or wildlife parks were very common. However, there were some disturbing pictures of tourists making contact with wild animals.

In promoting scuba diving on the Great Barrier Reef, there was one photo of a diver stroking a large fish. The caption encouraged visitors to, 'Pat a Potato Cod' (Tropics2, 9). Such behaviour is never acceptable on the Great Barrier Reef. Similarly unacceptable behaviour was depicted in a photo of three tourists standing next to a Sea Lion at Seal Bay on Kangaroo Island (SA, 61). One of the major difficulties at Seal Bay has been tourists getting too close to the Sea Lions, resulting in great stress for the animals and the possibility of tourists being attacked and bitten. In order to avoid these problems stricter visitor management policies have been implemented (Anon. 1995, 37-8). In comparison a photo of a young girl feeding wild parrots (Phillip Island, 7) seems tame.

Photos of viewing wildlife from boats tended to show the boat, perhaps as a way of reassuring the tourist of their size or suitability. However, land-based wildlife viewing structures were not shown, for example three shots of Penguins on Phillip Island did not show any of the stands or fences at the Penguin Parade (Phillip Island).

Use of Hardened Viewing Structures

The last decade has seen a proliferation of hardened viewing structures, including boardwalks, platforms and towers. These structures are intended to enhance the experience of visitors while protecting fragile high-traffic areas, though it has been argued that such sites are sacrificial and that their construction may be a substitution for good quality interpretation materials (Hall & McArthur 1996, 38-9; Frost 1999).

Two brochures heavily featured images of hardened viewing sites, sending messages that these existed in their regions and should be used by tourists. For Tasmania, only one was at an easily identifiable location - the Freycinet Peninsula, whereas the others seemed to be generally associated with the south and south-west of the state (Tasmania, 1, 5, 7, 10, 11 & 15).

For the Great Ocean Road viewing structures were depicted at Melba Gully, the Twelve Apostles, the Arch (Port Campbell) and Aireys Inlet (Great Ocean Rd, 24, 28, 29 & 51). The photo of the new platform at Melba Gully is interesting as previous brochures had shown tourists standing at the base of the Big Tree, which is now no longer possible unless visitors climb off the platform and over a fence. The Great Ocean Road brochure is also unusual in using photos to demonstrate that there are interpretative signboards at Maits Rest Rainforest Walk, Mt Leura volcanic cone, Loch Ard Gorge and the Mahogany Ship Walk (Great Ocean Rd, 50-1).

CONCLUSION

This survey of brochures yielded mixed results. Some brochures (Great Ocean Rd, Tasmania) seemed to have consciously promoted appropriate behaviour. In others there seemed to be a great deal of inconsistency.

In some cases the behaviour portrayed was so inappropriate that it would be impossible to justify. Examples of this (given in more detail above) included a scuba diver touching a fish, tourists approaching a Sea Lion and participants on a white water river rafting trip without lifevests.

A difficulty in analysing these photos is in to what extent these photos represent reality. For example, we have a photo of someone patting fish on the Great Barrier Reef. This may create an expectation amongst tourists that they can actually do this. However, when they commence their tour the operators may warn them not to and set out the consequences. Or they may not. Similarly, whatever the photo shows, the operators of river rafting trips may enforce the wearing of lifevests.

In a way, images of what we might think of as minor inappropriate behaviour, may be more dangerous. For example, the images of bareheaded people in the sun, may encourage tourists to think that hats are not necessary. And it may be that no one ensures that they take adequate protection, for it seems a minor point. The result may be minor – sunburn or major (but far in the future) – skin cancer.

Unfortunately we tend to think of brochures as purely a marketing tool. However as other studies have shown, they can also reinforce stereotypes, and as demonstrated in this study, they can encourage inappropriate behaviour. With some thought they can also be a powerful management tool, encouraging appropriate behaviour and ensuring safety and sustainability.

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